

**The Chief Commander of IRGC Says The Weapon of Mass Destruction Has No Place in the Logic of Islam According to the Order of the Leader Of the Revolution, This Phrase Is Not A Tactic But the Rule of Islam**

# IRAN NEWS

**Russia's Trade Representative in Iran Rustam Ziganshin Says That The Volume of Trade Between Iran And Russia in 2021 Reached \$4 Billion Which is an Unprecedented Record for Their Bilateral Trade**

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## UN Urged to Scale Up Anti-Sanctions Efforts

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador to the United Nations calls on the world body's Department of Global Communications to ratchet up its efforts to inform the international community about the adverse effects of sanctions on the targeted countries.

Majid Takht Ravanchi made the remarks during a session of the UN's Committee on Information on Wednesday.

The official considered deployment of the coercive economic measures to be contrary to the principles of the international law and the humanitarian law that have been specified in the UN Charter. He, therefore, called on the UN department to increase its efforts to broadcast the negative consequences that the unilateral bans for the target nations.

Takht Ravanchi said that the sanctions had "both weakened [the trend of] economic growth in the target countries and come to prevent their access to basic medical equipment and materials by restricting access to overseas' financial resources."

Separately, the envoy denounced some countries' abuse of their monopoly of modern communication technologies towards "skewing the truth" about other countries, especially the developing nations.

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## Iran Backs Friendly Ties With Neighboring States



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi says Iran has always laid emphasis on the unity and integrity of neighboring Iraq, expressing hope for the formation of a powerful government in the Arab country.

In a phone call with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, the Iranian president said he hoped that Iraq's political process, which started with last year's parliamentary elections, would lead to the establishment of a strong government as soon as possible.

Kadhimi, for his part, offered congratulations to Raisi on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr and hailed Iran's support for his country. Iraq has so far failed to elect a new president due to a lack of quorum in the parliament, prolonging a bitter deadlock in Iraqi politics months after a general election considerably changed the make-up of the parliament.

Iraqi parliamentary elections were held on October 10 last year, the fifth in Iraq since the US-led invasion of the Arab country in 2003.

Meanwhile Raisi in a phone talk with the Emir of Kuwait hailed that country for adopting wise stances in confrontation with regional plots, and while recalling excellent bilateral ties in the past said that the two countries' high level ties need to be restored.

President Raisi in his phone talk with Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Sabah felicitated the Eid al-Fitr to him and the Kuwaiti nation and expressed hope the Eid's blessings will engulf the friendly neighboring country of Kuwait.

"Such occasions contribute to bringing closer the hearts of the Muslim nation and further strengthen their bonds of solidarity," added Raisi.

The president expressed hope to meet the Emir of Kuwait in Tehran soon, adding that increased visits of the two countries' officials can increase the existing potentials for evermore improving of bilateral ties and to implementing the reached agreements.

Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Sabah of Kuwait, for his part, congratulated the Eid al-Fitr to President Raisi and the Iranian nation, appreciating the new Iranian government's policy of broadening ties with the neighboring and friendly countries.

He also expressed hope to host President Raisi in Kuwait, saying that he agreed with the Iranian president that the visits of two countries' senior officials can lead to further broadening of ties and their deepening, thus serving mutual national interests.

Meanwhile Raisi on Tuesday in a telephone conversation with his Turkmen counterpart Serdar Berdimuhamedow that he was sure that the process of expansion of ties between the two countries would be accelerated in Berdimuhamedow's term of office.

President Raisi also congratulated the Turkmen President on the advent of Eid al-Fitr which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Expressing certainty that the process would be accelerated, Raisi in this telephone conversation told his counterpart that with his father Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow's measures during his term of office as president of Turkmenistan, interactions between Tehran and Ashgabat in various fields progressed well.

Berdimuhamedow, for his part, congratulated the President and the people of Iran on Eid al-Fitr and referred to the 30th anniversary of the establishment of relations between the two countries, adding that in recent years, ties between the two countries in all fields have been actively expanded and developed.

He also said that Turkmenistan is interested to accelerate broadening ties with Iran and that activating the joint economic cooperation commission between the two countries would certainly help achieve this goal.

## Iran Moves Ahead With \$500m South Pars Oil Development Deal

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran is moving ahead with a \$500-million contract for the production development and enhanced oil recovery from its strategically vital South Pars Oil Layer signed between the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), the Iranian Offshore Engineering and Construction Company, and an as-yet officially undisclosed foreign company.

"In this contract, for the first time, horizontal drilling with new foreign technologies and water injection will be used as one of the methods of production enhancement," said NIOC chief executive officer, Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr. "The two key points to understand about the [South Pars] Oil Layer is that it is likely to have a lot more oil in it than has been publicized by the [Petroleum Ministry] and even more importantly it has always been seen by the [Oil] Ministry as being a doorway for foreign firms to participate more deeply in the ongoing development of the [South Pars] Gas Field," one of the sources said. The South Pars non-associated natural gas field's 3,700 square kilometers (km) sector of the 9,700 square km basin shared with Qatar (in the form of the 6,000 square km North Field) holds an estimated 14.2 trillion cubic meters (tcm) of gas reserves in place plus 18 billion barrels of gas condensate. It already accounts for around 40 percent of Iran's total estimated 33.8 tcm of gas reserves and about 60 percent of its gas production, with this set to rise. It is so important to Iran's future prosperity and places in the world that it is regarded by the Islamic Republic as a core strategic project with the latest accurate information relating to it seen as a matter of national security.

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## Russian Carmaker Seeks Iran Help to Shore Up Production

TEHRAN (Moscow) - A leading Russian automaker has called for cooperation with Iranian parts manufacturers to supply it with critical vehicle components, Iran's official news agency IRNA has reported.

The Ukraine war has upended car production in Russia which is the eighth-largest automotive market in the world. Several global manufacturers have halted deliveries to Russia, while others have been forced to pause production due to a lack of parts.

The Russian carmaker, which IRNA did not identify, has sounded out Iranian parts and equipment manufacturers on the possibility of supplying its production lines with required products, a member of the Iranian Auto Parts Manufacturers Association (IAMPA)'s presiding board said.

"Given the prominent Russian automaker's demand for cooperation with Iranian parts manufacturers, companies that have the ability to supply the Russian side in terms of quality and quantity of production, can try their luck for a presence in the market of this northern neighbor," Hossein Bahrainian said.

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## Sweden's Trial of Iranian Citizen Unlawful, Unfair

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi has lambasted as "unlawful and unfair" the trial of a former Iranian official in Sweden over alleged rights abuses.

Gharibabadi was quoted by Iran's official IRNA news agency as making the remarks after Swedish prosecutors requested the maximum penalty of life imprisonment for Hamid Nouri, accusing the former Iranian judiciary official of prisoner abuse in 1988.

The charges against Nouri stem from accusations leveled against him by members of anti-Iran terrorist Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO).

He was arrested upon arrival in Sweden at Stockholm Airport in 2019 and was immediately imprisoned. Nouri, now 61, has been held in solitary confinement for over two years and his family has not been allowed to visit him in prison.

His accusers allege that Nouri was involved in the execution and torture of MKO members in 1988. Nouri vehemently rejects the allegations.

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## Tehran, Caracas Discusses Energy Cooperation

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Iran's oil minister Javad Owji met with Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in Caracas on Monday and discussed ways to expand energy cooperation between the two countries.

In a Twitter post, Maduro described the meeting as "productive", which he said was aimed to "deepen the ties of brotherhood and cooperation (with Iran), (especially) in energy matters".

Owji, heading a high-level delegation of more than a dozen officials, arrived in Caracas on Saturday in a visit deemed significant for Iran-Venezuela relations and efforts to neutralize the impact of US sanctions.

Owji met his Venezuelan counterpart Tareck El Aissami to discuss ways to "overcome" the effects of harsh sanctions imposed on both the countries by the United States.

A statement by the Venezuelan oil ministry said the two officials discussed "the construction of routes and mechanisms to overcome the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the US government and allied countries".

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## Tehran Refutes Israel's Fake News

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Recent reports claiming that the Mossad spy agency has questioned a member of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) "in Iranian territory" are attempts in vain by the Israeli regime to distract attention from its atrocities against Palestinians, an outlet affiliated to Iran's top security body says.

Israeli media reported on Saturday that the Mossad detained and questioned a member of the IRGC in Iranian territory over his alleged involvement in an attempt to assassinate an Israeli diplomat in Turkey.

They claimed that the IRGC member admitted to Mossad agents during an interrogation at his home in Iran that he was sent to target the Israeli diplomat, as well as an American general stationed in Germany and a journalist in France.

"The Zionist regime cannot stir up a media frenzy and employ overused methods to divert public attention away from its security gaps within the occupied territories, which unveil a new page of the inefficiency of the regime's intelligence-security apparatus, and the obvious capability of the Resistance Front in various dimensions," Nour News affiliated to Iran's Supreme National Security Council said.

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# Leader, President to Receive Teachers

TEHRAN (IP) – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and the country's president Seyed Ebrahim Raisi are scheduled to meet with teachers this week.

On the occasion of Teacher's Week, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, will receive teachers on Wednesday, May 11th, 2022. Also, on Tuesday, May 10th, 2022, the teachers will meet with Iranian President Raisi.

## Tehran, Jakarta Stress Deepening Ties in Various Fields

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - The Presidents of Iran and Indonesia have stressed the need for joint efforts to realize diverse capacities available in the two countries and to improve the level of bilateral interaction.**

In a phone call on Wednesday, Ebrahim Raisi congratulated Indonesian President Joko Widodo and the people of his country on Eid al-Fitr and expressed hope that the great nation and government of Indonesia and all the nations of the world enjoy peace and security.

Referring to the various capacities available in the two countries, the President added, "By joint efforts to activate these capacities, the relations between the two countries can be developed in all fields".

