

**Authorities Seized a Foreign Ship
Reportedly Carrying More Than
550,000 Liters of Smuggled Fuel in
Iran's Southern Province of
Hormozgan and Detained Its Crew
For the Necessity Investigations**

IRAN NEWS

**Turkmenistan Ambassador to Iran
Ahmad Kakabayevich Gurbanov
Said That the Islamic Republic's
13th Government Has Promoted
Relations Between Tehran and
Ashgabat in a Short Time**

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7498 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

THURSDAY MAY 19, 2022 - ORDIBEHESHT 29, 1401

2

DOMESTIC

**Leader Urges for
Population Growth in
Iran as a Necessity**



> SEE PAGE 2

3

DOMESTIC

**Oman, Iran
Explore Cooperation
In Various Fields**



> SEE PAGE 3

4

INTERNATIONAL

**Mariupol Siege Appears
Over as Ukrainian Defenders
Emerge From Ruins**



> SEE PAGE 4

8

SPORTS

**Liverpool Beat
Southampton To Take
Title Race to Final Day**



> SEE PAGE 8

World Urged to End Passivity on Israeli Crimes

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Zahra Ershadi has slammed the international community's inaction on Israel's war crimes and continuous terrorism against the Palestinian people, saying the Security Council must take immediate action to hold the regime responsible for its brutalities.

"Every day, we are witnessing the Israel regime's crimes against the Palestinian people," Ershadi said on Tuesday.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran calls on the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, to take swift measures in support of the Palestinian people to end the Israeli aggression and impunity and to hold the regime accountable for the international crimes it has committed over the decades," she emphasized.

Pointing to the recent murder of a renowned Palestinian journalist in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, the Iranian diplomat said the Israeli forces brutally martyred Shireen Abu Akleh in an attempt to silence the voice of the Palestinian people's resistance against the regime's acts of aggression and occupation, "something that will never materialize."

See Page 7

Azerbaijani Delegation Due in Tehran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Baku and Tehran will discuss mutual cooperation in transport and transit, logistics, energy, industry, trade, investment, and other areas, Azemews reports.

The discussions were to take place as part of an upcoming visit of an Azerbaijani delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev to Iran on May 18.

The delegation includes officials from the Ministries of Energy, High Technologies and Transport, Foreign Affairs, the Customs Committee, the State Agency for Motor Roads, the Azerbaijan Railways, and other agencies.

During the visit, the delegation will hold meetings at the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, the Foreign Ministry, the General Staff of the Armed Forces, and other agencies of Iran.

One of the main topics of discussion will be the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Azerbaijani and Iranian governments on the establishment of new communication links between the Eastern Zangazur economic region of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan through Iran.

See Page 7

World Today Is in Dire Need of Honest Information



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN- Congratulating the World Public Relations Day to all activists in the field, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said, "Public relations and communications are the beacons of the development of awareness and jihad of enlightenment in society and have an important role in informing the public".

Speaking in a meeting of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace on Tuesday afternoon, Raisi referred to the approach of the World Communication and Public Relations Day, and said, "The world today needs free circulation of information, honest information and active protection of public opinion more than ever".

The President added, "In the age of increasing media messages, it is more difficult than ever to establish a healthy and effective relationship with the people and the elite, and this can only be achieved through the use of wise methods and strategies in the field of public relations".

Congratulating the World Public Relations and Communication Day to all activists in this field, Raisi said, "Public relations and communications are the beacons of awareness development and jihad of enlightenment in society, and for this reason, they have an important role in informing the public".

The President said that continuous communication with the people, especially in a government that claims to be justice-oriented and popular, is of fundamental importance.

Raisi stated, "In the days when the most important need of the country is to revive hope and restore social capital, a very heavy responsibility is on the shoulders of all public relations".

Meanwhile on Wednesday and in the cabinet meeting, he President described self-sufficiency in basic goods as a strategic issue and emphasized, "The Ministry of Agricultural Jihad should cooperated with other institutions, including science and knowledge-based centers, to come up with a plan so that the country becomes self-sufficient in the production of basic goods as soon as possible".

Raisi referred to the increase in pollution and dust in some provinces across the country, especially Khuzestan province, and said, "An effective solution to this issue requires cooperation with the region and neighboring countries".

Accordingly, the President instructed the Department of Environment to cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant agencies to solve the problem of air pollution through consultation with neighboring countries.

In another part of his speech, referring to the need to ensure the country's food security, the President called self-sufficiency in basic goods strategic and said, "Apart from daily routine work, basic and infrastructural measures should not be neglected".

Raisi added, "Production is a fundamental and infrastructural issue, and by strengthening domestic production, we must achieve self-sufficiency in the next few years and in the shortest possible time, so that we do not need other countries".

He continued by emphasizing the need for the inclusion of all agencies in making decisions, saying, "All elements of the government should evaluate all aspects in decision-making so that accurate and workable decisions can be made".

In another part of his speech, the President referred to the need for a precise and comprehensible explanation of the government's plan for the fair distribution of subsidies to the people to counter some skepticisms, and said, "The government's economic and information teams and related agencies should clear things up for people and calm the public opinion and the market by explaining things thoroughly".

Iran Oil Output Up 1.4% to 2.564 mln bpd in April

TEHRAN (PressTV) -Iran's oil production rose slightly in April against the first quarter this year, OPEC figures show, as a media report claims Iran's crude export volumes remained stable last month despite reports suggesting that shipments to China had declined because of higher Russian exports to the East Asian country.

Figures by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries published on Tuesday showed that Iranian oil production had reached an average of 2.564 million barrels per day (bpd) in April, an increase of 1.4% against figures reported in the January-March quarter and up 7.2% against the similar quarter in 2021.

The figures are consistent with reports in recent months suggesting that Iran has been selling more crude despite direct American sanctions targeting the country's exports. Government authorities have indicated that Iranian oil exports reached an average of 1.6 million bpd in late 2021 and remained at the same levels in the first quarter this year.

