

**IRGC Navy Forces Seized a Foreign Vessel Carrying More Than 220,000 Liters of Smuggled Fuel in the Persian Gulf and Its 11 Foreign Crew Members Were Detained**

# IRAN NEWS

**Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **140,577** With **49** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

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**Kuwait Ready for Talks With Iran on Exploitation of Joint Fields**



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## 3 DOMESTIC

**Australia Ready to Cooperate With Iran in Fight Against Terrorism**



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## Tehran Updates Blacklist Of Americans Officials

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Ministry has updated its blacklist of senior American officials for their involvement in terrorist activities and gross human rights violations against the Islamic Republic.

The ministry made the announcement in a statement on Saturday, saying the persons had been designated for their role in imposing and intensifying the imposition of the U.S.' unilateral coercive measures against the Iranian government and the people.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in conformity with the...

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## Nine Nuclear Achievements Unveiled On National Nuclear Technology Day



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran marked the National Nuclear Technology Day during an impressive ceremony held in Tehran on Saturday, where the country's latest nuclear achievements were unveiled.

Among the accomplishments put on display were three radiopharmaceuticals, two achievements in the fields of

cold plasma technology (CPT) and plasma therapy for cancer patients, and another four in the areas of industry, lasers, control systems, and photography.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi, who was present at the event, was briefed by the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami, and Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari on recent nuclear achievements.

Raisi expressed satisfaction with the progress made by the Iranian youth and scientists in the field of nuclear energy, describing the achievements as a symbol of self-confidence and reliance on domestic capabilities.

He called for extending such a spirit to other industries and strategic fields in the country.

While stressing Iran's inalienable right to access peaceful nuclear energy, he stated that the country's rapid and major strides in the areas of nuclear technology and expertise were irreversible.

"Iran does not restrict research and studies on the peaceful aspects of nuclear energy to the wishes or opinions of others. Fortunately, research into the peaceful applications of nuclear energy is growing and the [incumbent Iranian] administration will support the process," Raisi highlighted.

Eslami also spoke on the occasion, saying the AEOI unveiled and inaugurated nearly 77 new achievements in the nuclear technology sector during the Persian calendar year of 1400, which started on March 21, 2021, and ended on March 20, 2022.

Among them, 29 achievements were related to nuclear fuel, while 19 others were in the field of nuclear research and development. A total of 15 achievements were made in the field of energy supply, and another 14 achievements in the sphere of radiation application, the AEOI chief informed.

Saying that Iran, regarding international interactions, especially in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, tries to behave professionally, Eslami announced that the preparation of the Country Program Framework (CPF) is also in progress and will be submitted to the IAEA upon completion.

He also called on the IAEA to be committed to fulfilling its legal obligations and not to surrender to the excessive demands of Iran's enemies.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Eslami noted that the AEOI has reached about 77 new achievements during the past Iranian year 1400 (from March 21, 2021, to Feb. 22, 2022).

"Among them are 29 achievements in the field of nuclear fuel, 19 achievements in the field of research and development, 15 achievements in the field of energy supply and 14 achievements in the field of radiation application," he cited.

Stating that Iran seeks exponential progress from now on, Eslami added that the country is planning on deepening industrial self-sufficiency by building 10- and 40-megawatt research reactors, as well as the first fully homegrown 360-megawatt nuclear power plant.

Eslami announced three strategic plans and stated that his organization plans to generate 10,000 MW of nuclear power, promote the application of radiation technologies, and construct a fully-indigenous 360,000 MW power plant in the southwestern Iranian city of Darkhovin.

In recent years, Iranian scientists have made remarkable progress in the field of peaceful nuclear technology despite the sanctions imposed by the West.

## 4 INTERNATIONAL

**Ukraine Says 50 Killed In Rocket Strike On Rail Evacuation Hub**



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## 8 SPORT

**UEFA Adopts New Regulations To Replace Financial Fair Play**



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## Monthly Non-Oil Export Increases 37% Year on Year

TEHRAN (MNA)- The value of Iran's non-oil export increased 37 percent during the last month of the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), as compared to the last month of its preceding year, the spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran's Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Ruhollah Latifi said that 10.117 million tons of commodities worth \$5.102 billion were exported in the last month of the past year, indicating a two-percent decline in terms of weight.

The official further put Iran's non-oil trade at 14.539 million tons valued at \$11.538 billion in the said month, of which 4.422 million worth \$6.436 billion was import.

As previously announced by the IRICA head, the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 38 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1400, as compared to its previous year.

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## Pakistan Unveils Action Plan for Barter Trade With Iran

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan government notified procedure to launch barter trade with Iran on Friday, announcing that the trade would be settled on net-off basis.

Customs would introduce a Special Goods Declaration (GD) code namely 'BT' for barter trade in WeBoC to record transactions and keep accounts, Ministry of Commerce (MoC) said.

The ministry disclosed the action plan for barter trade between Pakistan and Iran for a first through Quetta Chamber of Commerce & Industry (QCCI) and Zahidan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ZCCI) in Iran.

The notification said QCCI would establish a barter trade cell for documentation and monitoring, and open a bank account for domestic payments in Pakistani rupees against bartered goods. It will also register exporters and importers for barter trader.

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## U.S. Should Make Political Decisions to Iran Legitimate Concerns

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian says the United States should make political decisions as soon as possible and actively respond to the legitimate concerns of the Iranian side if it wants a revival of the 2015 Iran deal through the Vienna negotiations.

Speaking at a press briefing in the Chinese capital city of Beijing on Friday, Zhao said negotiations on reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - as the deal is called - have entered the final stage, with all parties having reached a consensus on most of the issues while only a few remain to be resolved.

He said China believes that there is no better alternative to the JCPOA.

"At this final phase, it is ever more important that all parties boost confidence, step up diplomatic efforts, facilitate a smooth conclusion of the negotiations and avoid letting previous efforts come to naught," the Chinese diplomat said.

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انتخاب برترین قاری،  
حافظ، مرتل مردمی

۱۴۰۰

هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ  
(ششمین فجر تلاوت)  
زمان برگزاری ۲۶ فروردین ۱۴۰۱  
محل برگزاری تالار وحدت

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## Leader Donates 10b Rials for Release of Needy Prisoners

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei has donated 10 billion rials to the Blood Money (Diya) Organisation to help the needy prisoners who have committed involuntary crimes.

Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei Khamenei donated 10 billion rials to the Diya (Blood Money) organization to secure the freedom of prisoners who cannot afford to pay their debts.

The donation was made during a ceremony held by the Iranian Blood Money (Diya) Organization which is dubbed Golrizen. It is a nationwide event attended by people who would like to provide diya or blood money to help needy inmates.

## Kuwait Ready for Talks With Iran on Exploitation of Joint Fields

**IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK**

**TEHRAN - The foreign minister of Kuwait expressed his country's readiness to resume the legal negotiations with Iran about demarcation of the maritime boundaries and exploitation of the joint oil and gas fields.**

In a telephone conversation on Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al-Sabah talked about various bilateral and regional issues.

Congratulating the Iranian government and people on the holy month of Ramadan, the top Kuwaiti diplomat underscored his country's determination to expand relations with the Islamic Republic.

In response to a question about the need to demarcate the maritime border and to use the common fields by the two countries, Al-Sabah announced Kuwait's readiness to resume legal talks with Iran over the issue, the Foreign Ministry's website reported.

He also expressed hope that the ceasefire in Yemen would hold and pave the way for talks between the Yemeni factions and the resolution of the Yemen crisis.

The Kuwaiti foreign minister also invited Amirabdollahian to visit Kuwait for talks



over the trend of developing bilateral ties and regional developments, reaffirming Kuwait's support for regional dialogue.

For his part, Amirabdollahian declared Iran's readiness for enhancing bilateral ties with Kuwait and for regional talks.

He underlined that the government of Iran, within the framework of its policy to develop ties with neighbors in all areas, stresses practical regional cooperation.

"We believe that regional cooperation benefits regional security, progress and development," Amirabdollahian stated.

The Iranian foreign minister also referred to the ceasefire in Yemen, saying Iran welcomes the truce and stresses the need for the full removal of the siege on Yemen and for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Arab country.

Amirabdollahian also outlined the latest state of the Vienna talks on the removal of anti-Iran sanctions and revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

## Israel Racism and Repression Root Causes of Tensions

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said racism, repression, carnage, incarceration, massive deprivation and daily humiliation of the oppressed Palestinian people and also the naked terror by the apartheid Zionist regime are the root-causes of all tensions in the occupied territories.

Reacting to the recent developments in occupied Palestine, Khatibzadeh said the defenseless people of Palestine have a legitimate, clear and natural right to fight against the occupiers in response to the repeated desecrations of the scared sites of al-Quds by the Zionists and the usurper regime of Israel's crimes and aggression against people who face harsh hardships and deprivation in the holy city of al-Quds and other Palestinian territories.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman reaffirmed the Islamic Republic of Iran's support for the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people's fight for freedom.