"The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to enhance its relations with the priority of friendly countries in the regional and international fields," he said.

Raisi also referred to the importance of the Palestinian issue in the World of Islam, saying, "Islamic countries must be cohesive and united in defending the combat of the Palestinian people".

For his part, the Indonesian President congratulated the President and the people of Iran on Eid al-Fitr, emphasizing his country's interest in developing bilateral, regional, and international cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially in the field of energy and health.



Widodo stated, "In addition to common cultural grounds, Iran and Indonesia also have close views on regional and international issues, and both support the aspirations of the Palestinian people".

Meanwhile earlier Raisi through a telephone conversation invited his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon to visit Iran.

Such a visit will be effective in upgrading the level of regional and bilateral interactions, President Raisi said over the phone on Sunday.

Expressing satisfaction over the growing Tehran-Dushanbe economic relations, the president said that the Islamic Republic of Iran believes that security and happiness of Tajik people are those of Iranians.

In his remarks, the president congratulated the Tajik nation and government on Eid al-Fitr which falls on May 3 in Iran.

Stressing the importance of developing security coordination among the two countries, President Raisi said Iran is concerned about security situation of the region, Afghanistan in particular.

The Tajik president, too, thanked for the invitation and congratulated Iranian nation and government on Eid al-Fitr.

## Enemies' War With Iran Is on Identity

SARI (IP) - Interior Minister says the enemies' war against Iran is beyond power equations and is on identity, which is going on in the economic context.

The Iranian minister described the economy as a crucial element in wars and expansionism and underlined boosting economic power.

"Today, no one can say that the US and Europe war with Russia is an economic war, but it is a war over power equations that is happening on an economic context," Vahidi stated.

Vahidi called for fighting enemies in order not to let them dominate.

He stated that the census of Afghan citizens in Iran had commenced and called on the Afghan nationals to cooperate.

He noted that the census is mandatory.

Vahidi pointed out that following the recent influx of Afghan immigrants into Iran, it is necessary to identify them.

## Ongoing Census Mandatory For All Afghans

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian interior minister says it's mandatory for Afghan nationals living in Iran to take part in an ongoing census in the country.

Ahmad Vahidi said if Afghans refuse to cooperate with Iranian authorities, they will be considered as illegal and that the Iranian government will have no choice but to be tough on them.

Vahidi added that Iran is trying to get the census done in a short period of time.

He noted that following the recent refugee flow into the Islamic republic of Iran from Afghanistan, the Iranian government has to identify all Afghan refugees.

The interior minister said some of these people entered Iran with visas which may have expired and in that case, they have overstayed in the country.

Millions of Afghans have migrated to Iran since the 1980's when a war began there following the Soviet invasion of the country.

Meanwhile, the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 forced huge numbers of them to flee to Iran.

Tehran has time and again called on the EU and the UN to provide the refugees with relief aid.

## Iran, Norway Deputy FMs Meet In Tehran



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani and visiting State Secretary of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Deputy Foreign Minister) Henrik Thune met and conferred in Tehran.

During his visit to Iran, the Norwegian official also met with the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian earlier in the day.

In the meeting, Amirabdollahian described Iran-Norway political relations dating back to 115 years ago as important support for bilateral ties.

Amirabdollahian noted that promotion of parliamentary, trade, and political ties is a measure of importance.

He further said that participation of Iranian nationals residing in Norway in different scientific, economic, and political scenes is a valuable capital for fostering bilateral cooperation.

Also, the Iranian foreign minister elaborated on Islamic Republic's stance on regional developments including security in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Ukraine.

For his part, the Norwegian part said development of diplomatic contacts with the Islamic Republic of Iran is among priorities of his country's foreign policy.

Thune also talked of Norway's stance on developments in Ukraine and Afghanistan.

The Norwegian deputy foreign minister noted his country welcomes boost in ties with Iran.

Further, he once again extended the invitation to the Iranian foreign minister to visit Norway to hold bilateral talks and attend Oslo meeting.

At the end of the talks, the two sides also exchanged views about continuation of political consultations for enhancing mutual understanding and interactions.

## Iran to Inform UN Special Rapporteur on Negative Impacts of Sanctions

TEHRAN (IP) - Vice-President of the Judiciary for International Affairs and Secretary General of the Islamic Republic of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, called upcoming UN Special Rapporteur's visit to Tehran an opportunity to investigate the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures on Iranian nation.

Explaining the UN Special Rapporteur's visit to Iran, Kazem Gharibabadi said: "The Special Rapporteur's visit is an opportunity to get acquainted with the destructive impacts of sanctions on the Iranian people."

Kazem Gharibabadi, Vice-President of the Judiciary for International Affairs and Secretary-General of the I.R of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, commented on the visit of UN Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan to the Islamic Republic of Iran to investigate the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures:

"Following the Special Rapporteur's request to travel to Iran and our acceptance of this request, Ms. Douhan will have an 11-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran from May 8th," Vice-President of the Judiciary for International Affairs and Secretary-General of the I.R of Iran's High Council for Human Rights said.

He added: "Ms. Douhan's main mission is to investigate the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures on people's enjoyment of human rights, and in this regard, she will hold various meetings with representatives of Iran's government agencies, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations. As well as visiting some other centers."

In 2014, the UN Human Rights Council adopted in a resolution the Special Rapporteur mechanism for examining the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights by individuals. Western countries vote against this resolution every year.

## FM Calls on Sweden to Release Hamid Nouri

TEHRAN (IP) - Foreign Minister has called on Sweden to release Hamid Nouri, The Iranian citizen imprisoned in the European country, promptly and without delay.

Hossein Amirabdollahian, in response to a phone call from his Swedish counterpart Ann Linde on Wednesday, referred to the trial of Hamid Nouri, an Iranian citizen in Sweden, and said: "The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the arrest and trial of Nouri illegal and demands his immediate release."

"It is sorrowful that a terrorist group [MKO] whose crimes against the people of Iran and even Iraq were crystal clear during Saddam's Ba'athist regime has taken over the artificial atmosphere of the Iranian national's court process in Sweden," the Iranian foreign minister underlined.

Amirabdollahian expressed hope that the relations between the two countries would expand with mutual will and efforts.

The foreign ministers of Iran and Sweden also agreed on continuing consultations and ongoing exchange of views on issues on the agenda of relations between the two countries.

Last week, the Swedish ambassador to Tehran was summoned to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the arrest of Hamid Nouri, an Iranian national imprisoned in Sweden, and was informed of Iran's strong protest against the Swedish government on the matter.

## Vienna Talks Not Paused

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says negotiations on the revival of the 2015 Iran deal have not been paused, stressing that Tehran and Washington are in indirect correspondence to reach an agreement on removing the anti-Iran sanctions.

"The Vienna talks have not been paused, but they continue in another process to remove the unilateral sanctions imposed on us and through the exchange of written messages with the Americans through the EU representative," Amir-Abdollahian told Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network.

He underlined that Iran's objective in the talks is to reach a "strong" and "permanent" agreement.

"We urged the American side to be realistic," he said. "Removing sanctions in all areas and receiving economic guarantees are among the most important items on our negotiating team's agenda."

The chief Iranian diplomat also said he believes the Americans have perfectly understood Iran's red lines.

He added, "We will continue the dialog. As soon as an agreement is about to be reached, our representative in the negotiations will make the final changes to the agreement." Several rounds of negotiations have been held in the Austrian capital since April 2021 to bring the US back into the Iran deal. The Vienna talks, however, exclude American diplomats due to their country's withdrawal from the deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), on May 8, 2018.

Recent weeks have brought the talks to a new impasse, as the US insists on its refusal to remove Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) from its foreign terrorist organization list.

Strategic Bilateral Cooperation and to make planning for the Turkish president's visit to Tehran.

Cavusoglu referred to the good relations between the two neighboring and brotherly countries, saying that pursuant to an agreement between Iran and Turkey, he will pursue the environmental issues and the management of common water resources through relevant institutions in Turkey and continuation of the joint water committee's sessions.

During the telephone conversation, the Iranian foreign minister also congratulated Cavusoglu on Eid al-Fitr and noted that the continuation of visits by high-ranking officials of the two countries is in line with the expansion and development of the Tehran-Ankara ties more than ever before. Amir Abdollahian then referred to plans for holding the 7th Supreme Council of Strategic Bilateral Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. The top Iranian diplomat said holding the meeting is a key step toward promoting relations, realizing the interests of both nations and also expanding bilateral ties.

Iranian, Turkish FMs Hold Telephone Consultations

TEHRAN (IP) - In a telephone conversation with the Turkish Foreign Minister, the Iranian Foreign Minister stressed the growing cooperation between the two countries in protecting the environment and managing common water resources.

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu have discussed the latest developments in bilateral ties and some regional as well as international issues on the phone. Cavusoglu congratulated Amir Abdollahian and the Iranian people and government on Eid al-Fitr and underlined the need for taking effective and tangible steps to boost good and friendly ties between the two countries. The Turkish foreign minister also underscored Ankara's readiness to hold the 7th Supreme Council of





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:15
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:29
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:05

15. Say: "Is that best, or the eternal garden, promised to the righteous? for them, that is a reward as well as a goal (of attainment).  
16. "For them there will be therein all that they wish for: they will dwell (there) for aye: A promise to be prayed for from thy Lord."

Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (15 - 16)

## Gov't Preparing Cash Handouts to Offset Flour Price Hike

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - The government will offer direct cash handouts to the people in the country to offset a decision to raise the price of flour which has led to a steep increase in the price of wheat-based food.**

Iran's agriculture minister Javad Sadati Nejad said that direct cash handouts will be meant to compensate the rising costs of buying pasta, confectionary as well as some unsubsidized types of bread for the Iranian households.