China has been the dominant buyer of Iranian crude in recent months although some reports have suggested that Iranian crude exports to China declined in April by as much as 256,000 bpd as Russian shipments to East Asia increased after Western countries imposed sanctions on Moscow because of the war in Ukraine. Citing the new OPEC figures, Iran's official IRNA news agency said the figures prove reports about dwindling Iranian oil exports to China were wrong.

The report said that Iran's domestic consumption of crude was flat in April, meaning that export figures had remained unchanged over that month. It added that increased oil output in April as reported by OPEC means that Iran had either sold more crude to China or it had found a new market for its oil.

No Development in Tehran-Riyadh Talks

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's foreign ministry said there has been "no new development" since April in talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Iranian state news agency IRNA reported, shortly after a lawmaker said top diplomats of the rival countries will meet soon.

Earlier, an Iranian lawmaker told the semi-official Fars news agency that Iran's Hossein Amirabdollahian will soon meet his Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan in Iraq to discuss issues such as the reopening of embassies and the Yemen crisis.

When asked about the meeting, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh said: "No new developments have taken place since the last round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Iraq".

"There are a number of issues on the agenda such as how the talks will continue and at which level," Khatibzadeh said.

A fifth round of talks between Tehran and Riyadh was held in April in Baghdad, which Tehran described as "positive".

Riyadh severed ties with Tehran in 2016 after Iranian protesters stormed the Saudi embassy in the Iranian capital following the execution of a Shi'ite cleric in Saudi Arabia.

Stolen Money Paid Back To Iran's Dayyani

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea's financial authorities recently returned over 61.4 billion won (\$48.84 million) owed to Iran's Dayyani Group, the amount that was stolen in an embezzlement scheme here between late 2012 and 2018, sources said Tuesday.

The policymaking Financial Services Commission has returned most of the total 73 billion won owed to Dayyani's consumer electronics arm, Entekhab, as compensation over the Iranian business' failed takeover of Daewoo Electronics back in 2010.

Woori Bank, a top commercial lender here, had managed the money in the meantime, as the payment to Dayyani had been delayed due to US sanctions on Iran. The bank, however, failed to notice that an employee had withdrawn a combined 61.4 billion won over the course of six years, and discovered the embezzlement just last month.

See Page 7

France Considers Ready New Agreement With Iran On Nuclear Program

PARIS (Dispatches) - The French government today considered ready after two months of work a new agreement with Iran on its nuclear program, but warned that differences between the Persian country and the United States delay its materialization.

An issue involving the United States and Iran, external to the agreement, has not allowed a return to their respect, the Foreign Ministry specified in a statement by its spokesman.

According to the official source, the project was ready, and that is why the E3 negotiators (France, Germany and the United Kingdom) left Vienna, with the conviction that the pact can be completed very soon.

In 2015, the international community celebrated the signing of an agreement on Tehran's nuclear program between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Russia) plus Germany.

However, the coming to power of Donald Trump in 2017 represented the end of the initiative, with Washington's return to unilateral sanctions and aggressiveness against the Persian nation, which in response resumed uranium enrichment at levels prohibited by the pact.

France urged the parties to take the necessary steps to conclude the agreement as soon as possible.

It would be a serious and dangerous mistake to assume that the project could be on the table indefinitely, he warned.



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Iran to Invite 12 States to Discuss Fight Against Dust Storms

TEHRAN (MNA) - The secretary of the National Iranian Taskforce Against Dust Storms has said that Tehran will invite 12 countries to discuss the ways to fight against dust storms in June.

Ali Mohammad Tahmasebi Birgani, Secretary of the National Iranian Taskforce Against Dust Storms said that “More than 90% of the dust that damages the environment comes from outside Iran.”

He said that the air pollution from the dust storms causes a lot of

damage to the people’s health in addition to the environment.

Tahmasebi Birgani also said that the National Iranian Taskforce Against Dust Storms has formed a working group to discuss the matter with the neighboring countries.

The Iranian officials also noted that the environment ministers of 12 countries will also be invited to Iran in July to hold a summit on a comprehensive action plan on the dust storms problem.

Real Leap in Housing Construction Gov’t’s Priority

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi emphasizes the government’s commitment to the implementation of the National Housing Movement program, and calls this program one of the main priorities of the government and instructed the related agencies to remove the obstacles to the implementation of the housing construction leap.

Speaking in the third session of the Supreme Housing Council in the 13th government, Raisi said that building at least one million housing units a year and addressing the concerns of the people in this regard is a serious need of the society.

Noting that the Housing Leap Law has obliged all agencies and institutions to cooperate in achieving the goals of the National Housing Movement, the President added, “In the past 8 months, good measures have been taken to implement this law, which was necessary but not sufficient”.

Referring to the report presented in this meeting by the Minister of Roads and Urban Development on the progress of the implementation of the Housing Leap Law and the implementation of the obligations set for various agencies, Raisi said, “The law is to popularize and justify subsidies, but at the request of the Minister of Roads and Urban Development and considering the importance of housing for me, this meeting was held to review and resolve the problems ahead of the implementation of the Housing Leap Law”.

The President also said, “All agencies should consider resolving the concerns of households in the field of housing as one of their main priorities”.

“Those in charge of implementing the Housing Leap Law should make creating a real



leap in housing construction one of their top priorities and try to address households’ concerns about housing costs to an acceptable level,” he said.

Stating that efforts should be directed towards eliminating the shortcomings in the National Housing Movement, he said, “Any other delays and backwardness must be eliminated in the shortest possible time”.

The President stated that the agencies and departments that own the land, in coordination with the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, can use them to build housing.