Khatibzadeh urged all nations, governments and international bodies to move toward providing the Palestinian people with security in line with the principle of legitimate defense against occupation and terrorist activities by the apartheid Zionist regime and to prevent the aggression and brutal crimes of Zionists in Palestine.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said the only solution to the Palestine crisis is to hold a referendum with the participation of the real residents of Palestine.

Khatibzadeh noted that given the defiant, law-evading and pledge-breaking nature of the fake Zionist regime, resistance is the only choice of the occupied nation of Palestine to force this occupying regime to accept a democratic solution for the liberation of the holy city of al-Quds and the determination of the fate of Palestine.

## Zionists Turn to Religious Conflict Between Shias, Sunnis

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Intelligence Minister says that the Zionist regime is trying to create ethnic and religious conflict between Shias and Sunnis in Iran.

Referring to the recent terrorist acts that took place in the holy shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad, Esmail Khatib said that one of the centers of interest for Takfiris [to do terrorist acts] is religious places.

Such a terrorist act that took place in Imam Reza's holy shrine shows resentment of takfiri groups, he added. "Creating ethnic and religious conflict between Shias and Sunnis and other ethnicities is to divert public opinion from the crimes of the Zionist regime. They are trying to create new security problems in Iran by using

the media and technological atmosphere, and it is necessary for the clerics, intellectuals and individuals to neutralize these seditions with vigilance."

"The Zionist regime is trying to play the role of the regional gendarmerie with the support of the global arrogance and some Arab countries, whose efforts have been thwarted by the martyrdom and jihadi actions of the Palestinians," the minister noted.

A man with knife attacked the seminary students at Imam Reza shrine in the holy city of Mashhad in northeast Iran on Tuesday afternoon which led to the killing of a seminary student and injuring three seminary students.

## Iran, Serbia Art Universities to Expand Cooperation

TEHRAN (IP) - In a meeting between the Ambassador of Iran to Serbia and the President of the Belgrade University of Arts, the development of cooperation between the two universities was emphasized.

Iran and Serbia have good potential to increase cooperation in various sectors, including agriculture, industry, mining, construction, energy, science, petrochemicals, tourism, and culture.

In Serbia, Iran's Rashid Hassanpour met with the President of the Belgrade University of the Arts, Professor Marjana Nikolic, as well as the chancellors of the Music, Applied Arts, Drawing Arts, and Dramatic Arts faculties. During the meeting, Hassanpour stressed a signing of a memorandum of understanding to expand the academic cooperation and the development of a framework to sustain the bilateral ties further.

Nikolic, for her part, said there was cooperation between Iran and the Belgrade University of Arts.

## Trade of Mining Companies' Shares at Stock Market Up 71%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The total sales of the shares of Iran's major mining companies through the stock market reached 5.538 quadrillion rials (about \$20.67 billion) in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), to register a 71-percent rise year on year, IRNA reported.

As reported, the mentioned companies accounted for 21 percent of the total shares sold on the stock market in the mentioned year.

Mobarakeh Steel Company, National Iranian Copper Industry Company (NICIC), Khuzestan Steel, Gol Gohar Company, Esfahan Steel Company, Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company, Hormozgan Steel Company, South Kaveh Steel Company, Khorasan Steel and Iran Aluminum were the top companies in this regard, respectively.

Having 68 different types of minerals, Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries across the globe. In this regard, the Iranian government has been seriously

pursuing several programs for promoting the mining sector as a major contributor to the country's economic growth.

Iran's proven iron ore reserves are 2.7 billion tons, while the country's copper reserves are 2.6 billion tons. The country also has 11 million tons of zinc reserves.

The total proven reserves of Iran's mines are estimated at about 60 billion tons, which is expected to reach more than 100 billion tons with the implementation of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's exploration programs over 500,000 square kilometers of new mineral zones.

Back in November 2021, the deputy head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA)'s Mines and Mining Industries Committee said the country's mining sector requires \$50 billion-\$70 billion of investment to reach a proper development level.

## Tehran Air Quality in Red Zone, Unhealthy for All

TEHRAN (IFP) - Tehran Air Quality Control Company said on Saturday that the index was 177 which is unhealthy for all groups.

It advised people with heart or lung disease, the elderly and children to avoid prolonged or strenuous outdoor activities, and others to reduce them.

The Iranian capital had the worst air quality index in the world on Friday followed by Beijing and Pakistan's Lahore.

Droughts in the Middle East region and dust storms coming from the west have contributed to the growing air pollution problem in Iran.

## Home Appliances Production Up

TEHRAN (MNA) - The manufacturing of home appliances rose 7.6 percent in the 11-month period from March 21, 2021 to February 19, 2022, as compared to the same period of time in the preceding year, according to the data released by Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry.

The ministry data show that 5,194,400 sets of home appliances were manufactured in the mentioned 11-month period, while the figure was 4,588,300 in the same time span of the preceding year.

Back in April 2021, Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki had said that considering the Iranian home appliance industry's infrastructure and capacities, the country will be able to become an exporter of such products in the near future because most of the raw materials needed by the mentioned sector are produced domestically.

Stating that the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry will definitely support domestic manufacturers and national brands, the official added: "Today we have the necessary manpower, knowledge, and infrastructure in the field, so there is no reason to look for foreign sources to meet the country's demands."

## IME Enjoys Higher Weekly Records In Value and Volume of Trades

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 1,949,000 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$734m, posting growths of 25% in volume and 91% in value of trades compared to the figures of the previous week.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 1,672,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$525m.

Commodities sold on this floor included 911,902 tons of cement, 477,382 tons of steel, 180,000 tons of iron ore, 9,200 tons of sponge iron, 7,260 tons of copper, 2,975 tons of aluminum, 720 tons of zinc, 200 tons of lead, 150 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 14 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME saw trade 269,115 tons of commodities on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor valued at more than \$201m.

The exchange customers purchased on this floor 98,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 76,504 tons of polymeric products, 38,430 tons of bitumen, 32,624 tons of chemicals, 19,990 tons of lube cut, 2,984 tons of base oil, 715 tons of sulfur, 200 tons of slops wax and 100 tons of argon.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 8,449 tons of commodities traded on it.



## President Calls for Persuading Public for 3rd Covid-Vaccine Jab

**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi stressed the need to explain and persuade the public opinion to inject a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine to prevent further outbreaks of the disease and to be serious about reopening schools and universities and providing face-to-face education.

Speaking on Saturday at the meeting of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus, President Raisi congratulated the World Health Day, and appreciated the efforts of the country's health care staff during the coronavirus pandemic and said that the measures taken cause peace and guarantee people's health.

The President called public health the main priority of the Popular Government from the beginning of its office, and while expressing satisfaction with the effect of public COVID-19 vaccination in reducing cases and mortality, called on the healthcare staff, doctors, the media and others who hold podiums to encourage the people to receive the third dose of the vaccine.

Raisi emphasized, "The government's policy is to persuade public opinion and we believe that if the importance of the issue is well explained to the people and they are convinced, they will surely follow the recommendations of the country's health officials".

He continued by emphasizing the need to continue face-to-face education in the country's educational centers, saying, "The closure of schools and universities has irreparable damages, the most important of which is less academic knowledge".

Raisi also stressed the need to pay attention to health protocols in schools and said, "If a student has symptoms of the disease, it is not necessary to attend class, but this issue should not cause the school to be closed and disrupt the education of other students".

By emphasizing on monitoring and controlling the price of medicine, he further said, "The price of medicine should not increase, but this issue cannot be solved by merely talking and requires serious monitoring and dealing with possible violations".

In another part of his speech, referring to the 50% increase in Nowruz trips and the 23% decrease in fatal accidents in the country, Raisi thanked all those involved in creating order and security and service providers in this field and worked hard and planned to reduce accidents as much as possible.

The President said, "What we saw in the Nowruz trips is a good record that shows the increase of vitality, security and protection of people's lives and the efforts and activities of all related agencies".





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:51
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:09
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:36

62. "But he did lead astray a great multitude of you. Did ye not, then, understand?"  
63. "This is the Hell of which ye were (repeatedly) warned!"

Surah 36. Ya-sin ( 62 - 63 )

## Australia Ready to Cooperate With Iran in Fight Against Terrorism

**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

**TEHRAN - Australia's Ambassador to Tehran Lyndall Sachs said in this central Iranian city on Saturday that her country is ready to cooperate with Iran to fight terrorism.**

Sachs made the remarks in a meeting with Governor General of Yazd Mehran Fatemi. Speaking about the latest developments in Iran's neighboring country of Afghanistan, Sachs appreciated Iran's generosity to the nationals of Afghanistan, saying that Canberra and Tehran have the same concern about Taliban. She then announced readiness of Australia to help Iran to combat terrorism.

For his part, Yazd's governor general said that Iran has been open for millions of Afghan refugees for over four decades as if they were Iranians' siblings.

He went on to say that Iran has been doing so due to religious guidelines and the importance emphasized by Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

In a related developments, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic



Republic of Iran to the United Nations Majid Takht Ravanchi said in late January "While the United States' inhumane sanctions have created tremendous difficulties for our government and people, various services including education, health, medical treatment, vocational training, and employment are being provided to Afghan people living in Iran, with minimal assistance from the international community."