Sadati Nejad told the state TV that the Iranian government had decided to raise the price of flour to prevent trafficking to neighboring countries.

He said flour trafficking from Iran had surged in the wake of a military conflict between Russia and Ukraine that has led to a crisis in international grain markets.

The minister said that flour prices in neighboring countries are more than 15 times



the subsidized price inside Iran.

He even claimed that one of Iran's neighbors is counting on smuggled wheat from Iran to overcome a shortage of around three million metric tons estimated for this year.

Iran has been paying direct cash handouts to households since November 2019 when a former administration announced fuel price hikes of up to 300%.

That comes on top of a separate cash subsidy being paid since a decade ago to compensate for utility price hikes.

Reports in the local media earlier this week suggested that pasta prices in Iran had increased by nearly three times in the wake of government's decision to remove the subsidy for industrial users of flour.

Other reports said that price of baguette and confectionary items had also increased by nearly 300% after the government announced flour price hike.

## Iran Has Never Been So Dependent On Grain Imports

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the Flour Producers Association says this year Iran must import 20 million tons of grain, noting that the country has never been so dependent on imports.

Mohammad-Reza Mortazavi said that grain imports will include 6 to 7 million tons of wheat, as Iranian state media rejected rumors on Tuesday that bread prices will increase following the elimination of subsidies.

According to data by Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization grain imports stood at 16.5 million tons last year, about half of which was wheat while the rest were barley, corn and rice.

Referring to a five-fold increase in flour prices by the Agriculture Ministry, was expected, but "it would be better if the government first examined its effect on prices of other commodities". Pasta prices officially increased as much as threefold on Monday.

He added that most of the country's wheat imports this year will come from "Russia or the Baltic states and even Europe", highlighting that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to a global rise in wheat prices as well as almost all other agricultural produce. Ukraine and Russia account for more than a quarter of global wheat exports and nearly a fifth of corn.

In March, Nour News, affiliated with the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Ali Shamkhani, reported that Iran has signed a deal with Russia to import 20 million tons of basic goods, including vegetable oil, wheat, barley and corn.

## Iran Can Double Oil Exports From Kharg Island



TEHRAN (IP) - The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company says Iran has the potential to double the crude oil exports from Kharg Island in the southern part of the country.

In recent months, Iran's oil exports have grown with the successive increases being recorded, which have been unprecedented in the last three years.

The increase is despite the harsh sanctions imposed on Iran by the White House.

Emphasizing the importance of repairing and renovating oil terminal facilities, Deputy Minister of Oil and the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company, Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr said: "If market conditions allow, the export capacity of crude oil from Kharg can be doubled."

Khojasteh-Mehr visited Kharg island on Thursday and noted: "Kharg has been a symbol of the resistive economy in the country since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, and the island has been attacked by the enemies for the number of days of holy defense, but with diligent efforts and the will of the people and staff, even one day of oil exports has not been halted."

The official added: "With transformation and dynamism in Kharg island and the Oil Terminals Company, no matter how much, we will have the same transformation and dynamism in the country's economy."

"If we want to transform the country's economy, we must take necessary steps in Kharg both in industry and social responsibilities and welfare of the people and inhabitants of this island," he added.

The Deputy Minister of Oil has stated that the purpose of the visit is to closely review the latest status of projects related to the Oil Terminals Company, the Offshore Oil Company and the Kharg Island Oil Terminal, adding: "Major repairs mainly include repairs of docks, oil and gas condensate storage tanks located and safety and fire extinguishing systems in Kharg, which should be considered."

## Iraq's Energy Debt to Iran Reduced to Over \$1b

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior businessman watching over trade between Iran and Iraq says Baghdad has reduced its unpaid energy bill to Tehran to just over \$1 billion from more than \$5 billion reported in late 2020.

Yahya Al Es'haq, who serves as Chairman of Iran-Iraq joint Chamber of Commerce, said that Iraq had settled a large chunk of the debt that it had owed Iran for imports of natural gas and electricity over the past few years.

Al Es'haq said that Iraq's Electricity Minister Majid Mahdi Hantoush had discussed the payment of the remaining debt to Iran during his last month visit to Tehran.

"Arrears owed by Iraq over our energy exports are just over \$1 billion and there were talks about how this debt will be repaid during Iraqi electricity minister's recent trip to Iran," the businessman was quoted as saying by semi-official Fars news agency.

He said that the Iranian government has agreed to resume exports of energy to Iraq over the summer and winter now that the debt repayment issue is settled between the two countries.

Iraq to dispatch a delegation to Tehran to discuss gas supply

Iraq to dispatch a delegation to Tehran to discuss gas supply

Iraq's PM Kadhimi orders the dispatch of a working team to Iran to discuss gas supply issues.

Iraq relies on Iranian gas for a significant part of its electricity generation needs in thermal power plants. The country also imports electricity from Iran to respond to a growing demand for power, especially during hot summers.

Iran started to cut down on gas supplies delivered to Iraq in late 2020 after authorities in the National Iranian Gas Company said that Baghdad was in more than \$5 billion worth of arrears on its energy imports bill.

Iraqi authorities had cited U.S. sanctions on Iran as the main obstacle hampering the payment of energy debt to Tehran.

## Iran-Syria Trade Up by 60%

TEHRAN (IFP) - The chair of the Iran-Syria joint chamber of commerce says mutual trade surged by 60 percent in the year to march 2022.

"Seeing the improved conditions for transit through Iraqi borders, increased flights to Syria and trade agreements of government officials, the prospects for expansion of economic cooperation with this country is positive in the current year," Keyvan Kashef told IRNA.

The official said the issue of transportation is a key factor in mutual trade, adding that any businessman will need its product at the destination in the shortest possible time.

He said Iran and Syria are not neighbors and this raises the transit costs and the required time.

Kashef said Iraq enforces strict transit regulations that

make goods transit through the country very difficult.

He said getting goods to Syria through Turkey is also costly and time consuming.

"Since last year, Iraq took steps to activate transit routes that can be very helpful for Iran," he said.

"Syria is subject to sanctions and, under the Caesar regulations, any trade with the county subjects the seller to sanctions and for this reason we are also facing the problem of money transfer."

Kashef also called for preferential trade regulations with Syria to reduce or zero customs rates to further speed up transactions with the country.

He said both Iranian and Syrian businessmen are interested in trade with the other country describing such trade as "win-win" and in line with the interests of both countries.

## Iranian Port Plans Amenities for Qatar World Cup Visitors

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's southern port of Bushehr is setting up new facilities as it prepares to welcome international travelers visiting the neighboring Qatar for the 2022 World Cup tournament.

Head of the local branch of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) in Bushehr said that the port will add four new wharfs, including one where cruise ships can dock, as part of preparations to welcome World Cup visitors.

Mohammad Shakibi Nasab said that the port will also expand its asphalt area by 30,000 kilometers to allow better processing of passengers and vehicles during the World Cup season.

Shakibi Nasab said that the Iranian Oil Ministry will earmark extra fuel quotas to ships travelling between Iran and Qatar over the period.

He said that the PMO prepares to sign an agreement with Qatari officials to declare Bushehr and Qatari port of Ar-Ru'ays as sister ports.

Iran has capitalized on tourism opportunities that could arise from the World Cup tournament which will be held in Qatar from November 21 to December 18.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said last month that visa fees will be waived for World Cup visitors seeking to travel to Iran for tourism purposes.

Iran has also vowed to help Qatar in its preparations to successfully organize the world Cup tournament

A senior Qatari government delegation visited the southern Iranian island of Kish in early April to tour the tourism and transportation facilities in the area.

PMO's Shakibi Nasab said that Bushehr will strengthen its search and rescue arrangements during the World Cup to help Qatar with better management of maritime accidents.

## Iran Stands Among World's Top 5 in Nanotechnology

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian official highlights the significance of the findings of an international study in 2020 that ranked Iran among the world's top five in the area of nanotechnology, attributing the achievement to the country's progress in eco-technology.

Iranian Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari said the study compares countries and science and tech institutes based on a new indicator, which is "focusing on the emerging areas of technology."

Based on the study, Iran not only ranks fifth in the world in terms of producing nanoscience, but it has given the highest level focus to the most emerging and most advanced fields of science and technology, along with four other advanced states.

According to the criterion, China has the first place, followed by the United States, South Korea, India and Iran.

A report by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in April 2020 hailed the development of nanotechnology in Iran as an example to learn from. The study introduced Iran as a pioneer in policy making for nanotech development, preceded by the U.S. and China and followed by the European Union, describing it as a model for African states.

## Pobeda Granted Clearance To Open Iranian Service

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Aeroflot Group's budget carrier Pobeda has obtained permission to operate services to Iran from Russia's civil aviation regulator.

Pobeda will be permitted to fly twice-weekly between Moscow and Tehran, according to the decision disclosed by federal air transport authority Rosaviatsia.

All Pobeda flights are conducted with a fleet of Boeing 737s.

It had previously indicated that it would reduce the number of aircraft in its operation, owing to the reduction in demand.

The Iranian clearance is among a batch of approvals for new services, although the sanctions imposed on Russian air transport have limited the scope.

## Iran Trade With SCO Member States Grows 33%

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's bilateral trade with the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) grew 33 percent in the last Persian-calendar year (ended March 20), the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration says.

Rouhollah Latifi, spokesman for the Customs Administration, said on Sunday that bilateral trade between Iran and the members of the SCO last year was worth 54,856,000 tons of goods, valued at 37.168 billion dollars.

That marked a 33-percent increase compared to the year before, Latifi said. Iran exported 45,349,000 tons of goods, worth 20.596 billion dollars, to the SCO member states last year — registering an increase of 41 percent year on year.