Raisi also instructed the governor generals to assign the lands at their disposal within a month and announce the result to the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

The President also ordered the construction of 118,000 housing units in 21 new cities in the framework of the National Housing Movement with the Iranian and Islamic model and the use of industrial methods of mass housing construction.

Raisi pointed out, “Today, in addition to the good experiences that exist in the world in the field of housing industrialization, leading companies in the field of building industrialization and applying the achievements of knowledge-based are active in the country”.

Leader Urges for Population Growth in Iran as a Necessity

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has described an increase in the Iranian population as a vital necessity,



warning against the dangers of an aging population.

In a message to a meeting of the National Population Taskforce on Wednesday, which was read out by the secretary of the taskforce Dr. Froutan, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, expressed his gratitude for all efforts aimed at saving the country from the dangers of the aging population.

Ayatollah Khamenei expressed his appreciation to the people who are working in the National Population Taskforce and the government and the lawmakers in the parliament who are making efforts to save the country from the dangers of the aging population and try to increase the young population of the country.

“I would like to emphasize once again that trying to increase the population, and increase the young population in the country as well as the support for the family, is one of the most urgent duties of officials and individuals,” he underscored.

The Leader further described the policy of increasing the country’s population as a critical policy for the future of the country.

He further urged more efforts in both legal and cultural and media campaigns in line with the aim of an increase in the population.

Number of Iranian Immigrants “Doubled” in 30 Years

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The online Khabar news website, examining the statistics of the Islamic Republic’s Passport Office, announced Iran’s 19th place in “student sending” to other countries and more than twice the population of Iranian immigrants over the past 30 years.

This statistical analysis was conducted between 2001 and August 2020 on “medal holders in student Olympiads”, “elite foundation subjects” and individuals “ranked 1 to 1000” in the country.

Among the studied groups, Olympians with 37.2%, elite foundation subjects with 25.5% and ranked 1 to 1,000 national exams with 15.4% had the highest percentage of Iranians living abroad.

The report indicates that Iran’s “student-migration” rank dropped from 29th in the world from 2003 to 2012 to 11th, during 2012-2018, which remains a high ranking.

Suspect Kills Three, Self in Hostage Standoff in Iran’s West

TEHRAN (IFP) - A man who had taken a number of people hostage at a government building in Iran’s western Ilam City has killed three people and himself, ending the standoff, which also saw at least seven people wounded.

Police said the man took people hostage at the Department of Assets of Ilam Province’s Mostazafan Foundation on Wednesday morning.

The suspect, who was not identified by name, was reportedly a former employee of the institution who had been fired.

Counter-terror police immediately responded to the scene.

Colonel Farzad Yassemi, a deputy police chief for Ilam Province, said the incident was being investigated. Meanwhile, some of the wounded are said to be in critical condition.

Enhanced Military Interactions With Tajikistan, Main Priority



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian commander says the expansion of military interactions with Tajikistan is among the main priorities of the Islamic Republic’s Armed Forces given the two countries’ strategic position in the West Asia region.

Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri, who is in Tajikistan at the head of a high-ranking delegation, made the remarks in a meeting with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon in Dushanbe on Tuesday.

“Strengthening, upgrading and developing the level of joint military interaction and relations between the two countries and increasing cooperation in various military fields are among the important priorities of Iran’s Armed Forces with Tajikistan,” Baqeri said.

He expressed hope that the two countries would accelerate the improvement of military and defense cooperation in the future. The senior Iranian commander further stressed the importance of promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan as a neighbor and friendly country and said, “The Armed Forces of the two countries can help Afghanistan establish security and peace by developing military and regional cooperation.”

Rahmon, for his part, said Tajikistan’s Armed Forces welcomes the expansion of military and defense cooperation with the Iran. The Tajik president pointed to the inauguration of a manufacturing plant for tactical unmanned aerial vehicles in his country earlier in the day and added that such cooperation should reach its highest level in all military fields.

He noted that cultural commonalities are still regarded as the main basis for strengthening ties between the two nations and added that common historical and linguistic bonds have provided unparalleled conditions for further development of relations in defense, military, cultural, political and economic areas.

To promote and develop joint defense and military cooperation with regional countries, Iran has inaugurated a manufacturing plant for indigenously-developed Ababil-2 multi-role tactical unmanned aerial vehicles in Tajikistan. During an official ceremony in Dushanbe, Iran inaugurated a manufacturing plant for indigenously-developed Ababil-2 multi-role tactical unmanned aerial vehicles in Tajikistan in a bid to promote joint defense and military cooperation.

Ghana Ready for Exports of Health, Agricultural Items to Ghana

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said that Iran is ready for exports of health and agricultural items as well as industrial and knowledge-based commodities to Ghana.

The foreign minister made the remarks during a meeting in Tehran with Ghana’s Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Ibrahim Mohammed Awal.

The Ghanaian minister has traveled to Iran to attend the 7th meeting of the Iran-Ghana Joint Cooperation Commission.



Referring to the concerns of the African countries about the spread of terrorism in the continent, Amirabdollahian said that Iran is ready to share experiences with Ghana about the fight against terrorism.

The Ghanaian minister, for his part, hailed Iran’s support for Ghana in different agricultural,

health and educational areas and called for further cooperation in other areas such as transportation.

He noted that launching a direct flight between Iran and Ghana can help boost tourism between the two countries.

Int’l Bodies Must Adopt Just Stands on Afghanistan, Palestine, Yemen

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in a meeting with the visiting deputy Slovakian foreign minister, Ingrid Brockova, said that the international organizations must adopt just stances on developments of Afghanistan, Palestine and Yemen.

Amirabdollahian said in his meeting with Brockova that he is pleased with the outcome of the two countries’ deputy foreign ministers, and voiced the foreign ministry’s readiness for further improvement and deepening of bilateral political and economic cooperation.

He said that holding the Joint Economic Commission was an appropriate move for consultations on creating new business and economic opportunities.