As Fatemi noted, about 300,000 people from Afghanistan are living in Yazd.

He hoped that further support be extended to provide more favorable situation for the Afghan refugees.

On April 1, 2022, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi announced that over four million Afghan people are Iran's guests despite the claim made by the Europe over offering help for them.

## Iran Securing Its Share In Oil Market

TEHRAN (IFP) - The secretary of the Iranian parliament's energy commission says Iran is seeking to secure its share of the oil market through its energy diplomacy.

Hossein Hosseinzadeh also said the performance of the Oil Ministry in the 13th government has been good and that the Raisi administration has made many positive moves in the oil field.

He noted that under Raisi's presidency, oil sales have more than doubled and Iran's oil revenues have also increased accordingly.

Hosseinzadeh said Iran has held very useful consultations with Pakistan, Iraq, Oman, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the energy field and that the negotiations will produce positive results in the near future.

Hosseinzadeh also spoke about Iran's energy swap deal with Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, attributing this achievement to the energy diplomacy under the Raisi administration.

He said Iran is now ready to do 40 million cubic meters of gas swap daily.

He said Iran has also held talks with Russia over energy swap and it hopes that such contracts will expand so that the oil and gas industries will play a more prominent role in the economic development of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The value of trade between Iran and the EAEU members reached \$5.643 billion during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), registering a 66-percent rise compared to the figure for the preceding year.

According to Spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Ruhollah Latifi, the weight of Iran-EAEU trade in the mentioned year stood at over 13.127 million tons which was also 51 percent more than the previous year.

Iran exported 2.77 million tons of commodities worth over \$1.170 billion to the mentioned union to register a 3.5 percent increase in terms of weight and 12 percent growth in terms of value.

After several years of negotiations, Iran and EAEU finally reached a PTA in 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items are subject to preferential tariffs. The PTA came into effect on October 27, 2019.

As the agreement was designed to be in effect for three years, it is to expire in October this year. For this reason, the parties have recently begun technical and expert negotiations to upgrade the PTA to an FTA.

In this regard, Iran and the EAEU held their first round of negotiations on the matter in Tehran on July 19, 2021. According to Hamid Zadboum, the former TPO head, the two sides have agreed upon most terms related to the outlines of the PTA; the partner countries have reached an agreement to gradually remove tariffs and duties on most imports and exports in the near future to expand business opportunities.

Iran is a very important market in the region and the development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The preferential trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

## North-South Corridor Cuts Transit Cost, Time by 30%

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization said that activation of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) would reduce transportation costs and time from Eurasia to the Persian Gulf countries and India by 30 percent.

Alireza Peyman-pak met with the Minister of Eurasian Economic Council in Moscow on Friday as a part of President Ebrahim Raisi's efforts to accelerate making free trade agreement with Eurasia.

Peyman-pak said that they agreed to finalize the list of good by making a joint working group between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

The two sides emphasized final ratification of free trade agreement with Iran in the EAEU countries, the official said, adding that a joint working group was slated to be formed to provide the infrastructure required for the INSTC to be operational.

Iran can obtain billions of dollars in transit tariffs if the international corridor is activated, he noted.

## Iran Participates in Brazil's Tourism Expo

SAO PAULO (IP) - The 6th edition of the Latin America's Tourist Exhibition was held in Brazil's Sao Paulo with the participation of 50 companies from different countries including Iran.

The Iranian booths were visited well during the exhibition. Some visitors told Iran Press (IP) that Iran enjoyed numerous tourist places with highly-cultured people.

The Iranian ambassador to Brazil Hossein Gharibi told IP that Iran and Brazil's tourism was of a good history and that the Brazilian people were interested in visiting Iranian historical monuments and cultural attractions.

Gharibi says the 2022 Qatar World Cup could be a good opportunity to encourage Brazilian football fans to visit Iran's tourist places.

The Sixth edition of Latin American Travel and Tourism Exhibition was held from April 5 to 8, 2022, in the Brazilian city of Sao Paulo.

## MAPNA Is a Unique, Gigantic and Advanced Group

**IRAN MEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN - Minister of Health and Medical Education Dr. Bahram Einollahi paid a visit to the plants of MAPNA Group where he got acquainted with different sections of the group and production of equipment as well as the achievements and capabilities of the group.

During the visit, the CEO of MAPNA Group Mr. Abbas Aliabadi announced the plans of the group for offering the capacity of gigantic MAPNA in the health sector of the country. He stipulated that today many of the complicated medical equipment to the implants are manufactured in the world in companies like MAPNA.

He then reminded the joint cooperation between MAPNA and the health ministry, adding that soon the new x-ray screening equipment and advanced implants will be unveiled by the group and it will announce good news to the public.

During the visit, for the first time the project for producing medical implants for knees, joints and perlvls based on the international standards was presented in the MAPNA plants. With its implementation, the final cost of these products will decrease by 50%. Medical implements enjoy high technologies and only around 10 countries in the world are able to design and produce them.

Health Minister Einollahi, for his part, pointed to the slogan of the year as Year of Production, Knowledge-Based and Job Creation and said it will be a roadmap for materializing the domestic production achievements.

He expressed his satisfaction during the visit of the MAPNA Group plants and said MAPNA has continued non-stop efforts for manufacture and provision of medical equipment like MRI and CT Scan machines, and soon the ministry will sign agreements with the



group in order to witness rise in job creation by the knowledge-based companies and medical sciences universities with MAPNA Group.

He also hailed the efforts of domestic experts like in MAPNA in this field which help the medical sector.

## Exploration, Extraction of Iron Ore in Any Depth Has Economic Justification

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and Head of Board of Directors of Iranian Mines, Mining Industries Development and Renovation (IMIDRO) Mr. Vajiollah Jaafari during his visit from Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Complex in Yazd emphasized the necessity for access to new iron ore resources in the country.

Jaafari said that in the current condition of the domestic and global market, the issue of exploration and extraction of iron ore is completely an economy wise and cost effective and all should take action in this regard.

He then hailed the effective activities of Chadormalu and role of it in the national economic development and emphasized his support from any project which leads to creation of value added in the production process and profitability of the companies.

Then the CEO of Chadormalu Company Eng. Naser Taghizadeh briefed Mr. Jaafari if the performance of the country in the past year and pointed to some hurdles in way of implementing the developmental projects of the company like delay in executive operation of the authorized projects due to the environmental issues and called for removal of hurdles in way of implementation of the developmental projects of Chadormalu Company.

## New Head of IDRO Appointed

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN - Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin has in a decree appointed Ali Nabavi as the 21st head of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO).



Fatemi Amin, who is the Chairman of IDRO's General Assembly, appointed Nabavi to the position according to a resolution approved during the extraordinary general assembly meeting of the organization which was attended by the ministers of economy, defense, energy, science, and labor as well as the vice president and chairman of the Planning and Budget Organization.

Nabavi, who has been also a board member at IDRO, was previously the industry minister's special assistant for corporate affairs.

He has also served as the chairman of the board of directors of Mobarakeh Steel Company, secretary of the Industry Ministry's Finance Working Group, and the director of the Energy Program of the mentioned ministry.

Nabavi is a Amir Kabir Industrial University graduate.

## Investors Invited to Boost Knowledge-Based Production, Job Creations

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN - Advisor to President and Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones Mr. Saeed Mohammad in meeting with some distinguished investors of the country called them for the launch of production and offering services in the free zones of the country.



In the meeting which was held in collaboration with Iran Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Mohammad emphasized offering investment opportunities in the free zones and acquaintance with the capacities and capabilities of investors. He went on to say that all efforts of the secretariat of the council are aimed at removing hurdles in way of investment and by the way by revealing the challenges of the free zones in the body of the government, it tries the problems of this field to be resolved.

Mohammad admitted that there are a large number of hurdles in way of the producers and for this reason last year the Supreme Leader named the year as year of removal of hurdles in way of production which was totally in accordance with the conditions because many investors had reached this conclusion that they can face less challenges if they invest in other countries than Iran and for this reason removal of sanctions in way of the production was put on agenda.

He admitted that several laws have been approved in the past which have made difficult production process and its reforms will take time and the council is working to explain the nature of free zones to avoid approval of other laws.

He reiterated that the council is determined to implement those laws which have been ignored in order to open the main ties in free zones of the country and a committee has been formed to make decision on the Article 65 of permanent regulations.





## Slovakia Has Given S-300 Air Defense System to Ukraine

BRATISLOVA (Dispatches) - Prime Minister Eduard Heger says Slovakia has given its S-300 air defence system to Ukraine to help it defend against Russian attacks.

In a post on Facebook on Friday, Heger said the donation of the Soviet-made anti-aircraft batteries did not mean that the European Union and NATO member had joined the conflict with Russia, which invaded neighbouring Ukraine on February 24.

"I can confirm that the Slovak Republic has donated the S-300 air defence system to Ukraine, following Ukraine's request for assistance," Heger wrote.



## Russia Admits Significant Losses of Troops in Ukraine

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - In a rare admission, the Kremlin said Russia has suffered "significant losses" in Ukraine amounting to a "huge tragedy" for the country.