Total imports from the SCO weighed 9,507,000 tons, worth 16.572 billion dollars, marking a 24-percent increase compared to the year before.

China, Afghanistan (which has observer SCO status), and India were the top three SCO importers of Iranian goods last year, according to Latifi.

Iran had the largest imports of its own from, respectively, China, Russia, and India.

The SCO is a transcontinental political, economic, security, and military alliance, comprising China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Iran had its full membership in the organization approved in 2021. Previously, it held observer status in the organization.



## Iraq Sandstorm Sends More Than 1,000 to Hospital

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - More than 1,000 Iraqis were rushed to hospital with respiratory ailments on Thursday due to a sandstorm, the seventh to hit the country in the past month, state media said.

Residents of six of Iraq's 18 provinces, including Baghdad and the vast western region of Al-Anbar, awoke once again to a thick cloud of dust blanketing the sky.

Authorities in Al-Anbar and Kirkuk provinces, north of the capital, urged people to stay indoors, said the official INA news agency. Hospitals in Al-Anbar province had received more than 700 patients with breathing difficulties, said Anas Qais, a health official cited by INA.



## Millions in Beijing Urged To Work From Home

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The streets of Beijing's business district were deserted on Thursday as the government called for people to return to work remotely, with scores of subway stations shut after a national holiday muted by coronavirus curbs.

Chinese authorities have stuck to their zero-Covid policy of lockdowns and mass testing as they battle the biggest outbreak since the early days of the pandemic, with entire neighbourhoods in the capital sealed over handfuls of infections.

Beijing reported 50 local cases on Thursday, a day after it said people in Chaoyang, its most populous district, should work from home.



## Zelenskiy Appeals for Truce to Dig Out Civilians Trapped in Mariupol



KYIV (Dispatches) - Civilians will need to be dug from bunkers under a steel works that is the last holdout of resistance in Ukraine's Mariupol, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said, after a Russian bombardment that has littered the area with concrete debris.

Having failed to capture the capital Kyiv in the early weeks of an invasion that has killed thousands and flattened towns and villages, Russia has accelerated attacks in southern and eastern Ukraine, including on the Azovstal steel works in Mariupol.

Ukraine's resistance at the plant underscores Russia's failure to capture major cities in a war that has united Western powers in arming Kyiv and punishing Moscow with sanctions. Sweden and Finland are expected to decide very soon whether to join NATO, in what would be a major historical shift.

Russia's military promised to pause its activity in Azovstal during Thursday daytime and the following two days to allow civilians to leave, after what Ukrainian fighters described as "bloody battles" prevented evacuations on Wednesday. The Kremlin said humanitarian corridors from the plant were in place.

Ukrainian officials believe around 200 civilians remain trapped along with fighters in the network of underground bunkers at the sprawling Soviet-era Azovstal complex.

In an early morning address, Zelenskiy said Ukraine stood ready to ensure a ceasefire in Mariupol, a port city that after a weeks-long siege Russia controls - apart from the steel works.

"It will take time simply to lift people out of those basements, out of those underground shelters. In the present conditions, we cannot use heavy equipment to clear the rubble away. It all has to be done by hand," Zelenskiy said.

Ukrainian fighters inside Azovstal are fighting "difficult, bloody battles," Denis Prokopenko, a commander with Ukraine's Azov regiment, said late on Wednesday.

Ukraine's military general staff said the assault on the plant included air support, and pictures released by Russian-backed fighters appeared to show smoke and flames enveloping it.

"God forbid more shells hit near the bunkers where the civilians are," said Tetyana Trotsak, an Azovstal evacuee among dozens who reached a Ukraine-controlled town this week, describing her two-and-a-half hour walk to get across a short stretch of ground strewn with rubble at the plant.

Mariupol has been an important target in Russia's efforts to cut Ukraine off from its Black Sea grain and metals export routes, as well as to link Russian-controlled territory in the east of the country to Crimea, seized by Moscow in 2014.

The United Nations and Red Cross evacuated hundreds of people from the city and other areas this week.

## France, India Call for Immediate End to Ukraine Hostilities

PARIS (Dispatches) - India and France called for "an immediate cessation of hostilities" in Ukraine, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi again stopping short of condemning Russia's invasion of its neighbour.

India, which imports much of its military hardware from Russia, has long walked a diplomatic tightrope between the West and Moscow -- notably refusing to denounce the latter or vote against it at the United Nations over its actions in Ukraine.

"France and India expressed their deep concern over the humanitarian crisis and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine," Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron said in a joint statement after they met in Paris for talks and a working dinner.

"Both countries unequivocally condemned the fact that civilians have been killed in Ukraine, and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in order for the two sides to come together to promote dialogue and diplomacy, and to put an immediate end to the suffering of the people."

However, only France condemned "Russian forces' illegal and unjustified aggression against Ukraine".



## Israeli Forces Storm Al-Aqsa as Hundreds of Settlers Gather

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israeli forces stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem on Thursday, injuring at least 16 Palestinians and arresting dozens.

Injuries reported included 14 with fractures from rubber-coated bullets and tear gas suffocation, the Sama al-Quds field medical center told Al Jazeera.

The Red Crescent reported two people were injured from beatings and taken to hospital for treatment.

About 50 Palestinian males, including the elderly and children, were arrested and escorted out of the compound from Bab al-Silsila (Chain Gate).

At least 600 settlers raided the compound through the Moroccan Gate on Thursday between 7am to 11am. More were expected between 1:30pm to 2:30pm.

Settler incursions under police protection into the Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound resumed after a 10-day pause during the last days of Ramadan, during which there were heightened tensions.

In a statement on Thursday, Hamas said settler incursions are "a serious escalation and direct provocation, threatening a comprehensive explosion, for which the occupation government bears full responsibility".

Israel is celebrating its establishment 74 years ago on Thursday in accordance with the Jewish calendar, which it refers to as Independence Day. Palestinians commemorate the day on May 15 as the Nakba or catastrophe - during which 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced from historic Palestine.

The holy site has been the center of days of violence amid heightened tensions following a series of attacks inside Israel and raids in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Last year, escalating tensions around the expulsion of Palestinian families from their homes in Jerusalem were the catalyst for widespread Palestinian protests across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Raids of the Al-Aqsa Mosque

by Israeli security forces during the holy month of Ramadan heightened tensions further, and four days later, an 11-day Israeli assault on Gaza began, ostensibly targeting Hamas facilities.

## Northern Ireland Poised to Make History as UK Votes

BELFAST (Dispatches) - Polls opened across the UK in local and regional elections that could prove historic in Northern Ireland and heap further pressure on embattled Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The contest for the devolved assembly in Belfast could see a pro-Irish reunification nationalist party win for the first time in the troubled history of Northern Ireland.

The results of Thursday's polls, which were expected from Friday, could have huge constitutional implications for the four-nation UK's future, with predicted victors Sinn Féin committed to a vote in the province on reunification with Ireland.

Polls opened at 06:00 GMT on Thursday for the election of councils in Scotland, Wales and much of England, with Johnson facing a potentially pivotal mid-term popularity test.

Poor results could reignite simmering discontent within his ruling Conservatives about his leadership, after a string of recent scandals.

Johnson, 57, won by a landslide in the 2019 general election by promising to take Britain out of the European Union, and reverse rampant regional inequality.

Despite making good on his Brexit pledge, the coronavirus pandemic largely stalled his domestic plans.

But his position has been put in jeopardy because of anger at revelations of lockdown-breaking parties at

his Downing Street office and a cost-of-living crisis.

Heavy losses could revive calls among Tory MPs to trigger an internal contest to overthrow Johnson as party leader and from power.

The polls should also point to whether the main opposition Labour party poses a serious threat, as it tries to make inroads across England despite defending the many gains it made at the last local elections in 2018.

Labour is bidding to leapfrog over the Conservatives into second place in Scotland, behind the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP), and remain the largest party in Wales, where 16- and 17-year-olds are eligible to vote for the first time.

The contest for Northern Ireland's power-sharing assembly is set to capture attention after numerous polls put Sinn Féin ahead.

A University of Liverpool poll reported on Tuesday it remained on target to win comfortably with over a quarter of the vote.

The pro-UK Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and cross-community Alliance Party were tied for second.

Deirdre Heenan, professor of social policy at Ulster University, said there was a feeling the election "really is momentous".

"It will be a sea change if a nationalist becomes first minister," she told the AFP news agency.



## N. Korea Slams South's New leader as Pro-U.S., Confrontational

SEOUL (Dispatches) - A major North Korean propaganda website denounced South Korea's incoming president

Yoon Suk-yeol, who has vowed to take a tougher line on weapons tests by Pyongyang, describing him as "pro-United States", and "confrontational".

The North's state media have yet to make formal comments on Yoon, a conservative who is set to take office on May 10, but the website Uririnzokkiri issued scathing criticism ahead of his inauguration.

"Yoon Suk-yeol had aroused shock with such preposterous remarks as 'preemptive strike' and 'main enemy,' and stirred up confrontational madness trumpeting a 'stronger South Korea-U.S. alliance,'" it said. It was referring to comments by Yoon that he would allow a pre-emptive strike on North Korea if signs of attack were imminent, and his description of the neighboring nation as a "main enemy".

That description of the North has been shunned by outgoing progressive President Moon Jae-in, who had sought to improve relations.

The propaganda site's remarks are a departure from past practice, when state media have trumpeted news of a missile test by the North on the day following, but have this time kept silent, instead, about Wednesday's weapons test.

The propaganda site criticized Yoon and his picks for ministers of defense, foreign affairs and the unification portfolio as "pro-U.S. toadies" who had sought confrontation while serving in previous conservative governments.

"There's nothing strange for him to nominate pro-U.S. toadies seeking confrontation with the same people," it added. On Wednesday, South Korea's military reported the North's 14th known weapons test this year, which analysts said could aim at testing its reconnaissance satellite technology.