Referring to the prevailing developments in the region, Amirabdollahian said that the Islamic Republic of Iran’s stance is against wars in which the civilians are hurt.

“Unfortunately, in our region Afghanistan, Palestine, and Yemen we are witnesses to the scenes of heartbreaking suffering of ordinary people, including women and children, and it is necessary that the international and European organizations will adopt appropriate stances and pay greater attention to those issues,” added the Iranian foreign minister.

The Slovakian deputy foreign minister, for her part, expressed delight for the meetings among the two countries’ political and economic officials in various levels.

Brockova also stressed the importance of bilateral political and economic relations.

Tehran to Host Iran SCOCOEX Conference and Exhibition in July

TEHRAN, May 18 (MNA) – The 1st conference and exhibition of economic cooperation opportunities of the member countries, supervisors and “dialogue partners” of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization “SCO” and Iran’s neighbors will be held.

The exhibition will be held from 3 to 6 July in Tehran International Conference Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Summit Hall) (Tehran, Persian Gulf Freeway), Shahr-e Aftab International.

Some Part of Iran’s goals in joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and holding the mentioned exhibition is maintaining, creating and expanding a large and sustainable consumer market for oil and non-oil exports, meeting some of the country’s technology needs and required raw materials and Industries, and take advantage of China’s economic strength, power and capabilities, free trade and working and reaching an agreement on granting and tariff exemptions, strengthening trade with East Asian countries, opportunities of the Energy Club between SCO countries, enhancing Iran’s capacity in the field of transit and international transportation and creating benefits for the country in a plan, facilitating cooperation in the field of special medicines and knowledge-based activities, increase foreign investment and create opportunities for

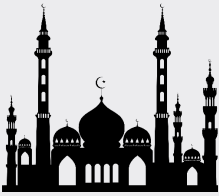
attracting resources in the SCO interbank consortium and take the initiative for Iran to establish a joint international bank with the presence of SCO countries and Iran’s neighbors (8 + 18 group), formation of a free trade zone with SCO member countries as well as Iran’s neighbors and the establishment of the International Trade Development Organization between these countries (8 + 18 group).

The proposed subjects of the Iran SCOCOEX Conference, which will be attended by 26 member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, are:

A prosperous future for the development of SCO cooperation in member countries joint cooperation and investment in the development of oil and energy projects

Challenges and strategies for developing joint economic cooperation. Technological and industrial cooperation in various fields: food industry, medicine, automobile, steel, knowledge-based companies, artificial intelligence, IT and ...

The most important benefit that this event brings for you along with business communication is strengthening your position and ranking in the minds of the audience and taking advantage of meeting opportunities and the subconscious influence of your brand on the minds of the audience.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

13:00

20:25

04:15

05:55

32. Those who reject Faith say: "Why is not the Qur'an revealed to him all at once? Thus (is it revealed), that We may strengthen thy heart thereby, and We have rehearsed it to thee in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually.

33. And no question do they bring to thee but We reveal to thee the truth and the best explanation (thereof).

Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (32 - 33)

Oman, Iran

Explore Cooperation

In Various Fields

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Oman's Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology Eng. Said Hamound Al Ma'awali received in his office Alireza Peyman-Pak, Deputy Minister for Industry, Mining and Trade of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The two sides reviewed areas of cooperation in the fields of transport, communications and information technology and ways of enhancing them to serve the interests of the two countries.

During the meeting, the two sides also emphasized the need for developing cooperation in the field of maritime transportation and also regional and trans-regional transit.

Iran and Oman also agreed to hold a joint Working Group on maritime transportation.

The meeting was attended by Eng. Khamis Mohammed Al Shamakhi, Undersecretary for Transport.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) received on Tuesday a business



delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran, headed by Peyman-Pak.

Eng. Ridha Juma Al Saleh, Chairman of OCCI's Board of Directors said that the visit reflects the keenness of Oman and Iran to enhance relations and trade exchange.

Al Saleh added that B2B meetings between business-people and representatives from the private sectors of the two countries will contribute to broadening the horizons of joint businesses and investments in lucrative sectors.

The trade exchange between the two countries, Al Saleh said, reached \$306.043 million by June 2020. Omani exports reached \$175.207 million, while Iranian imports stood at \$130.836 million.

In his turn, the Iranian Deputy Minister for Industry, Mining and Trade said that the Iranian side is keen to achieve higher rates of trade exchange as his country is striving to resolve the challenges facing Omani businesspeople in Iran.

As the visit of Iranian President to Oman approaches, the Deputy Minister of Industry arrived in Omani capital of Muscat at the head of a high-ranking trade delegation consisting of 30 private companies, representatives of Ports and Maritime Organization and the Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) and were welcomed by Omani officials.

IMIDRO Watchdog Inspects

Lamerd Special Economic Zone



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Following remarkable activities of the infrastructural projects in Lamerd Special Economic Zone, the watchdog of Iranian Mines, Mining Industries Development and Renovation (IMIDRO) inspected these projects.

According to the public relations of Lamerd Special Economic Zone, Dr. Gholamrezaee, the infrastructure manager and Dr. Hassani, the manager of the comptroller's office of IMIDRO, leading a delegation comprised of the watchdog team of the organization, visited the zone and inspected the projects underway in the zone and got acquainted with the trend of progress of the projects.

In this one-day visit, the dispatched team inspected projects of green space, water desalination, parking lot of the zone, supporting park, key road, mine, construction of roads and streets, channels for guiding the surficial waters, dykes and construction of warehouses and the second line of the Lamerd-Special zone and Lamerd Freeway-Parsian roads.

During the visit, the infrastructure manager of IMIDRO Eng. Ansari explained the goals and progresses of the infrastructural projects in the zone and hailed the support and cooperation of IMIDRO in materialization and operationalization of these projects.