"Yes, we have significant losses of troops and it is a huge tragedy for us," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Sky News.

Russia launched its military offensive against Ukraine on February 24, causing the world's fastest refugee crisis - with more than 4.3 million fleeing to neighbouring countries.

At least 1,500 civilians have been killed so far, according to the United Nations, which fears the real number to be far higher.



## Ukraine Says 50 Killed in Rocket Strike on Rail Evacuation Hub



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine said at least 50 people were killed on Friday and many more wounded in a rocket strike at a railway station packed with civilians fleeing the threat of a major Russian offensive in the country's east.

As regional authorities scrambled to evacuate the vulnerable, European Union leaders visited Kyiv to offer President Volodymyr Zelenskyy support and assure him there would be a path to EU membership for Ukraine.

Zelenskyy called the strike on the station in Kramatorsk in the eastern region of Donetsk a deliberate attack on civilians. The town's mayor estimated that about 4,000 people were gathered there at the time.

Regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said the station was hit by a Tochka U short-range ballistic missile containing cluster munitions, which explode in mid-air, spraying small lethal bomblets over a wider area.

"They wanted to sow panic and fear, they wanted to take as many civilians as possible," he said, adding that evacuations by rail from the region, where Ukrainian officials are anticipating a new thrust by Russian forces, would continue.

Reuters was unable to verify what happened in Kramatorsk.

The use of cluster munitions is banned under a 2008 convention. Russia has not signed it but has previously denied using such armaments in Ukraine.

The Russian defense ministry was quoted by RIA news agency as saying the missiles said to have struck the station were used only by Ukraine's military and that Russia's armed forces had no targets assigned in Kramatorsk on Friday.

Zelenskyy said no Ukrainian troops were at the station. "Russian forces (fired) on an ordinary train station, on ordinary people," he told Finland's parliament in a video address.

Kramatorsk Mayor Oleksander Honcharenko said some victims of the attack had lost a leg or arm. "The hospitals are carrying out about 40 operations simultaneously," he told an online briefing.

The White House decried the "horrific and devastating images" of the attack which EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, in Kyiv with the head of the EU executive Ursula von der Leyen, condemned on Twitter as "yet another attempt to close escape routes for those fleeing this unjustified war."

Ukrainian officials say Russia's military is regrouping after withdrawing eastwards from the zone around Kyiv, where a forensics team on Friday began exhuming a mass grave in the town of Bucha.

The grave's discovery last week galvanised the West into toughening sanctions against Russia and speeding up arms deliveries to Ukraine.

Since Russian troops pulled back from Bucha, Ukrainian officials say hundreds of dead civilians have been found there.

Visiting the town on Friday, von der Leyen said it had witnessed the "unthinkable" and that said the EU would do everything to support Ukraine in securing membership of the bloc.

## Macron Hits Out At Racist Le Pen

PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday accused his far-right challenger Marine Le Pen of lying to voters about her "racist" platform, as the gap in voter support for the two political rivals narrows down ever more.

The race appears to be coming down to the two finalists of the 2017 election. While Macron, who entered the race as the clear favorite, appears to have lost ground in recent polls, far-right candidate Le Pen continues on her upward trend.

Macron so far has kept clear of any direct debate, the two have increasingly taken aim at each other from afar. And they were not mincing their words on Friday.

"There was a clear strategy (from Le Pen's camp) to hide what is brutal in her programme," Macron told Le Parisien in an interview published on Friday.

"Her fundamentals have not changed: It's a racist programme that aims to divide society and is very brutal."



## EU Adopts Fresh Sanctions Against Russia Including Coal Import Ban

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Union on Friday formally adopted its fifth package of sanctions against Russia since the country's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine, including bans on the import of coal, wood, chemicals and other products.

The measures also prevent many Russian vessels and trucks from accessing the EU, further crippling trade, and will ban all transactions with four Russian banks, including VTB.

The ban on coal imports will be fully effective from the second week of August. No new contracts can be signed from Friday, when sanctions are to be published in the EU's official journal.

Existing contracts will have to be terminated by the second week of August, meaning that Russia can continue to receive payments from the EU on coal exports until then.

"These latest sanctions were adopted following the atrocities committed by Russian armed forces in Bucha and other places under Russian occupation," EU's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, said in a statement.

The Kremlin has said that Western allegations Russian forces committed war crimes by executing civilians in the Ukrainian town of Bucha were a "monstrous forgery" aimed at denigrating the Russian army.

The coal ban alone is estimated by the Commission to be worth 8 billion euros a year in lost revenues for Russia. That is twice as big as the EU Commission's head Ursula von der Leyen had said on Tuesday.

In addition to coal, the new EU sanctions ban imports from Russia of many other commodities and products, including wood, rubber, cement, fertilisers, high-end seafood, such as caviar, and spirits, such as vodka, for a total additional value estimated in 5.5 billion euros (\$5.9 billion) a year.

The EU also restricted export to Russia of a number of products, including jet fuel, quantum computers, advanced semiconductors, high-end electronics, software, sensitive machinery and transportation equipment, for a total value of 10 billion euros a year.

## Crisis-Hit Sri Lanka Hikes Rates as Protests Spiral

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Cash-strapped Sri Lanka's central bank hiked interest rates by a record 700 basis points Friday as police fired tear gas at hundreds of students protesting about the economic crisis.

Severe shortages of food, fuel and electricity have led to widespread anti-government demonstrations with calls for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign.

The latest protests saw students try to march to the national parliament on Friday.

Elsewhere demonstrators nationwide carried placards demanding Rajapaksa step down over the country's worst economic crisis since independence in 1948.

Buddhist monks, who had largely led Rajapaksa's election bid in November 2019, were also seen joining demonstrations in the capital Colombo.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka said its benchmark lending rate had been raised to 14.5 percent to "stabilize the exchange rate" after the rupee tumbled over 35 percent in a month.

The rate for deposits was also increased by seven percentage points to 13.5 percent as reports said Sri Lanka's rupee was the worst performing currency in the world, edging out the Russian ruble.

The bank said the shock-treatment rate hike was due to its belief that the embattled island's inflation, which is already at record levels, could get worse.

The Colombo Consumer Price Index rose 18.7

percent in March while food inflation stood at more than 25 percent, but private analysts placed inflation at over 50 percent in the month.

International rating agencies have downgraded Sri Lanka as fears grow that it could default on its \$51 billion external debt after foreign reserves fell below \$2 billion at the end of March.

This week Rajapaksa appointed a panel of experts to organise a restructuring of foreign debt.

His government is preparing for bailout negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, and finance ministry officials told AFP the panel will prepare a programme for sovereign bond holders and other creditors to take a haircut. "What Sri Lanka is keen to do is avoid a hard default," a source from the ministry who requested anonymity told AFP.

"It will be a negotiated restructuring of the debt with the help of the IMF."

Meetings with the IMF are set to begin by next week but finance minister Basil Rajapaksa -- the president's brother -- resigned on Sunday night along with nearly the entire cabinet.

The country is still without a replacement, with his successor quitting after just one day in office.

Public anger is at fever pitch, and thousands of people were expected to take part on Saturday in what likely will be the biggest protest since the crisis began.



## Japan Ends Russian Coal Imports, Expels Diplomats

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan

said Friday it will end imports of Russian coal and announced the expulsion of eight of Moscow's diplomats over "war crimes" in Ukraine.

The move comes as Ukraine's allies step up pressure on Moscow after allegations that Russian troops killed civilians in areas around Kyiv.

"Russian troops have killed civilians and have attacked nuclear facilities, gravely violating international humanitarian law. These are war crimes that can never be forgiven," Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters.

"We will ban imports of Russian coal," he added, pledging to find alternatives and asking Japanese citizens for their "understanding and cooperation."

Japan imports around 11 percent of its coal from Russia, and the fuel remains a key plank of the country's power generation.

Kishida said Japan would, in line with other Group of Seven developed nations, work to decrease its reliance on other energy imports from Russia, which include oil and gas, but he gave no specific timeframe.

He also outlined fresh sanctions, including new asset freezes and a ban on imports from Russia, including machinery and vodka, and said Tokyo would back efforts to investigate Moscow's actions at the International Criminal Court.

Earlier, Japan's foreign ministry announced the expulsion of eight Russian diplomats from the embassy and trade office.

The decision does not affect Russia's ambassador Mikhail Yurievich Galuzin.

Japan has marched in lockstep with Western allies on sanctions against Russia, and has even welcomed several hundred Ukrainians fleeing the conflict despite generally accepting very few refugees.

Tokyo had complex relations with Moscow before the Ukrainian invasion and the two sides have yet to sign a post-World War II peace treaty.

Attempts to do so have been hampered by a long-running dispute over islands controlled by Russia, which calls them the Kurils.

Japan calls the islands the Northern Territories and has long sought to have them under Tokyo's control.