In March, South Korea said a North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) exploded mid-air soon after liftoff. State media made no mention at the time, but another, presumably successful, ICBM launch took place days later.

"North Korea might not announce failed tests, but it's too early to say that's the case, and the latest launch appeared rather successful as it showed some progress," said Park Won-gon, a professor of North Korean studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul.





**Shanon**  
(adviser)

**Parsian**

**Gheitarieh Apt (\$1900)**  
180sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/pool, S, J  
L.balcony  
marble fle  
fireplace  
Fully Furn

**Pasdaran Villa (\$2500)**  
600sq.m  
5bdrs, S/p, S  
J, balcony  
green yard  
Fully Furn

**(\$2400)**  
**Kamranieh**  
230sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, S, J, & F.F

**Darrous (\$2600)**  
3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

**Jordan (\$1500)**  
3bdrs, balcony, F.F

**Zaferanieh Apt (\$2000)**  
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, & F.F

**(\$8000)**  
**Velenjak bldg**  
5storey, 20bdrs  
S/p, storages, pkgs

**Elahieh bldg (\$5000)**  
4stoery, 12bdrs, pkgs

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## Oil Propels Saudi GDP Growth to Near 10% in Q1

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia reported its fastest economic growth rate in a decade, as a booming oil sector fuelled a 9.6 per cent rise in the first quarter over the same period of 2021. The preliminary results come after the world's biggest oil exporter resisted US entreaties to raise output in an attempt to rein in prices that have spiked since the Ukraine war began. "Oil activities led the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Saudi Arabia to achieve the highest growth rate in [the] last 10 years," the Saudi statistics authority said in initial estimates published online.



## China Factory Activity Dips To Lowest in Two Years

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's manufacturing activity slumped to its lowest level since February 2020, official data showed last week, the latest sign of economic pain as Beijing doggedly pursues its zero-Covid response.

The official Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a key gauge of manufacturing activity, clocked 47.4 in April — below the 50-point mark separating growth from contraction — as authorities said that a "decline in production and demand" has deepened.

The figures come as Beijing's policy of swiftly stamping out infections with lockdowns and mass testing has been severely challenged by an Omicron-fuelled pandemic resurgence.

Dozens of cities, including economic powerhouses like Shenzhen and Shanghai, have been either fully or partially sealed off in recent months.

The inflexible approach — even as most of the world learns to live with the virus — has inflicted mounting economic pain, with the curbs snarling supply chains and leaving goods piling up at the world's busiest container port.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) senior statistician Zhao Qinghe acknowledged that some enterprises have had to reduce or stop production, while many firms have reported an increase in transportation difficulties.

"The production and operation of... enterprises have been greatly affected," Zhao said, according to an NBS statement that also noted the price indexes for raw materials remain "relatively high".

The official non-manufacturing PMI plummeted to its lowest level since early 2020 as well, NBS figures showed, as the country braces for a muted Labour Day holiday.

Yesterday, Chinese media group Caixin released its own manufacturing purchasing managers' index, showing a second straight month of deterioration, with the figure dropping from 48.1 to 46.0.

The Caixin survey, which covers small and medium-sized enterprises, is seen by some as a more accurate reflection of China's economic situation than the official government figures, which more closely track the condition of large state groups.

"Covid control measures have done a number on logistics," said Caixin Insight Group senior economist Wang Zhe in a statement.

Caixin also noted that firms expressed concerns over how long Covid restrictions would remain in place.

On Thursday, tech giant Apple warned that China's Covid lockdowns were among the factors that would dent its June quarter results by US\$4-8 billion.

## Australia Hikes Interest Rates for First Time Since 2010

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australia's central bank raised interest rates for the first time in more than a decade, a pre-election hike designed to curb soaring consumer prices.

The Reserve Bank of Australia raised the main lending rate by 25 basis points to 0.35 per cent, the first increase since November 2010.

Ending record-low rates, the bank cited inflation levels that had "picked up more quickly, and to a higher level, than was expected". The move thrusts the bank to the center of a fierce political debate about the health of Australia's economy just weeks before the May 21 elections.

The opposition Labor party has seized on the prospect of a rate rise as evidence of a weakening economy and the conservative government's economic maladministration.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who is trailing in the polls, has insisted inflation is a result of worldwide trends, including the war in Ukraine.

The annual inflation rate is currently at 5.1 per cent.

Like consumers around the world, Australians have been hit by soaring prices for food and fuels.

But house prices have been rising for years even as wages have stagnated. Sydney and Melbourne are among the world's most expensive cities in the world to live.

The rate rise is expected to be the first of several, which could have serious implications for Australia's once-perennially growing economy.

Higher interest rates will spell higher borrowing costs for millions of already heavily indebted Australians, in a country where real estate market speculation at times appears to be a national pastime. Interest rates of two per cent would cost the average homeowner about \$362 a month, according to financial services website RateCity.com.au.

"That's going to be a lot for many borrowers to swallow, particularly anyone already struggling to make the monthly budget add up," said RateCity's Sally Tindall.

Australia's vast resource wealth has for decades provided insulation from global financial headwinds and underpinned high standards of living.



## French Q1 GDP Flatlines, Inflation Hits New Record

PARIS (Dispatches) - France's economic growth unexpectedly flatlined in the first quarter as consumer spending dropped in the face of record-high inflation, official data showed, putting pressure on President Emmanuel Macron ahead of legislative elections.

The INSEE official statistics agency said preliminary data showed no change in gross domestic product (GDP) for January-March. That signaled a sharp slowdown from the final three months of 2021, when the eurozone's second-biggest economy expanded 0.8%, which was revised up from 0.7% previously.

While a slowdown in France had been expected, the reading was worse than expectations for growth of 0.3% in a Reuters poll of 24 economists, whose forecasts ranged from 0.6% to -0.1%.

Household spending, the traditional driver of French growth, fell 1.3% in the quarter as consumer confidence waned amid concerns over surging energy prices and the war in Ukraine, eclipsing any boost from an easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

Inflation has soared from record to record in recent months, rising unexpectedly in April to touch a new high of 5.4%, INSEE said in a separate report.

The latest inflationary spike will offer fresh fodder to Macron's opponents who accuse the president of not doing enough to protect consumers' purchasing power heading into legislative elections next month that will determine whether he has a majority to govern for the next five years.

His current government has put together a 25 billion euro (\$26.3 billion) package of measures to help protect consumers' dwindling purchasing power and consisting in large part of caps on gas and electricity price increases.

But that did not stop the cost of living from being a major theme in France's presidential election this month, which incumbent Macron won on Sunday by beating far-right leader Marine Le Pen.

"Although government measures have shielded households from the worst of the energy price rises, the broader rise in inflation will still take its toll on real incomes and spending," said senior Europe economist Jessica Hinds at consultancy Capital Economics.

"One silver lining, at least, is that the French economy is less exposed to the Ukraine conflict than most in the eurozone, including Germany," she added.

Macron has indicated that his first steps after the June vote will include further measures to help consumers, such as subsidies for people on low incomes who have to use their cars, as well as an increase in pensions.

## Inflation and War Risks to Buoy Gold in Short Term

LONDON (Dispatches) - Gold prices are expected to hold firm this quarter as investors seek refuge from soaring inflation and risks such as the Ukraine war, before retreating later this year as interest rates rise, a Reuters poll showed.

Gold is traditionally seen as a safe place to invest during times of financial and economic uncertainty but, as it yields no interest, it tends to lose its attraction when interest rates rise.

The relationship has been complicated this time by fears that the aggressive pace of tightening signaled by the U.S. Federal Reserve to combat inflation may derail economic growth, which could bode well for gold.

In the latest quarterly survey of 31 analysts and traders carried out in April, the median forecast for gold prices came in at \$1,920 an ounce for the April-June quarter.

That compares with \$1,770 in the previous quarterly poll compiled in January, and an average price so far this quarter of around \$1,930 an ounce.

The median forecast for the third quarter was \$1,875, while the numbers for 2022 and 2023 were \$1,890.65 and \$1,762.50 an ounce respectively versus \$1,775.50 and \$1,653 previously.

"A geopolitical risk premium is likely to keep gold prices elevated short-term," said Standard Chartered analyst Suki Cooper.

"Longer-term we expect the yield relationship to re-establish itself as the primary driver, and gold prices are likely to trend lower, albeit from elevated levels."

Gold climbed above \$2,000 an ounce in early March after Russia invaded Ukraine, but has since retreated to around \$1,850 an ounce.

Capital flows into the dollar, another safe haven, also diminish gold's appeal for those holding other currencies.

## Germany Should Cut Gas Use in Preparation for Russian Cut-Off

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - Germany should already limit gas use, even though Russian supplies have so far continued, to prepare for the possibility of a future cut-off in retaliation for Western sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, energy research institute EWI said.

Russian energy giant Gazprom last Wednesday stopped gas supplies to Bulgaria

and Poland after they declined to comply with a scheme proposed by Moscow requiring payments in roubles, raising concerns Germany could also be vulnerable.

"Gas demand should be reduced immediately over the summer months," said Eren Cam, head of Energy Resources at Cologne-based EWI, recommending proactive measures to shore up supply security.

German utility Uniper, a major Russian gas customer whose next payment is due at the end of May, has said an EU embargo under consideration on Russian oil could prompt Russia to halt westward gas flows. Read full story

On Monday, EU energy ministers meet for emergency talks, which will include discussions of whether making payments to Russia via a mechanism that converts euros into roubles would be a breach of sanctions.

In 2021, the EU imported 38 per cent of its gas for manufacturing, home heating and gas-to-power generation from Russia.