Gholamrezaee said considerable changes are seen in the field of infrastructures in the zone, adding that last year the zone held some good tenders and this year the zone expects good progress in projects in this geographical location. She reiterated that the output of these efforts and successes is not limited to this zone but it will be for the whole country.

Then Dr. Hassani, for his part, hailed efforts of the young CEO of the zone Eng. Ansari for advancing the infrastructural projects and said ever personnel and manager in the zone can reduce pressure on the CEO and expressed hope this good move of Mr. Ansari would continue.

At the end of the meeting, the CEO of the zone Eng. Ansari expressed his gratitude over the presence of the IMIDRO officials in the zone and commemorated he memory of the late Mohammad Ali Hayati, former representative of Lamerd in Majlis, who laid the cornerstone the Lamerd Special Economic Zone during his presence in Majlis.

Sepahan Oil Co. Honored by IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – During the first conference for honoring the top companies which was held by Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Sepahan Oil Company was honored as one of the top companies.

The conference was held in presence of Minister of Finance and some government and private sector officials and the best companies in terms of offering their products on the IME were chosen and honored.

Sepahan Oil Company as the biggest supplier on the IME and the first supplier of base oil and engine oil on the IME which led to the formation of this market on the IME was honored.

The company as one of the biggest refiners for producing lubricants of the Middle East decided to offer its products on the IME to create transparency in the market due to the lack of transparency regarding the lubricant and engine oil market in the past years.

This action of Sepahan Oil Refinery has cut the hands of the middlemen from this market and it has been direct supply of products to the domestic producers and companies.

So due to the successful model of Sepahan Oil Company, the ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade tasked other lubricant producing companies to offer their products on the IME and currently, Sepahan Co. offers different types of base oil, wax and engine oil on the IME.



Tehran,Havana Stress

Strengthening Ports,

Maritime Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Cuba emphasized the need for enhancing cooperation in the fields of ports and maritime.

The protocol on ports cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Cuba was signed by CEO of Iranian Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Cuba in Tehran on Tuesday in the course of Iran-Cuba Joint Economic Cooperation Commission.

In the signing ceremony, Ali Akbar Safaei, Deputy Roads Minister pointed to the policies adopted by Iranian government in establishing economic cooperation with neighboring countries and also those countries which share the same views with Iran's policies in the international arena and stated that very good and important documents were inked between officials of the two countries, one of which is the signing of a port cooperation protocol between Iranian and Cuban governments.

Cooperating with Cuba in the field of ports including joint investment in ports is one of the main issues of the document, he said.

Upon signing of this document and negotiations made in this regard, maritime trade between Iran and Cuba in the field of shipping and exchange of goods as well as exporting of goods from Cuba to Iran was developed considerably, Safaei continued.

Development of maritime and port cooperation in International Maritime Organization (IMO) in line with securing the common interests of the two countries in international bodies was another issue that was discussed in the course of signing the cooperation document, the deputy roads minister added.

He expressed hope that the two countries would witness a considerable boom in bilateral trade.

Meanwhile a roadmap barter trade agreement was inked between Iran and Cuba on the sidelines of holding a Joint Economic Commission meeting between the two countries in Tehran on Tuesday.

The agreement was signed between Iranian Deputy Industry Minister for Commercial Affairs Mohammad Sadeq Mofatteh and visiting Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz.

The signing ceremony also hosted senior officials from the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO).

Cuba is one of the main grain producers and is also considered a major market for Iranian commodities in Central and Latin America.

The 18th Iran-Cuba Joint Economic Commission was held in Tehran on May 15-17.

Electricity Imports Surpass Exports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The statistics published by the ministry of energy show that in April, electricity imports increased by 67 percent and by the way electricity exports dropped by 54 percent during this period, and Iran became a net importer of electricity for the first time.

A spokesperson for Iran's Electricity Industry said: "In the current situation, imports are greasy compared to electricity exports, so that we have about 500 to 600 mw of imports and about 300 to 400 mw of electricity exports. There is no problem with power supply now, but it will definitely be a priority with domestic electricity supply when restrictions are imposed."

"Iran is facing a shortage of 10,000 megawatts of electricity in the industry sector, and in order to provide this amount of electricity, it is necessary to invest large companies over four years, which has "begun," he said, noting the extent of this investment and the financial resources necessary for it.

Inflation Rate of Some Basic Foods exceed 400%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A member of parliament says that despite the government's announcement, subsidies have not been paid to nine deciles and that there is currently 400 percent inflation in some areas of basic goods.

Moinuddin Saeedi confirmed that people were "in trouble" for not paying the subsidies and hoped this would not happen when the "electronic goods coupon" project was implemented.

According to him, there is no "cohesion" in the government's economic team and, contrary to the announcement of government officials, "the impact of basic goods on inflation will be much, much greater" and will push inflation 10 percent higher.

The elimination of the preferred currency, which has led to skyrocketing prices of at least five basic commodities, has caused problems.

Cuba's COVID-19 Vaccine Production Plant Opens in Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DSESK

TEHRAN - A plant for the production of the PastoCorona vaccine was inaugurated in Iran's capital, Tehran.

With the new PastoCorona vaccine mass production center opening, Iran became the first country to manufacture Cuban Covid-19 vaccines industrially, the Finlay Vaccine Institute reported on Twitter.

The president of the Organization for Senior Business Management (OSDE) BioCubaFarma, Eduardo Martínez, said that the opening of the vaccine plant in Iran "consolidates the scientific collaboration and the international insertion of BioCubaFarma companies."

This critical step has been made possible thanks to the transfer to the Pasteur Institute of the Cuban Soberana 02 vaccine technology, a scientific breakthrough of the Finlay Vaccine Institute. According to experts in the field, Soberana 02 is the world's first conjugated vaccine against Covid-19. The Soberana 02 produced at the Pasteur Institute will be marketed as PastuCovac.