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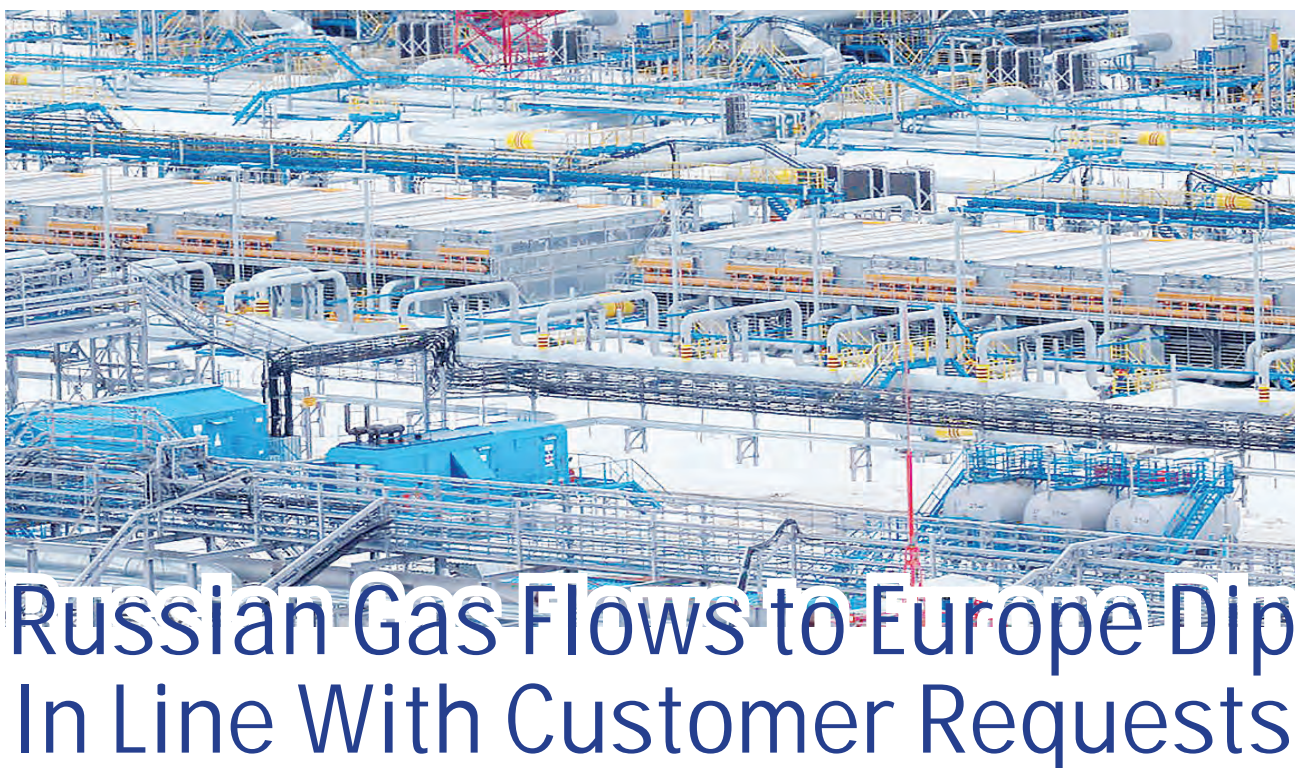
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## Sterling Falls to Its Lowest Since Mid-March Versus Dollar

LONDON (Dispatches) - Sterling fell to its lowest level since mid-March against a strengthening dollar while being close to its 2-week high versus the euro, with investors still focused on central banks' monetary tightening.

European Central Bank policymakers appeared keen to unwind stimulus at their March 10 meeting, with some pushing for even more action, the accounts of the gathering showed, without affecting bets on future rate hikes significantly. "The market's dovish repricing of BoE rate expectations has been contained," ING analysts said in a research note.



## Russian Gas Flows to Europe Dip In Line With Customer Requests

OSLO (Dispatches) - Russian gas deliveries to Europe via the Yamal-Europe pipeline reversed direction to flow from Germany to Poland and supplies via Ukraine also eased, all in line with requests from customers.

Gas flows switched to an eastward direction into Poland at the Mallnow metering point on the German-Polish border on Thursday morning after flowing westward overnight, data from pipeline operator Gascade showed.

The change is in line with nominations from shippers, with no requests for westward shipments for the rest of the day, the data showed.

Russia's Gazprom is continuing to supply gas to Europe via Ukraine in line with requests from European consumers, which dropped to 105.4 million cubic metres (mcm) from 108.4 mcm the previous day, according to news agency Interfax.

Nominations for flows into Slovakia from Ukraine via the Velke Kapusany border point were at 936,935 megawatt hours (MWh) per day on Thursday, down from 968,186 MWh/day on Wednesday, data from Slovakian operator TSO Eustream showed.

Flows to Germany through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline across the Baltic Sea were at 73,165,350 kWh/h on Thursday, little changed from the previous 24 hours.

The gas market remains concerned that flows of Russian gas, which accounts for some 40% of its supplies, could stop in reaction to the West imposing more sanctions on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine.

While shying away from sanctioning oil and gas so far, European Union envoys are set to approve a ban on Russian coal that would take full effect from mid-August.

Top EU diplomat Josep Borrell said the package could be passed on Thursday or Friday and that the EU will discuss an embargo on Russian oil as well.

Finland and Estonia have become the latest European member states to announce their intention to cut out Russian gas deliveries by planning a joint charter of a floating LNG terminal.

Lithuania has already announced it has stopped all Russian gas imports.

There are also still questions over how many countries may concede to a Russian request to pay for gas deliveries in roubles as of this month.

On Wednesday Hungary became the first EU member country to say it was prepared to pay in the Russian currency, with companies buying gas from Russian producer Gazprom awaiting guidance from their respective governments.

## Venezuela's Inflation Slows Down to Lowest in Almost a Decade

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela's inflation slowed down further to reach 1.4% in March, its lowest level in almost a decade, according to figures reported on Wednesday by the Central Bank.

The South American country's price index, which rose 2.9% in February, is showing a slower increase since President Nicolas Maduro's government began easing foreign exchange controls to allow a wider circulation of hard currency, leading to more stable prices.

The accumulated increase of prices in the last 12 months reached 284.4% at the end of March, while inflation in the first quarter was 11.4%, according to Reuters calculations based on official data, showing rising prices are still among the main problems affecting many families in the country.

Venezuela experienced hyperinflation until last year. Minimum wage in the country is the equivalent of \$30 per month. Inflation was pushed up in March by higher prices of communication and education services, according to the data.

The inflation's deceleration trend could be reversed following the implementation this month of a tax to operations in hard currency, a move by Maduro to boost the government's income. Venezuela's Finance Observatory this week reported problems to implement the tax by stores and companies, adding that the measure is creating ground for higher prices.



## IMF, Lebanon Reach Draft Funding Deal

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said it had reached a draft funding agreement with Lebanon - but that Beirut needed to enact a batch of economic reforms first before its board decided whether to approve the deal.

An IMF deal is widely seen as vital for Lebanon to begin exiting an economic meltdown that has devastated the country since 2019, freezing savers out of their deposits, sinking the currency, and causing poverty to soar, in the country's worst crisis since its 1975-90 civil war.

Thursday's staff-level agreement covers a 46-month extended fund facility, under which Lebanon has requested access to the equivalent of around \$3 billion, the IMF said in a statement.

But it is dependent on Beirut enacting reforms that include steps its ruling politicians have failed to deliver since the crisis erupted. While Lebanese leaders hailed the preliminary agreement and said they were ready to make it a success, some analysts doubted whether the politicians could deliver after more than two years of inaction.

Lebanese authorities had agreed, prior to the IMF board considering whether to approve the deal, to complete eight reform measures, the fund said. These include a plan to address huge losses in the financial system, which collapsed in 2019 due to massive public debts racked up by decades of corruption and waste.

Cabinet must approve a banking restructuring strategy that "recognizes and addresses up front the large losses in the sector, while protecting small depositors and limiting recourse to public resources", the fund said.

Cabinet must also approve a "fiscal and debt restructuring strategy, which is needed to restore debt sustainability". Lebanon defaulted on its sovereign debt, including \$31 billion in dollar bonds, in March 2020.

Other measures to be delivered included parliamentary approval of a reformed banking secrecy law, completion of an audit of the central bank's foreign asset position and "initiation of an externally assisted bank-by-bank evaluation for the 14 largest banks".

## India Trying to Stabilize Economic Transactions With Russia

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India's foreign minister said today the government is working to stabilize economic transactions with Russia, a day after India condemned killings of civilians in Ukraine and called for an independent probe.

S.Jaishankar told lawmakers in the Parliament that Russia continues to be a critical economic partner and efforts were underway to "stabilize economic transactions between India and Russia."

Russia is India's main supplier of defense hardware but overall annual trade is small, averaging about \$9 billion in the past few years, mainly fertilizer and some oil.

Official sources have earlier stated that

Indian government has been looking to establish a rupee-rouble trade system.

India's permanent representative to the United Nations, told a meeting of the Security Council that India condemned the killings of civilians in Ukraine's Bucha and called for an independent investigation.

Moscow has denied targeting civilians.

New Delhi has repeatedly called for an end to violence in Ukraine, but has abstained from various UN resolutions on the war as it balances its diplomatic ties with Moscow and the West.