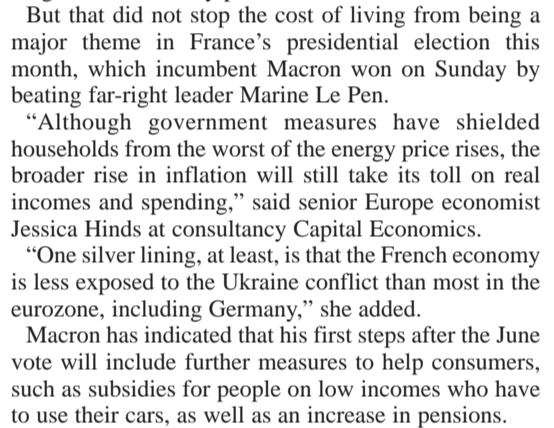
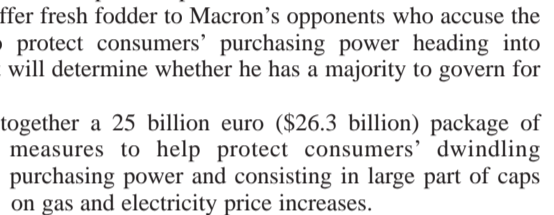
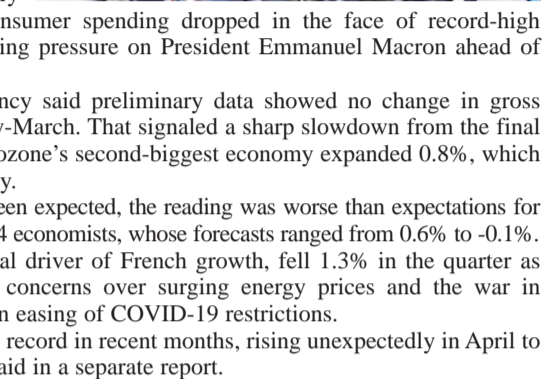
EWI said if Moscow halted gas now, the EU region plus Britain and excluding Cyprus, Malta and Iberia, would have to cut demand by 459 terawatt hours (TWh) in the summer. It would end up with empty storage facilities within one year.

EWI factored in the anticipated impact of more pipeline gas from Norway and of increased liquefied natural gas (LNG) deliveries in the Netherlands and Germany.

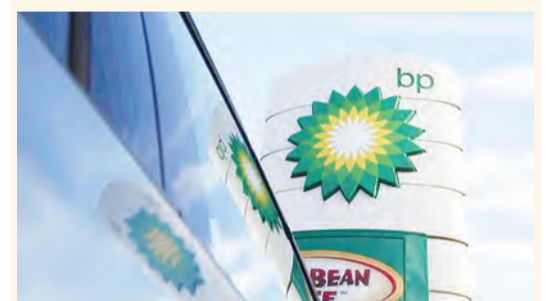
Should the objective be to keep gas reserves at current levels of 33 per cent over the next 12 months, the necessary cut in demand would amount to 790 TWh, it said.

This level represented 18 per cent of total demand between November and April, which EWI pegged at 4,446 TWh. But it hinges on how cold the winter will be.

Germany, which has Europe's largest storage capacity, has signed off on a law to ensure underground caverns are 80 per cent full by Oct. 1, when the winter season starts.



## BP Plunges Into \$20.4b Loss on Russia Exit



LONDON (Dispatches) - British energy giant BP plunged into a huge net loss in the first quarter after it decided to exit Russia over the country's invasion of neighbor Ukraine.

The loss after tax stood at \$20.4 billion following BP's decision in February to pull its 19.75-per cent stake in energy group Rosneft, ending more than three decades of investment in Russia.

BP had posted a net profit of \$4.7 billion in the first quarter of 2021.

"Our decision... to exit our shareholding in Rosneft resulted in the material non-cash charges and headline loss," BP chief executive Bernard Looney said in a statement.

The group booked a pre-tax charge of \$25.5 billion owing to its break with Rosneft.

That wiped out the benefit of surging energy prices, which have been fuelled by fears of tight supplies following the invasion by major oil and gas producer Russia.

BP revenue jumped 40 per cent to \$51 billion in the first quarter from a year earlier.

"In a quarter dominated by the tragic events in Ukraine and volatility in energy markets, BP's focus has been on supplying the reliable energy our customers need," Looney said.

The European Commission will on Tuesday propose to member states a new package of sanctions to punish President Vladimir Putin's Kremlin for its invasion of Ukraine, including an embargo on Russian oil, officials said.

It comes after the EU on Monday warned member states to prepare for a possible complete breakdown in gas supplies from Russia, insisting it would not cede to Moscow's demand that imports be paid for in rubles.



## Sweden Is a Safe Haven For MKO Criminals

TEHRAN (IP) - In a letter to the Swedish ambassador to Iran, the Association for the Protection of Victims of Terrorism criticized the Swedish judiciary's support for the terrorist group, the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO, also known as MEK).

The association's letter was published after the indictment of Hamid Nouri, an Iranian citizen in a Swedish prison, addressed to the Swedish Ambassador to Tehran, Mattias Lentz.

Hamid Nouri, an Iranian citizen, was arrested by the security forces on November 9, 2019, upon his arrival in Sweden, and he has been in prison for nearly 30 months.



## Huge Russian Cargo Ship Docks at Iranian Port After 21 Years

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A huge Russian cargo vessel has docked at a northern Iranian port for a first time in 21 years as the two countries seek to increase their transit cooperation as part of efforts to counter the American sanctions.

Kompozitor Gasanov, a Russian roll-on/roll-off (Ro Ro) vessel, had docked at the Iranian port of Noshahr on May 2, said a report by semi-official Mehr news agency on Wednesday.

The report said that the ship had unloaded 66 Ro Ro trucks at Noshahr for road transit through Iran to the United Arab Emirates.

Kompozitor Gasanov, a 6,894-ton, 125.9-meter ship which is one of Russia's largest Ro Ro vessels, is currently returning to the port of Olya in Russia's Astrakhan region where it started its journey toward Iran a few weeks ago.

The last time a major Russian vessel had docked at Noshahr port was in 1991 when the

Mercury unloaded its cargo in the port located in the central coast of the Caspian Sea. Russia and Iran have expanded their trade ties in recent years in an effort to offset the economic impacts of American sanctions on both countries.

Experts say Russia will seek more Iranian assistance to battle fresh Western sanctions imposed on the country because of the ongoing war in Ukraine.

They say cargo transit through Iran will be key to Russia's efforts to maintain trade ties with partners in the Persian Gulf and in Asia now that normal trade routes are blocked because of the sanctions.

Iranian transportation minister Rostam Qassemi was in Moscow earlier this week to discuss increased cooperation between the two countries in the fields of cargo transit, rail and air transportation.

### UN Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

"It is imperative that this unfavorable situation be immediately addressed by the international community," he said.

Takht Ravanchi, meanwhile, noted how some Western anti-Islam media outlets and officials were contributing to creation of "an atmosphere of hate mongering" around Islam and Muslims around the world by fuelling Islamophobia.

"The time has come for the international community to condemn this phenomenon and take the necessary measures that are aimed at fighting Islamophobia and violation of Muslims' basic rights."

### Sweden's Trial of...

FROM PAGE 1

Gharibabadi said Nouri's trial was "sham" and in violation of justice and human rights principles, adding that he had been arrested based on false accusations and that his detention was regarded as "forced disappearance" since his family had been kept unaware of the arrest.

"When the Nouri family found out about his detention, the Swedish government denied them permission to visit him for more than two years, and when his family visited Sweden in person, they for several times were not allowed to visit him and kept him in solitary confinement for nearly two years, which is a clear example of a gross violation of human rights," Gharibabadi said.

"The Swedish government must be held accountable for denying him access to a doctor, and for the prison officials' negligence in his physical and mental health, for long-term solitary confinement and beatings and torture by prison officials, all of which violate basic rights," he added.

Stressing that Nouri's arrest was in violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Gharibabadi said Sweden's failure to inform the Iranian embassy and Nouri's family of his whereabouts were other examples of inhumane measures against him.

"The lack of a comprehensive and independent investigation by the Swedish prosecutor, the issuance of an indictment based on the biased and baseless claims of some MKO's affiliates, the lack of access to a lawyer and the lack of permission to defend him in court is another proof of this sham trial which has been held with politically biased goals and fails to uphold the basic principles of judicial justice," Gharibabadi underlined.

The senior Iranian judiciary official censured the Swedish government for supporting terror groups like MKO and said that Sweden has now turned into a safe place for hosting terrorists.

"It is now time for Sweden to decide whether it wants to stand with terrorists or abide by its international obligations to counter terror groups," Gharibabadi said, calling on the Iranian judicial authorities to bring to justice the people who conduct acts of terror against Iran and are backed by Sweden.

During the 89th session of his trial on Friday, Swedish prosecutors read a summary of Nouri's indictment in court, a day after submitting a request for life imprisonment for him.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the continued detention of the former Iranian official as "totally illegal" and driven by "false allegations made by the MKO terrorist organization and the hostile smear campaign against the Islamic Republic."

It also urged Sweden to end the "political show" of Nouri's trial and release the Iranian national.

### Tehran, Caracas...

FROM PAGE 1

Bloomberg cited unnamed sources as saying that Owji signed a series of energy cooperation deals with Caracas on Monday.

The report said Owji visited the Paraguana refining complex in western Venezuela with Asdrubal Chávez, the head of Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural gas company, Petróleos de Venezuela P.D.V.S.A.

Venezuela and Iran, both under illegal U.S. sanctions, have bolstered their energy cooperation in recent years, with Tehran going out of its way to help the South American country.

Iran has in the last two years sent several shipments of gasoline to Venezuela, whose oil industry has been hit hard by US sanctions.