According to the Finlay Vaccine Institute report, the opening of the production plant, called PastoCorona, took place in the 18th session of the Cuba-Iran Intergovernmental Commission, which is taking place in Tehran and addresses issues for enhancing cooperation between the two countries.

Iran will be the first nation to produce one of the Cuban vaccines against the COVID-19. The inauguration, in Iran, of an anti-COVID-19 vaccine production plant called PastoCorona as a result of the transfer of technology from Soberana 02.

The inauguration ceremony for the new facility was held on Sunday, May 15, attended by Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas and Iranian Health Minister Bahram Ainollahi, together with the first vice-president of the Cuban company BioCubaFarma, Mayda Mauri.

Early agreements with Iran for the transfer of technology of Cuban vaccine candidates date back to the beginning of 2021 when Cuba announced the signing of a document with such objectives.

Iran inaugurated the facility after administering 149 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine to its population. At the same time, 69 out of every 100 people have been fully vaccinated, updated reports from Our World in Data shows.

Several Countries

Eager to Invest

In Iran's

Innotech Sector

TEHRAN (Shana) – The head of the Oil Industry Technology and Innovation Park here said that Russia, China, and Qatar have expressed their willingness to make investments in Iran.

Talking to reporters Seyed Esmaeil Kefayati added that \$750 million should be allocated to the projects of the revival of oil and gas wells, and the Russian companies are keen to invest in these projects.

He revealed that the country is also holding negotiations with a big bank of Qatar on investment in this sector.

In the meantime, he said the contracts will be signed in the near future and knowledge-based companies will cooperate in an effort to increase the production of the wells.

Shifting to a contract with a capacity to create \$2.2 billion in added value per annum, Kefayati said the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and the Oil Turbo Compressor Company (OTC) will soon ink a contract on the manufacturing of 14 turbo compressors.

According to him, OTC has also voiced its readiness to manufacture compressors for pressure booster platforms of the South Pars field.

Armenia Police Detain 300 at Anti-Gov't Protests

YEREVAN (Dispatches) - Police in Armenia today detained nearly 300 opposition supporters who tried to block streets in the capital Yerevan, which has been gripped for a month by anti-government protests.

Since mid-April, opposition parties have been staging rallies demanding Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation over his handling of a territorial dispute with Azerbaijan.

This morning, hundreds of opposition supporters attempted to block streets across central Yerevan, an AFP journalist witnessed. Armenia's police department said "286 people who disobeyed lawful demands of law enforcement agents were briefly detained".



Talks Between Maduro, Opposition Expected

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and the country's opposition are expected to announce a resumption of political negotiations in Mexico, as Washington eases some restrictions on Maduro's heavily sanctioned government, people familiar with the matter said.

President Joe Biden's administration will authorize U.S. oil company Chevron Corp to open negotiations with Maduro's government, temporarily lifting a U.S. ban on such discussions, two people told Reuters.

However, there is no final U.S. decision yet on renewing Chevron's current, limited license to operate in Venezuela, the sources said. Chevron is the last U.S. oil producer to maintain a presence in Venezuela, home to the world's largest crude reserves.



Mariupol Siege Appears Over as Ukrainian Defenders Emerge From Ruins



MARIUPOL (Dispatches) - More than 250 Ukrainian fighters surrendered to Russian forces at the Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol after weeks of desperate resistance, bringing an end to the most devastating siege of Russia's war in Ukraine and allowing President Vladimir Putin to claim a rare victory in his faltering campaign.

Reuters saw buses leave the steelworks, where defenders had held out in a complex of bunkers and tunnels, overnight and five arrived in the Russian-held town of Novoazovsk, where Moscow said the wounded would be treated.

What will happen to the fighters was unclear, although the Kremlin said Putin had personally guaranteed the prisoners would be treated according to international standards.

The denouement of a battle which came to symbolize Ukrainian resistance took place as Russia's invading forces struggled elsewhere, with troops retreating from the outskirts of Kharkiv in the northeast.

On the international front, Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson said Sweden and Finland will on Wednesday hand in their respective applications to join NATO, abandoning their long-standing policy of neutrality over concerns about Putin's wider intentions.

Their leaders expressed optimism they could overcome Turkey's objections to them joining amid a flurry of diplomatic activity aimed at smoothing their path into the 30-nation alliance.

Their move will bring about the very expansion of the Western alliance Putin invoked as one of the main justifications for what he terms his "special military operation".

The complete capture of Mariupol is Russia's biggest victory since its Feb. 24 invasion and gives Moscow total control of the Sea of Azov coast and an unbroken stretch of eastern and southern Ukraine.

But the port city now lies in ruins, and Ukraine believes tens of thousands of people were killed under months of Russian bombardment and siege.

Russia said at least 256 Ukrainian fighters had "laid down their arms and surrendered", including 51 severely wounded. Ukraine said 264 soldiers, including 53 wounded, had left.

Russian defense ministry video showed fighters leaving the plant, some carried on stretchers, others with hands up to be searched by Russian troops.

While both sides spoke of a deal under which all Ukrainian troops would abandon the huge steelworks, many details were not yet public, including how many fighters still remained inside, and whether any form of prisoner swap had been agreed.

Ukraine's Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar told a briefing that Kyiv would not disclose how many fighters were inside the plant until all were safe.

"The 'Mariupol' garrison has fulfilled its combat mission," the General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces said in a statement.

Finnish President Optimistic of NATO Deal With Turkey

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Finnish President Sauli Niinisto said he was 'optimistic' Finland and Sweden would be able to secure Turkey's support for their NATO membership bids, despite Ankara's last-minute objections.

"I am confident that with the help of constructive talks, the situation will be resolved", Niinisto told Sweden's parliament in a speech, later adding during a question period: "I'm optimistic".

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has threatened to block the alliance's expansion, accusing Helsinki and Stockholm of harboring militants from the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which has waged a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state.