Last month U.S. President Joe Biden said only India among the Quad group of countries was "somewhat shaky" in acting against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

While the other Quad countries — the United States, Japan and Australia — have sanctioned Russian entities or people, India has not imposed sanctions on its biggest supplier of military hardware.

Late last month, India's steel minister said is leaning toward continuing to import coking coal from Russia, seeming to buck a global trend to shun Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

Speaking about the Ukraine crisis, Jaishankar told lawmakers that India has chosen the "side of peace".

"This is our principled stand and has consistently guided our position in international forums and debates, including in the UN," he said, adding that no solution can be arrived at by shedding blood and at the cost of innocent lives.

A federal lawmaker from Modi's government said India must condemn the Russian invasion and welcomed the statement made by the Indian official at the UN.

"The Modi government's change of stance on the Russian human rights brutality in Ukraine — as stated by our UN Ambassador in the UNSC yesterday — is welcome. Better late than never," Subramanian Swamy said in a tweet.

## Sri Lanka Calls For \$1b Debt Restructure as Crisis Rages

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka must urgently seek funds from multilateral lenders and aim to restructure a debt payment due in July, its outgoing finance minister said, pleading for political stability amid the country's worst economic crisis in decades.

The opposition and some partners of the ruling coalition rejected calls this week for a unity government from President Gotabaya Rajapaksa after he disbanded his cabinet, hoping to quell weeks-long street protests over shortages of fuel, power, food and medicine.

With its foreign exchange reserves shrinking quickly, massive debt payments due and the rupee currency slumping, analysts say the government - controlled by Rajapaksa and his elder brother Mahinda, the prime minister - is running out of options.

Reserves dropped 16% to \$1.93 billion in March, central bank data showed on Thursday.

"We must look at how to structure the \$1 billion international sovereign bond payment maturing in July," said Ali Sabry, who submitted his resignation to Rajapaksa on Tuesday. "We must go to the IMF, there is no other solution that I can see."

Sabry was moved to finance from the justice ministry on Monday to replace President Rajapaksa's younger brother Basil Rajapaksa.

It was not immediately clear if Rajapaksa had accepted Sabry's resignation, submitted days ahead of scheduled talks with the IMF for emergency loans.

As the island nation attempts to fast-track the formulation of proposals to present to the IMF President Rajapaksa on Thursday appointed K.M.M. Siriwardana, a deputy governor at the central bank who previously worked with the Fund, as treasury secretary.

The \$1 billion bond maturing on July 25 was trading at 54 cents in the dollar, its lowest level since spring 2020 when the COVID-19 rout hit global financial markets, data from MarketAxess showed.

Other Sri Lankan dollar-denominated sovereign bonds traded at even more stressed levels, with most changing hands around 40 cents in the dollar.

"We must have political stability to find solutions to the financial crisis," Sabry said.

"We must discuss with the World Bank and we must have a bridge-financing plan with the ADB. If we don't have stability, who will conduct these talks?," he said, referring to the Philippines-based Asian Development Bank.

Opposition lawmakers continued to call for the president to step down. At least 41 parliamentarians withdrew from the ruling coalition this week, though they could still support the government in the house and the opposition has not called for a no-confidence vote.

## Italy Slashes Growth Outlook As Ukraine Weighs



ROME (Dispatches) - Italy slashed its growth estimate for this year as the war in Ukraine weighs on the economy, while confirming a previous budget deficit target of 5.6% of national output.

The Treasury's annual Economic and Financial Document (DEF) forecasts gross domestic product in the euro zone's third largest economy will grow by 3.1%, down from a 4.7% projection made last September.

For 2023, the government sees GDP growth of 2.4%, down from the previous target of 2.8%.

"It's clear the war has caused a weakening of the outlook," Prime Minister Mario Draghi told reporters after cabinet signed off on the targets. "Confidence has diminished a lot, consumers and companies see a less positive future."

The economy probably contracted by 0.5% in the first quarter, the DEF showed. It is expected to recover between April and June, the document said, while acknowledging mounting difficulties connected with events in Ukraine.

A lasting war "would have strong repercussions on inflation as well as on economic growth", it added.

In a worst-case scenario assuming an embargo on Russian gas and oil and serious shortages in supplies, the Treasury estimated growth of just 0.6% in 2022 and 0.4% next year.

Several independent bodies have already cut their GDP forecasts for Italy well below the government's. The Milan-based Ref think tank sees 2022 growth of 2.0%, while employers lobby Confindustria forecasts 1.9%.

Confindustria chief Carlo Bonomi has said the country is already facing recession, defined as two consecutive quarters of falling GDP. Draghi told reporters he may be right.

"Bonomi is seeing things as they are," he said. "At the moment you're more likely to be right by being pessimistic than by being optimistic."



## Iran, Russia Sign 1st MoU In Exhibition Industry

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The International Exhibitions Company of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Expocentre signed MoU in exhibition industry field.

The MoU was signed by Head of Iran International Exhibitions Company Hooman Razdar and Director General of Expocentre Alexey Vyalkin. Signing the MoU will help the two countries introduce their economic capacities.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Vyalkin said after signing the agreement that Iranian companies would have more active participation in Expocentre.

Accordingly, the two sides reached a good agreement on a joint venture and presenting knowledge-based products. Meanwhile, Razdar termed the MoU as the first and the most important one between the two sides. He referred to exchange of exhibition sites and integrated cooperation as the most important articles of the MoU.



## Turkey Fishermen Fear Mines in Black Sea

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish fisherman Sahin Afsut fears the worst: hitting a mine and “disappearing underwater in the blink of an eye”.

Like many fishermen in Rumelifeneri, a village set on the rocks of the Bosphorus in northern Istanbul, Afsut and his team remain in port since the discovery of a drifting mine last month in the Black Sea.

Fears grew after a second mine was found on March 28, which could have come from Ukraine where Russia launched an invasion in February.

A third stray mine was found Wednesday in the Black Sea off the town of Kefken in northwestern Turkey.

Turkish authorities fear an accident and believe the mines became unmoored from the Ukrainian coast during storms.

“If you hit (a mine), you’re finished,” says Afsut, wearing a grey cap in front of his small trawler from which he usually catches whiting, red mullet and anchovies.

He did not see the first mine two kilometres (1.2 miles) offshore, first discovered by a local fisherman but several others described the scene.

“It was large, like half a barrel. We watched from above there, the (special Turkish navy) units neutralised it,” says 55-year-old Ahmet Tarlaci who has been a fisherman for 43 years.

The Turkish navy warned five days before the first was found on March 26 of the risk of mines coming from Ukrainian waters.

But “the mines arrived quickly, even the Turkish armed forces were surprised,” Tarlaci says.

The Russian defense ministry last week said 420 mines -- 370 mines of them in the Black Sea -- were placed by Ukraine to protect its coast but around 10 had broken off.

Kyiv dismissed Moscow’s version of events, accusing the Russian navy of letting the mines wander to discredit Ukraine.

At Rumelifeneri port, where around 100 boats, from small fishing boats to 40-metre (131-foot) trawler boats were waiting Friday, “90 percent of people that we know have stopped” going out to sea, says fisherman Sefki Deniz, 42.

Turkish officials have banned fishing at night, and with the price of diesel reaching spectacular heights, many fishermen decided to end the fishing season three weeks ahead of time.

“We already have financial losses, there shouldn’t be any human losses,” says Deniz, wearing plastic boots and a blue fleece.

The fisherman regrets the little information provided by officials who say they cannot reveal how many mines there are, where they came from or how dangerous they may be.



“For the time being, (the mines) are not a problem, but we won’t let our guard down,” Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Friday.

“They speak now of 10 mines and what if the others wander off? The Black Sea is not a large sea, it’s like a lake,” says Deniz, despite 24-hour searches by minehunters in the area.

“Across from us, there is Ukraine, Russia: if the wind blows violently from the north, it’s only a question of time” before the mines arrive in Turkey’s waters, fears fishing captain Saban Ucar, 32.

The 30-40 metre (98-foot to 131-foot) fishing boats “have radars, sonars... but the 9-10 metre boats only have binoculars,” he says from a building overlooking the port.

Ucar was not born at the time, but the memory is still vivid in the village of two accidents in the 1980s caused by mines dating back to World War II.

“There was one that exploded at the port in 1983, five people from the village died. And in 1989, it happened at sea while lifting a net, the mine exploded and so did the boat: four people died.

“We never found their bodies,” says Deniz, one of the veterans at the port.

The fisherman now fears a mine will be able to make its way to the Bosphorus Strait used by 38,500 ships last year.

The strait, which crosses Istanbul, is in some places less than 700 metres (2,296 feet) wide.

“At sea, the risk (of an accident) is 10 percent,” Deniz says, adding: “In the Bosphorus, it’s 100 percent.”

## Increase in Atmospheric Methane Set New Record in 2021

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - For the second year running, US scientists observed record increases in the atmospheric concentration of the potent greenhouse gas methane, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said.