Venezuela imports condensate from Iran, which is deemed important to thin its extra-thick crude oil. Iran has also helped its South American ally with engineers, refined products, and spare parts for its oil industry.

## Gov't to Ramp Up Cooking Oil Imports to Prevent Shortages

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian agriculture ministry (MAJ) plans to ramp up imports of cooking oil into the country to prevent any shortages that could be caused by the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

MAJ's deputy for trade development Abbas Asgarzadeh said on Thursday that cooking oil imports into Iran will be increased by at least 200,000 metric tons in the short term to calm down prices in the domestic market.

Asgarzadeh said that the supply of raw oil to domestic producers of cooking oil had been increased by the same amount in recent weeks to help ease the situation.

The announcement came a day after MAJ officials said they have plans to raise the price of basic consumer goods like flour and cooking oil to prevent them from being trafficked into neighboring countries where prices have soared because of the war in Ukraine.

Ukraine and Russia are among the main suppliers of grains in the world but exports from the two countries have declined because of the war that started in February.

Asgarzadeh said that the government will be forced to introduce restrictions on the supply of basic goods to the households to prevent panic buying and hoarding.

"The global inflation, drought and the war between Russia and Ukraine requires us to regulate the market of

cooking oil, wheat and flour with national determination, social discipline and more care so that households are not turned into hoarders of those products," the official was quoted by the official IRNA agency.

The Iranian government has announced it will offer direct cash handouts to households to compensate for the planned increase in the price of basic goods like flour and cooking oil.

### Russian Carmaker...

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Master cylinder brake boosters, hydraulic anti-lock braking systems, ABS sensors, seat belts, airbags, alternators, air conditioners, oxygen sensors, thermostats and window lift systems are among the parts demanded by the Russian automaker, he said.

Bahrainian said an Iranian automaker has already been planning to take advantage of the maritime border to carve out a bigger share of the Russian and Eurasian market.

Some Iran-made automotive components such as engine cooling systems, suspension and casting parts have been exported to the Russian market in recent years.

The conflict in Ukraine has caused logistical and supply chain problems as well as parts shortages of critical vehicle components.

Many automakers source wire harnesses, which are used in vehicles for electrical power and communication between parts, from Ukraine.

The problems add to an already strained supply chain due to the coronavirus pandemic and an ongoing shortage of semiconductor chips.

They have impacted vehicle production not only in Ukraine and Russia but have also destabilized supply of components in other parts of Europe and beyond – with other risks as well in the upstream supply chain.

Russia is currently subject to unprecedented Western sanctions amounting to an economic war that, experts say, will have profound implications for the global economy and the automotive supply chain.

Several global manufacturers have severed ties with partners in Russia, including Groupe Renault, BMW, Jaguar Land Rover, Stellantis and the Volkswagen Group.

Renault is the most exposed in Russia which is the French carmaker's second largest market, contributing around \$5.5 billion or 12% to its balance sheets.

The group has a 51% stake in Avtovaz, assembling Ladas, 90% of which are sold within Russia.

In March, Avtovaz announced partially halting production at its plants due to shortages of electronic parts.

For Avtovaz and other Russian industrial groups, Iran offers a way to beat sanctions.

Iran's auto sector has started standing on its own feet after years of reliance on imported car kits which foreign companies stopped supplying when the US reimposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic in 2018.

Former Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Alireza Razm Hosseini said in July that the total value of imported contents used in car manufacturing had been cut by \$2.5 billion.

### Tehran Refutes...

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The Israeli media reports also published an audio recording claimed to be of the IRGC member who is saying: "We will assassinate these three for the Islamic Republic. They insisted this would be carried out."

However, the reports, which received extensive coverage by the BBC Persian, provided no source for the audio recording. Undoubtedly, Nour News maintained, the aforementioned fake news extinguished what was left of the BBC Persian's so-called credibility.

They were "clumsy attempts and baseless [allegations] to distract public attention and reduce internal pressures against the fictitious Zionist regime," it said.

The article also noted that the Israeli plot, promoted by the BBC Persian, comes at a time when the regime in Tel Aviv is under intensified pressure from world

public opinion over its crimes against Palestinians.

Israeli forces intensified their deadly attacks against Palestinians, particularly at the al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of occupied al-Quds, with the beginning of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan a month ago.

Israeli troops on various occasions attacked Palestinian worshippers at the mosque, as they gathered for prayers during Ramadan.

The desecration of al-Aqsa Mosque has drawn widespread condemnation, with Palestinian resistance groups promising a firm response.

"Thousands of synagogues will be desecrated if the Zionist acts of storming al-Aqsa Mosque recur," Yahya Sinwar, the leader of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, said in a warning to the Israeli regime last Saturday.

### Iran Moves Ahead...

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Nonetheless, as part of the detailed analysis of it and of all Iran's core oil and gas assets contained in my new book on the global oil markets, with the addition of the export and sanctions-avoiding Guriyeh-Jask pipeline, the net present value of the South Pars gas field has jumped from an estimated \$116 billion two years ago to just under US\$150 billion now, according to sources close to the Oil Ministry.

According to the only previous public statements from Iran on the South Pars Oil Layer (SPOL) project, the former deputy head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Gholamreza Manouchehri, has said that the project is a complex process requiring integrated development and that: "We are looking for a competent contractor who can make a commitment to production... We are looking for cumulative production." Earlier last month, Mohammad Meshkinfam, the managing director of the Pars Oil and Gas Company, which is in charge of developing the South Pars site, said that the company was in talks with a number of Iranian companies on the development of the oil layer of the field. He added that these negotiations were confidential.

This said, just prior to discussing the possibility of pushing the development of the SPOL, the Iranian minister of transport and urban development, Rostam Ghasemi, was at the head of a delegation that flew to Moscow overnight on 26 April to meet his Russian counterparts in order to sign several wide-ranging agreements connected to transport and transit infrastructure. According to local Iranian reports, the agreements included the activation of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the development of maritime, air, and rail cooperation between Iran and Russia. Part of this includes the operation of the rail corridor from Chabahar Port in Iran to Russia and the electrification of the Incheborun-Garmsar Railway.

Chabahar Port has been designated by China and Russia as one of the key port and later air facilities that can be assigned 'dual use' for civilian and military purposes both under the 25-year China-Iran deal originally agreed in 2019, as analyzed in-depth in my new book on the global oil markets, and under the rolling 10-year cooperation agreements between Russia and Iran. The railroad, from Garmsar on the Tehran-Mashhad mainline to Incheborun on the border with Turkmenistan, is part of a transit route connecting Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to Amirabad Port

in Iran's Mazandaran province. Meanwhile, as Finland pushed for NATO membership in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is apposite to note that the North-South railway corridor starts from Helsinki in Finland and passes through Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Mumbai.

Previously, the main international oil companies with interests in the SPOL were Denmark's Maersk Group and French oil supermajor Total. Ironically, given the subsequent turn of events regarding Iran's supermajor non-associated South Pars gas field, many in the oil industry believed that one of the reasons for Total's US\$7.45 billion purchase of Danish A.P. Moller-Maersk's oil and gas unit was to boost the French company's chances of being allowed to run the flagship Phase 11 of the South Pars field by being allowed first to develop the SPOL. According to one of the Iran sources exclusively spoken to by OilPrice.com, Maersk was just days away from being awarded the SPOL contract – alongside Royal Dutch Shell – before Iran's NIOC heard that Total was going to buy the Norwegian firm, so held off awarding the contract.

According to the NIOC's Khojasteh-Mehr, the development of the second phase of the SPOL has been negotiated within the framework of the new upstream contract model of the Iran – the Iran Petroleum Contract (IPC), as also analyzed in-depth in my new book on the global oil markets. As such, he added, the project entails upgrading and modifying the existing processing vessel and platform, overhauling existing wells, drilling new wells including production and water injection wells and appraisal, construction of oil discharge and loading system, and strengthening the water injection system.

Iran started pumping oil from the oil layer in March 2017, with an initial production of just 5,000 bpd that has risen now to 25,000 bpd, and this has been focused on the proven oil areas of the SPOL, including Sarvak, Kazhdomi, and the Upper Darian and Lower Darian formations. However, previous internal Petroleum Ministry estimates have been that the SPOL may hold around seven billion barrels of oil. This original estimate has officially been revised down to just under one billion barrels, but this is regarded by the Iranian sources spoken to by OilPrice.com as being an attempt to minimize any potential wrangling with neighboring Qatar over boundaries and the future development of the site.



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## Lampard Charged With Improper Conduct by FA

LONDON (Dispatches) - Everton manager Frank Lampard has been charged with improper conduct by the Football Association (FA) for the comments he made after his team lost 2-0 away to Merseyside rivals Liverpool last month. Lampard criticized referee Stuart Attwell after he did not award a penalty for a challenge on Everton's Anthony Gordon, with the manager suggesting that the spot kick would have been given if the challenge had been made on a Liverpool player.

## Santi Mina Sentenced To Four Years in Prison

MADRID (Dispatches) - Santi Mina, the Spanish footballer who plays for Celta Vigo, was sentenced to four years in prison after being found guilty of sexual abuse. According to the sentence, Mina will not be able to communicate or be within 500 metres of the victim for 12 years. Mina has appealed against the sentence. The 26-year-old was cleared of the charge of sexual assault, for which the state prosecutor had sought a sentence of eight years in prison, which according to Spanish law necessitates proof of intimidation or violence.

# Real Madrid to Play Liverpool In Champions League Final

MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid fought back from the brink of elimination to beat Manchester City 3-1 after extra time and 6-5 on aggregate in an enthralling and dramatic Champions League semi-final on Wednesday.

City led 1-0 on the night and 5-3 on aggregate when Riyad Mahrez scored after 73 minutes but Real substitute Rodrygo equalised in the last minute of normal time and headed home one minute later to level the tie at 5-5.