Sweden has suspended any arms sales to Turkey since 2019 over Ankara's military operation in neighboring Syria.

"We will not say 'yes' to those (countries) who apply sanctions to Turkey to join security organization NATO," Erdogan said.

"Neither of the countries has a clear stance against terror organizations," Erdogan said.



Sri Lanka's Embattled President Escapes Censure Motion

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka's beleaguered president side-stepped a censure motion after his fractured coalition rallied to delay a resolution blaming him for the country's worst economic crisis.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa's shaky coalition voted against taking up the unprecedented "displeasure of parliament" motion.

The non-binding motion was proposed by the main opposition Tamil party, the Tamil National Alliance, saying it echoed the demands of thousands of anti-government demonstrators who have for weeks been seeking Rajapaksa's resignation.

Shortages of food, fuel and medicines, along with record inflation and lengthy blackouts, have brought severe hardships to Sri Lankans, in the worst financial crisis since independence from Britain in 1948.

The president's elder brother Mahinda stepped down as prime minister last week and in a bid to defuse mounting public anger, Gotabaya appointed opposition politician Ranil Wickremesinghe to replace him.

Wickremesinghe has won crucial support from the two main opposition parties to form a "unity government" to pull the country out of the dire economic crisis, but had yet to form a full cabinet on Monday afternoon.

He was expected to name a new cabinet later, but political sources said negotiations were still underway on sharing portfolios.

In an address to the nation Monday, Wickremesinghe said the country had run out of petrol and that the "next couple of months will be the most difficult ones of our lives".

Most petrol stations in the capital were closed on Tuesday with long queues outside the few that were still open.

Sri Lanka had run out of dollars to finance essential imports, Wickremesinghe said, and three oil tankers were waiting off Colombo to be paid before they would unload.

UK Unveils Radical Overhaul of EU Trade Deal in N. Ireland

LONDON (Dispatches) - The UK government announced its intention to drastically overhaul post-Brexit trade rules in Northern Ireland, arguing the plan was needed to end political paralysis in the territory but risking a trade war with the EU.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said she would introduce legislation reforming the so-called Northern Ireland Protocol "in the coming weeks" -- unless Brussels caves on its insistence that the pact cannot be rewritten.

The protocol was agreed as part of Britain's 2019 Brexit divorce deal with the European Union, recognizing Northern Ireland's status as a post-conflict territory that shared the UK's new land border with an EU member.

Its requirement for checks on goods arriving from England, Scotland and Wales has infuriated pro-UK unionists in Northern Ireland, who claim the protocol is undermining their place within the UK and are refusing to join a new power-sharing government in Belfast.

"Our preference remains a negotiated solution with the EU, and in parallel with the legislation being introduced, we remain open to further talks," Truss told parliament.

But she added: "To respond to the very grave and serious situation in Northern Ireland, we are clear there is a necessity to act to ensure the institutions can be restored as soon as possible."

Truss denied Britain was breaching international law by effectively abrogating a key element of the Brexit deal, arguing that the government had tried to implement the protocol "in good faith" but had been stymied by EU inflexibility.

The government's "first priority" remains upholding a 1998 peace deal that ended three decades of violence in Northern Ireland, Truss said, rejecting opposition fears the EU could retaliate by imposing swinging tariffs at a time of surging inflation for the UK public.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday described the plan as an "insurance" policy, after holding talks in Belfast with leaders of Northern Ireland's main parties.

The largest pro-British party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), said it would not share power with pro-Irish rivals Sinn Fein until the protocol is reworked.

Its hard line came nearly two weeks after Sinn Fein won a historic victory in elections for the devolved Stormont assembly, which entitled the party to the role of first minister in a joint executive with the DUP.

Responding to Truss in parliament, DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson said the government's announcement was a "good start" that could help restore the Stormont executive. But he insisted progress on an actual bill was needed in "days, not weeks".



Biden Calls on U.S. to Reject Poison of White Supremacy

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden on Tuesday called out what he branded the "poison" of white supremacist ideology behind a deadly mass shooting in Buffalo, New York, and said that racism is being stoked for political gain.

Speaking in the city where a white teen is accused of murdering 10 African Americans in a neighborhood supermarket, Biden said: "What happened here is simple and straightforward terrorism. Domestic terrorism."

"White supremacy is a poison running through our body politic and it's been allowed to fester right in front of our eyes," Biden said, condemning "those who spread the lie for power, for political gain and for profit."

In a searing speech that also called for restrictions on ownership of assault-style rifles, Biden listed the victims, fighting tears as he recounted how one of the dead, named as 53-year-old Andre Mackniel, had been buying a birthday cake for his three-year-old son when the gunman entered the store.

Biden's harshest comments were directed at what he described as the "perverse ideology" of white supremacists that police say inspired the shooter. In a manifesto, the alleged mass killer referred to the so-called "replacement theory" which claims the existence of a leftist plot to overwhelm the white population with non-white immigrants.

Biden described "a hate that through the media and politics (and) the internet has radicalized angry, alienated, lost and isolated individuals into falsely believing that they will be replaced -- that's the word, replaced -- by 'the other.'"

"No more. I mean no more. We need to say as clearly and forcefully as we can that the ideology of white supremacy has no place in America," he said to applause.

Payton Gendron, the 18-year-old murder suspect, planned the shooting for months -- and scoped out the location ahead of time, according to a stream of posts attributed to him on social media sites.

Gendron first wrote about killing Black people in December and decided to target the Buffalo store based on its large surrounding African American population, according to US media analysis of hundreds of pages of messages.

Earlier Tuesday, Biden and his wife Jill Biden laid a bouquet at a makeshift memorial outside the supermarket where the slaughter took place.