Methane, the second biggest contributor to global warming after carbon dioxide, is generated by the production, transport and use of fossil fuels, but also from the decay of organic matter in wetlands, and as a byproduct of ruminant digestion in agriculture.

At last year’s COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, participants agreed to a Global Methane Pledge to reduce methane emissions by 30 percent by 2030 -- but notable emitters including China, Russia, Iran and India have not signed on.

“Our data show that global emissions continue to move in the wrong direction at a rapid pace,” said NOAA administrator Rick Spinrad in a statement.

The annual increase in atmospheric methane during 2021 was 17 parts per billion (ppb), the largest rise recorded since systematic measurements began in 1983, said NOAA.

Across 2021, atmospheric methane levels averaged 1,895.7 ppb, around 162 percent greater than pre-industrial levels.

“We can no longer afford to delay urgent and effective action needed to address the cause of the problem -- greenhouse gas pollution,” Spinrad warned.

It’s estimated about 30 percent of methane comes from fossil fuel production -- making it a clear target for lessening the impacts of the climate crisis in the short term.



Meanwhile, carbon dioxide levels continued to increase at historically high rates.

NOAA found that the global surface average for carbon dioxide during 2021 was 414.7 parts per million (ppm), which is an increase of 2.66 ppm over the 2020 average.

Atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide are now comparable to where they were 4.3 million years ago, during the mid-Pliocene epoch.

At that time, the sea level was about 75 feet (23 meters) higher than today, the average temperature was 7 degrees Fahrenheit (4C) higher than pre-industrial times, and large forests occupied areas of the Arctic.

Methane is far less abundant but around 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere.

The “atmospheric residence time” of methane is approximately nine years, compared to thousands of years for carbon dioxide -- therefore controlling methane is critical to influencing the rate of climate change in the near future.

Methane also contributes to the formation of ozone at the ground level, which in turn is the main ingredient in smog and has harmful effects on the environment and people’s health.

Previous NOAA methane research indicated that biological sources of methane -- such as from wetlands -- are the main driver of increasing methane post-2006.

This is worrying because it may signal a feedback loop caused by more rain over tropical wetlands, which in turn generates yet more methane -- a cycle that would become largely outside of human control.

### Pakistan Unveils...

FROM PAGE 1

Export would be done on a permission letter by QCCI with quantum and value of goods. A confirmation that sufficient funds equivalent to value of export are available in QCCI bank account for barter trade will also be required. According to the notification, QCCI will make payment to Pakistani exporters in local currency on confirmation from ZCCI of receiving goods.

Similarly, import would be allowed on a QCCI permission letter with quantum and value of goods. Copies of export and import permissions would be shared by QCCI with concerned collector of customs, the notification said.

Value of goods bartered would be settled and declared in Pak rupees. QCCI would mention “Declared Value” in WeBoC data, and Customs would share BT Data on monthly basis with QCCI, it added.

Business chambers from both sides would reconcile barter trade stats and volume on quarterly basis to determine any outstanding amount, which could be netted off through import/export of goods or any other means. QCCI would also formulate a barter trade dispute resolution mechanism in consultation with ZCCI.

The notification stated that the government would have no liability from barter trade and QCCI could charge a minimum fee for services provided.

### Tehran Updates...

FROM PAGE 1

...“Act on Countering Violations of Human Rights and Adventurist and Terrorist Actions of the United States of America in the Region”, particularly, Articles 4 and 5, identifies and imposes sanctions as set forth in the above-mentioned Act on the following persons in connection with their involvement in terrorist acts, glorification and supporting terrorism and gross violations of human rights,” the statement read.

“The designated persons, as indicated, have played role in supporting, organizing, imposing, and also intensifying the imposition of the United States’ Unilateral Coercive Measures against the people and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and also in financing and supporting terrorist groups and terrorist acts against the latter and in supporting repressive acts of the Zionist regime of Israel in the region, in particular, against the Palestinian people,” it added.

The ministry slammed the US government for its coercive measures and deliberate infliction of harm against the people of Iran through “deprivation of access to medicine and medical equipment and services”, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ordeals resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and deprivation of the fundamental rights, it said, had “endangered the lives of millions of Iranians”, impacting their economic and social rights.

The ministry denounced such measures as a “flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of international law and fundamental human rights”, calling them “crime against humanity.”

“In addition, supporting, organizing and conducting terrorist acts as well as organizing, financing and providing material support including weapon, intelligence, and training to terrorist groups are in violation of international law and contravene international obligations undertaken in fighting terrorism,” the statement noted.

The ministry said the U.S., through unlawful acts carried out, facilitated, or operationalized by the following persons, had breached its international obligations.

“In view of the above, the Islamic Republic of Iran in conformity with its human rights obligations and obligations in combating terrorism and countering terrorism financing, in particular, terrorism perpetrated by the United States, imposes the sanctions on the said persons. The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates that the promulgations and application of Unilateral Coercive Measures is a stark violation of the fundamental principles of international law set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and a blatant transgression of international law and impede enjoyment of human rights,” the statement underlined.

“Accordingly, and taking into account the internationally wrongful acts of the United States, the sanctions delineated in the Act are imposed in compliance with the obligations of the Islamic Republic of Iran in countering Unilateral Coercive Measures and on a reciprocal basis,” it added

The ministry said the relevant authorities will take appropriate measures for effective implementation of the sanctions stipulated in the ‘Act on Countering Violations of Human Rights and Adventurist and Terrorist Actions of the United States of America in the Region’.

### Monthly Non-Oil...

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Alireza Moqadasi put the country’s non-oil trade at 162 million tons worth \$100 billion in the past year.

He said that Iran exported 122 million tons of non-oil products worth \$48 billion in the previous year, which was \$14 billion (41 percent) more than the figure for its preceding year.

The country’s non-oil trade record in 1400 was reached while the toughest sanctions were imposed on Iran, but thanks to God and the efforts of entrepreneurs, producers and the cooperation of foreign trade-related organizations, a historical record was achieved in the past year which was unprecedented in recent decades, the official underlined.

### U.S. Should Make...

FROM PAGE 1

“As the culprit of the Iranian nuclear crisis, the US should make political decisions as soon as possible and actively respond to the legitimate concerns of the Iranian side,” he added.

Zhao also said that China will continue to “participate in the negotiations constructively, help bring the JCPOA back to the normal track at an early date, uphold the international non-proliferation system and promote peace and stability in the Middle East.”

The remarks came days after U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he was not “overly optimistic” at the prospects of concluding the Vienna talks.

In an interview with MSNBC on Wednesday, Blinken warned that “time is getting extremely short to restore the JCPOA” but added that a successful conclusion of the talks would be in the interest of the United States.

Negotiations have been held in the Austrian capital since April last year to restore the JCPOA, which was ditched by former US President Donald Trump in May 2018.

## Stopped Press: Algeria Billionaire to Shut Liberte Newspaper



ALGIERS (Dispatches) - Algeria’s French-language newspaper Liberte will run its final edition next week, the newspaper announced Thursday, criticising the decision by its owner, the country’s richest man.

“After 30 years in existence, Liberte is being extinguished,” it said in an editorial.

The closure adds to an already difficult climate for journalism in Algeria, which is ranked one of the world’s worst countries for press freedom.

Liberte’s final press run will occur next Thursday, said the paper whose motto is: “The right to know and the duty to inform.”

“In just a few days, newspaper vendors, readers, advertisers and the institutions of the republic will be orphaned by a newspaper that had made its name as a reference for all viewpoints,” it wrote.

Algerian intellectuals and public figures had signed a petition urging its owner Issad Rebrab to change his mind, but to no avail. An appeal by the newspaper’s journalists also fell on deaf ears.

They had written Sunday that they did not understand why the newspaper was to be closed.

“The publishing company still has sufficient financial resources to allow it to continue to exist,” they wrote.

Forbes reported Thursday that Rebrab and his family “are the world’s second-richest Arabs, worth \$5.1 billion.”

Rebrab is the founder of Cevital, which owns one of the world’s biggest sugar refineries.

Liberte’s closure is “a victory for silence over speech and for violence over debate”, Algerian novelist Kamel Daoud wrote Thursday in the newspaper.

Algerian media went through something of a golden age after protests against the country’s one-party system in 1988, but several titles have closed since the turn of the millennium, mostly due to falling sales and advertising revenue.

Many cities in Algeria, Africa’s biggest country by surface area, lack access to hard copies of newspapers, meaning free news websites have largely taken their place.

Several journalists are in prison or facing trial, notably for defamation of political figures or because of social media posts.

The country ranks 146th out of 180 on the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Index.



## Berrettini to Miss Start of Clay Court Season

ROME (Dispatches) - Matteo Berrettini announced that he will miss out on next week's Monte Carlo Masters and further clay events in Madrid and Rome after hand surgery. The world number six revealed last week that he had undergone a minor operation on his right hand after deciding not to play at the Miami Open. "Following advice from the medical experts, my team and I have decided that it is crucial I do not put time pressure on my recovery process," the Italian said on Instagram.