Five minutes into extra time Karim Benzema converted a penalty awarded for a foul on him by Ruben Dias and Real, the record 13-times European champions, held the shell-shocked English side at bay to reach the final.

Real will play Liverpool on May 28 in Paris, a repeat of the 2018 final in Kyiv which the Spanish team won 3-1.

It was another superb rearguard action by Real who came from behind for the third consecutive time in this season Champions League knock-out stage to stay on course to win Europe's most prestigious club competition for the fifth time in the last nine years.

After a breathtaking first leg packed with goals and individual brilliance from both sides, the return game was the complete opposite.

City worked tirelessly to subdue their hosts who failed to manage a shot on target on the first half.

With Real fast running out of ideas, Bernardo Silva broke through the middle of their defence and laid the ball off for Mahrez to finish and City looked certain to stay on course to win the trophy for the first time.

But as they did against Paris St Germain in the round of 16 and Chelsea in the quarter-finals, Real conjured up the magic they required.

Rodrygo finished from close range to give them a lifeline and the Brazilian headed home moments later to send the Bernabeu crowd into raptures before Benzema completed the turnaround.

Meanwhile Liverpool held off a stirring comeback from Villarreal to reach the Champions League final as second-half goals from Fabinho, Luis Diaz and Sadio Mane secured a 5-2 aggregate victory.

Trailing 2-0 from the first leg, Villarreal sparked hopes of a remarkable turnaround in the return at the Estadio de la Ceramica after Boulaye Dia finished in the third



minute and Francis Coquelin headed in another to level the tie at 2-2.

But Jurgen Klopp threw on Diaz for Diogo Jota at the interval to shake Liverpool into life and it worked, the visitors scoring three times in 12 minutes to kill off Villarreal's revival and advance to their third Champions League final in five years.

Liverpool will await the winner of Real Madrid and Manchester City, who play their second leg at the Santiago Bernabeu on Wednesday, with City leading 4-3 from the opener last week.

Madrid will offer a sterner test than Villarreal, but after a chastening experience at Anfield last week, Unai Emery's side delivered a spirited performance that rattled Liverpool and showed why they knocked out both Juventus and Bayern Munich to reach the semi-finals.

Liverpool were careless, perhaps complacent even, in the first half but sensational in the second, finding an intensity and pace Villarreal were simply unable to match.

Diaz, who started on the bench but was integral to the fightback, was excellent again and may soon be an automatic starter for Klopp.

A banner draped behind the Villarreal goal at one end read "90 minutes from our dream" while before kick-off the stadium announcer shouted "it's possible, the comeback is possible!"

And if anyone inside the ground was still sceptical they were given an early injection of belief in the third minute as Pervis Estupinan swung in a cross from the left to Etienne Capoue at the back post.



MUeller (Dispatches) - Thomas Mueller has extended his contract with Bayern Munich until 2024, it was announced, with the Germany international set to spend his entire professional career at the Bundesliga champions, who he joined as a 10-year-old.

"The journey we have taken together since I joined the youth team in 2000 has been a fantastic success story so far," said Mueller, 32, who won a record 11th league title with the Bavarians this season.

"So let's continue it together," added the 2014 World Cup winner, who has made 112 appearances for Germany since his international debut in 2010.

Mueller as well as top-scorer Robert Lewandowski, Bayern captain Manuel Neuer and winger Serge Gnabry, were due to be out of contract in 2023.

He is the first of the quartet to extend their deals amid speculation Lewandowski could leave at the end of the season with Barcelona reportedly a possible destination.

Bayern chief executive Oliver Kahn describes Mueller as "an identification figure who carries the emblem of our club in his heart."

"He's someone who takes leadership, plus he's an important character with his manner in the dressing room," Kahn added.

## Bournemouth Seal Premier League Promotion

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bournemouth earned promotion to the Premier League with a 1-0 home win over Nottingham Forest in the second-tier Championship, sewing up second-place with one game to spare.

Bournemouth, together with Championship title winners Fulham, secure automatic promotion and will return to the Premier League after two years while Forest will go into the playoffs for the final spot.

Striker Kieffer Moore broke the deadlock in the 83rd minute, sidefooting powerfully home after Philip Billing found him with a clever free kick having shaped to shoot.

"We locked eyes and just saw the space. Thankfully Phil (Billing) played me the ball and the rest is history," Moore told Sky Sports.

Bournemouth got off to a good start, creating their first chance after a couple of minutes but Forest keeper Brice Samba denied midfielder Billing.

Forest striker Sam Surridge found space in the ninth minute after a brilliant long-range cross from defender Djed Spence but he smashed his finish against the crossbar.

Both sides created further chances in an attacking first half, which ended goalless.

After a slow start to the second period, Bournemouth got on top, but Forest held firm until Bournemouth defender Jordan Zemura won the decisive free kick on the edge of the box.

"I've not really slept this week. The first-half was emotional. Then we had a moment of magic from Kieffer (Moore) and we're in the Premier League," winger Ryan Christie told Sky Sports.

## Bryant's Rookie Jersey Could fetch \$5m at Auction

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - A purple and gold jersey worn 25 years ago by Los Angeles Lakers great Kobe Bryant during his rookie season will hit the auction block next month and is estimated to fetch between \$3 million and \$5 million, SCP Auctions said.

Bryant entered the league as a teenager in 1996 and the number eight jersey has been "resolution photomatched" to four games during his rookie campaign, including two playoff games, SCP said.

# Maradona's "Hand of God" Shirt Sold for 7.1m Pounds



LONDON (Dispatches) - The shirt worn by Diego Maradona when he scored two of the most famous goals in soccer history was sold for 7.14 million pounds (\$8.93 million) on Wednesday, marking a new auction record for an item of sports memorabilia.

Maradona wore Argentina's No. 10 shirt in the 1986 World Cup quarter-final against England in Mexico. Six minutes into the second half he put his team ahead by punching the ball into the net for what became known as the "Hand of God" goal.

Four minutes later Maradona dribbled from his own half to score a goal widely considered one of the greatest in World Cup history.

England midfielder Steve Hodge got Maradona's jersey after the game and announced last month he was putting it up for auction after 19 years on display at England's National Football Museum.

"This historic shirt is a tangible reminder of an important moment not only in the history of sports, but in the history of the 20th century," said Brahm Wachter, Sotheby's Head of Streetwear and Modern Collectables.

One-Year anniversary of Diego Maradona's death, in Buenos Aires Sotheby's said the buyer was anonymous.

The sale broke the previous record for sports memorabilia set by the original autograph manuscript of the Olympic Manifesto from 1892, which went for \$8.8 million in 2019.

The sale of Maradona's jersey was complicated by claims that the wrong shirt was going under the hammer, with his daughter and ex-wife saying Hodge received the shirt Maradona wore in the first half of the match.

Sotheby's said they used photomatching technology to "conclusively" match the shirt to both goals by "examining unique details on various elements of the item, including the patch, stripes, and numbering".

Maradona, regarded as one of the world's best ever footballers, died in November, 2020 aged 60.

## UEFA Bans Russian Soccer Team, Club Sides From European Competitions

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's national soccer team and the country's club sides have been banned from participating in the Champions League and all other European competitions in 2022-23 seasons following its invasion of Ukraine, UEFA announced.

It is the latest round of sanctions during Russia's war on Ukraine after FIFA and UEFA previously suspended Russian national and club teams in February.

The Switzerland-based governing body also said Russia's bid to host the Euro 2028 or the Euro 2032 tournaments have also been declared ineligible, while no Russian clubs will be allowed to compete in European competitions next season.

Saying that Portugal will take Russia's place in the Women's Euro 2022 being hosted by England in July, UEFA said the decision to rule Russia out as a host followed its regulations that each bidder should "not act in a manner that could bring UEFA, the UEFA final or UEFA final phase, any other bidder the bidding procedure or European football into disrepute."

According to UEFA's updated list of allocated entries, Russian league winner Zenit St. Petersburg's place in the next Champions League group stage will instead go to the champion of Scotland.

UEFA said its executive committee took the latest decisions to "ensure their smooth staging in a safe and secure environment for all those concerned."



## Nadal Overpowers Kecmanovic in Madrid on Return

MADRID (Dispatches) - Rafa Nadal returned from an injury layoff to beat Miomir Kecmanovic 6-1 7-6(4) and reach the last 16 in the Madrid Open claycourt tournament. Nadal, competing in his first match since March following a rib injury, quickly found his rhythm in a strong start against Serbian Kecmanovic.

Rain suspended play early in the second set and 21-times Grand Slam champion Nadal lost momentum. The 35-year-old Spaniard, hitting with explosive power, recovered from failing to serve out the match at 6-5 in the second set to seal victory in just under two hours.

Nadal, who improved his win-loss record to 21-1 for the season, is aiming to win his sixth title on home soil in Madrid having last won the tournament in 2017, and will next play qualifier David Goffin. Earlier, world number three Alexander Zverev overcame a slow start to beat Marin Cilic 4-6 6-4 6-4, while qualifier Dusan Lajovic beat fifth seed Casper Ruud 7-6(7) 2-6 6-4.

Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas is due to face Lucas Pouille later. In the women's draw, Tunisian Ons Jabeur reached her second WTA 1000 semi-final after beating former world number one Simona Halep 6-3 6-2. Jabeur won 77.8 per cent points on her first serve and converted four of five break points against twice champion Halep to seal victory in just over an hour.

World number 10 Jabeur will face qualifier Ekaterina Alexandrova for a spot in her first WTA 1000 final after Alexandrova defeated Amanda Anisimova 6-4 6-3.

Swiss Jil Teichmann beat Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina 6-3 6-4 and will face the winner of the match between Sara Sorribes Tormo of Spain and American Jessica Pegula.