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## Hamilton on Collision Course With F1 Chiefs Over Bling Ban

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Formula One drivers have been reminded that they are not allowed to wear jewellery while racing, prompting Lewis Hamilton to joke Friday he had piercings he can't take out. The ruling was included in the event notes for this week's Australian Grand Prix issued by new FIA race director Niels Wittich, who is in the role at Albert Park following the sacking of Michael Masi. It is not a new regulation, but reportedly follows some drivers being spotted wearing jewellery while in their cars.

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SPORTS

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# UEFA Adopts New Regulations to Replace Financial Fair Play

NYON (Dispatches) - UEFA approved new licensing and "sustainability" regulations to replace its existing Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules, allowing European clubs to make bigger losses than before while bringing in caps on spending on wages and transfers. As expected, European football's governing body decided to overhaul the FFP rules that were introduced in 2010 in order to reduce spiralling club debts across the continent. FFP's limitations had been exposed by the emergence of state-held superpowers like Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain, while huge losses incurred by the coronavirus pandemic left poorer clubs with little room for manoeuvre. "The biggest innovation will be the introduction of a squad cost rule to bring better cost control in relation to player wages and transfer costs," UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin announced following a meeting of the body's executive committee. UEFA will now allow clubs to report losses of 60 million euros (\$65.5m) over three years rather than 30 million euros previously, and the permitted figure will even reach 90 million euros for a club "in good financial health". However, that relaxation of the rules is combined with the new ceilings on wage spending. There was never any possibility of bringing in a specific salary cap like in North American sports because UEFA has 55 member countries and must contend with European Union and national labor and competition laws.

Yet under UEFA's new regulations clubs will be forced to limit spending on player and staff wages, transfers and agents fees to 70 percent of total revenues by 2025/26.

The ceiling will drop as current contracts expire: 90 percent of club income in 2023/24, followed by 80 percent the season after and then 70 percent.

"Before the pandemic, the average ratio was under 70 percent," said Andrea Traverso, UEFA's director of financial sustainability.

Then the health crisis led to losses over two seasons of about seven billion euros, causing that ratio to rise.



Ceferin said breaches of the new rules "will result in predefined financial penalties and sporting measures".

The size of the fines will depend on the extent to which clubs have crossed the threshold, with that money then redistributed among the well-behaved -- in line with the idea of a "luxury tax" championed in the past by Ceferin.

Serious or repeated breaches will lead to sporting punishments, with Traverso saying these could range from bans on using certain players and limits on squad sizes, to points deductions in the new-look Champions League group phase to be introduced from 2024. He added that discussions are ongoing about the possibility of teams being demoted from one European competition to another, for example from the Champions League to the Europa League.

The fate of FFP in its existing guise was sealed when Manchester City successfully appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in 2020 to have a two-year ban from European competition overturned.

Abu Dhabi-owned City had been accused of deliberately inflating the value of income from Emirati sponsors Etisalat and Etihad Airways to meet FFP regulations.

State-owned clubs such as City and Qatar-backed PSG may still find themselves in a position to spend far more than their rivals, despite the new 70 percent rule.

Meanwhile, traditional giants like Barcelona and Juventus -- two of the main backers of the failed European Super League project -- could see their ambitions still restricted by the need to reduce debts.

The new regulations come in at a time when elite-level football is dominated by a smaller and more select group of clubs than ever, but Traverso said improving competitive balance required more than just financial measures.

Now that UEFA has announced its new budgetary rules after months of consultations, he said the body was "going to open a new chapter and move on to other measures".

## Ten Hag Closes in on United Job

LONDON (Dispatches) - Erik ten Hag is the strong favorite to be named Manchester United's next full-time manager, dealing a crushing blow to the dreams of embattled Paris Saint-Germain coach Mauricio Pochettino, according to British media reports.

Both the BBC and the Daily Mail claim the 52-year-old Ajax manager is seen as fitting the profile the United board want for the man who they hope will restore the glory days the club enjoyed under Alex Ferguson.

The Mail says United held talks with Ajax -- whose chief executive is former United goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar -- at the end of last week about the conditions under which Ten Hag can leave.

His contract is up at the end of next season and would cost United around £1.6 million (RM8.8 million) to prise him away whereas PSG might demand a far larger sum for Pochettino to leave.

However, Pochettino's position at PSG is far from secure after a disappointing exit in the last 16 of the Champions League -- the barometer by which coaches at the Qatar-owned club are judged.

Ten Hag -- whose Ajax side were denied a place in the 2019 Champions League final in the final minute by Pochettino when he managed Tottenham -- has been interviewed by United and is said to have demanded backing from United to pursue his transfer targets.

## Tsonga to Retire After Roland Garros

PARIS (Dispatches) - Former world number five Jo-Wilfried Tsonga will play his final tournament at next month's French Open, he said, announcing his decision to bow out of the sport at his home Grand Slam. Tsonga, 36, has struggled with injuries in recent years and claimed only his second win since 2019 in February after missing almost the entire 2020 season with a back injury and posting a 1-8 record last year.

"My head tells me, 'But you can play all your life,' and at the same time your body reminds you that your abilities to surpass yourself are no longer there," Tsonga said in a video shared on his social media channels.

Tsonga finished runner-up at the Australian Open in 2008 and has reached another five Grand Slam semi-finals.

He has won 18 ATP titles, including two Masters 1000 tournaments, since turning professional in 2004 and also won an Olympic silver medal in doubles at the London Games in 2012.

"I hope that I will stay in shape before and be able to be who I always have been at this tournament," added Tsonga, referring to Roland Garros, which runs from May 22-June 5.

"The goal is to be myself, to be Jo-Wilfried Tsonga the tennis player... I have always set myself high goals to try to get what I can. For me, this will be the opportunity to do it one last time."

## Corinthians Ask Police for Protection After Goalkeeper Receives Death Threat

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches)- Brazilian club Corinthians asked police to ensure the safety of their players on Thursday after their goalkeeper received a death threat following a Copa Libertadores defeat in Bolivia.

Cassio said he had handed over an audio message to the police that was sent to his wife via social media.

In the message, published in local media, a man is heard to insult the goalkeeper and tells him to leave the club. The man warns: "It's a matter of time. I don't know what we'll do, kill, I don't know, but we are going to find you."

# Marquez Doesn't Remember Much of Indonesia Crash



AUSTIN (Dispatches) - Six-times MotoGP champion Marc Marquez does not remember much about his crash in Indonesia and will be cautious on his return to action at this weekend's Grand Prix of the Americas in Austin, Texas.

Honda rider Marquez, 29, did not race in Indonesia in March after a crash in the warm-up session at Mandalika left him with double vision. He also missed last weekend's race in Argentina.

"I don't remember a lot, I remember more from the video, from the images than what

I feel I remember," Marquez told reporters on Thursday. "The vision is fixed... but I arrive here not in the best way.

"After Mandalika it was a really hard week, but luckily for me the vision was much less affected than last time," added Marquez, who also suffered from double vision at the end of 2021 after a concussion in a training crash.

Marquez has won the Grand Prix of the Americas seven times in eight visits, including last year.

"The approach for this weekend cannot be the victory because I don't feel (like I can do it)," he said. "If I don't feel it then I don't push because then an unexpected crash will arrive like Indonesia.

"Even for Argentina, I was very close to coming but I didn't feel motivated and I didn't want to take that risk. I discussed it with the doctor and decided to stay home and relax... I just want to build up the confidence again."

## Man City to Unveil Aguero Statue Next Month

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester City will pay tribute to their all-time leading goalscorer Sergio Aguero by unveiling a statue of him outside the Etihad Stadium next month on the 10th anniversary of his goal that ended the club's 44-year wait for a league title.

City reversed a 2-1 deficit to beat Queens Park Rangers 3-2 on the final day of the 2011-12 season, scoring two goals in stoppage time, with Aguero netting the winner to clinch City's first Premier League title.

Aguero scored a club record 260 goals in 390 appearances during a decade-long association with City, helping them win four more Premier League trophies, one FA Cup and six League Cups.

He left City at the end of last season and joined Barcelona on a free transfer but the 33-year-old was forced to retire from soccer in December due to a heart condition.

Aguero's statue will be unveiled on May 13 as part of City's celebrations to mark the 10th anniversary of their first Premier League title.

City unveiled statues of Aguero's former team mates David Silva and Vincent Kompany in August.



## Alonso Targets Another 2 or 3 Years in F1

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Twice world champion Fernando Alonso is enjoying his comeback in Formula One and hopes to have another two or three years in the series, the Spaniard said.

Alonso returned at the start of last season following a two-year break after becoming disillusioned with the sport and took up his one-year contract extension with Alpine for this season.

Australian reserve driver Oscar Piastri is waiting for his chance but Alonso said he did not feel pressure to retain his seat.

"Obviously if I was 25 there would not be this talk," he told reporters at Albert Park on Friday ahead of the Australian Grand Prix.

"It's an age thing that people try to find a way for the young talents. But I think this is about performance."

The oldest driver in F1, Alonso finished 10th in the championship last season, seven points ahead of his 11th-placed French team mate Esteban Ocon.

"Last year, I think I did well. I finished slightly in front of Esteban," he said. "Let's see this year how the battle goes. This is about performance, not about age."