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Zaferanieh Apt (\$2500)
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yard, pkg
Fully Furn

Jordan Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdes, S/p
S, J, yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Farmanieh (\$2200) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, balcony, F.F
Gheitarieh (\$1600) 150sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, balcony, F.F
Mahmoodieh (\$3000) 300sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, balcony, F.F

Aghdasieh (\$2700)
300sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p
S, J, L.balcony, pkg
marble fl, Fully Furn

Niavaran Apt (\$2000)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg

Velenjak bldg
5storey, 20bdrs, S/p
S, J, storages, pkgs
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Standard Chartered Expects Malaysia's Economy to Grow to 7%

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - The Malaysian economy is expected to return to above pre-pandemic levels with the 2022 gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast to 7.0 per cent from 6.2 per cent given stronger-than-expected first quarter (Q1) GDP growth, said Standard Chartered Bank (StanChart).

The bank also maintained Overnight Policy Rate (OPR)

hikes in 2022 totalling 75 basis points (bps), with two more hikes in July and September 2022, bringing it up to 2.5 per cent by end-2022.

StanChart said the "growth recovery was broad-based" which saw all components expanding quarter-on-quarter (q-o-q), with the exception of investment and trade in services remaining below pre-pandemic levels as of Q1.



Turkish House Sales Mark Record April

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Residential property sales in Turkey rose nearly 40% year-over-year in April, official data showed Tuesday, as the upward trend continued despite high borrowing costs and soaring prices.

The surge was also propelled by the pace in interest from foreign buyers, particularly Russians, who more than doubled their house purchases compared to a month ago as they sought a financial haven.

House sales rose 38.8% in April to 133,058 units, up from 95,863 a year ago, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said, marking an all-time monthly high for the month.

It followed the highest March figure to date, as sales hit 134,170, a 20.6% year-over-year increase. Sales on annual basis had surged 113.7%, 25.1% and 20% in December, January and February, respectively.

The rise comes amid declining supply and soaring prices, but households continue to view real estate as an attractive investment tool to shield themselves from inflation that runs at a 20-year high of nearly 70%.

The government earlier this month announced several measures to boost home sales and address the skyrocketing prices that have surged nearly 100% annually, as residents struggle to find affordable homes to rent or buy.

The construction index has soared 102% year-over-year in March, according to data from TurkStat. The residential property price index also leaped an annual 96% in February, the central bank data showed. In Istanbul, the index climbed 106% on the year.

The data showed April mortgaged sales rose 82.9% from a year earlier to 32,030, accounting for 24.1% of the total sales in the period.

The surge in sales this year come despite interest rates on housing loans being above 1%, soaring costs and skyrocketing prices.

Istanbul, Turkey's largest city in terms of population, had the highest share with 19.8%, or 26,330 house sales last month. It was followed by the capital Ankara with 12,195 sales and the Aegean province of Izmir at 8,459, giving them shares of 9.2% and 6.4%, respectively.

Sales from January through April were up 26.2% to 453,121 houses, despite high borrowing costs.

The growth momentum will continue because real estate is the most valuable means of protection against inflation, said Inanç Kabadayı, chairperson of Ege Yapı.

The current demand supports the expectations, Kabadayı told Anadolu Agency (AA), stating that measures recently unveiled by the government would add pace to sales in the period ahead.

As part of the scheme announced by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan last week, cheaper housing loans will be provided to those who convert their foreign exchange savings to Turkish lira or sell their gold to the central bank to use in purchases of houses worth up to TL 2 million (\$127,150).

The rates on the loans would be a monthly 0.89% with a maturity of up to 10 years.

Russian Crude Production Plunges by Nearly 9% in April

LONDON (Dispatches) - Russian crude output in April fell by nearly 9% from the previous month, an internal OPEC+ report showed on Tuesday, as Western sanctions on Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine hit the top oil producer.

Russia's oil output stood at 9.16 million barrels per day (bpd) in April, according to data from secondary sources collated by OPEC+, down about 860,000 bpd from March and nearly 1.2 million bpd below its OPEC+ ally Saudi Arabia's output.

That is the steepest fall in the country's output since the one that unfolded after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and has left Russian production 1.28 million bpd below the level required under an oil production cut agreement between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, a group known as OPEC+.

Despite missing production targets and selling barrels at a discount, the recent surge in crude prices pushed Moscow's oil and gas revenue to 1.81 trillion roubles (\$27.92 billion) in April, compared to a total 2.97 trillion roubles for the first three months of the year, according to the finance ministry.

European Union members are negotiating a proposed oil embargo on Russia, but talks failed this week because of a veto from Hungary, which is heavily reliant on Russian oil imports.

The ban proposed by the European Commission in early May would be its harshest sanction yet in response to Moscow's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine but also includes carve-outs for EU states most dependent on Russian oil.

Meanwhile, Russia has boosted sales of oil to China and India as it grapples with Western sanctions on its financial sector and a standoff over its demand that EU countries pay for energy in roubles.



Moscow may see its oil production plummet by as much as 17% in 2022, an economy ministry document seen by Reuters showed last month, as the country struggles with the sanctions.

Moscow calls its invasion of Ukraine a "special military operation" to rid the country of fascists, an assertion Kyiv and its allies say is a baseless pretext for an unprovoked war.

Overall, OPEC+ produced 2.6 million bpd below its targets in April, the data showed, with overall compliance with cuts rising to a record 220% from 157% the previous month.

West African producers Nigeria and Angola, which have been struggling in recent years with capacity constraints, produced 413,000 bpd and 290,000 bpd below targets, respectively, in April, the data showed.

Transneft Limits Access to Monthly Russian Oil Loading Plans

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's oil pipeline monopoly Transneft has limited access to monthly crude export loading schedules from Russian ports in a move to protect the country's oil market as tensions between Moscow and the West escalate, four sources familiar with the matter said on Tuesday.

Russian oil exporters will be provided only with the loading dates of their own cargoes instead of the standard practice of agreeing a document that included full loading plans for all exporters, they added.

The move is the latest instance of the Russian government withholding important statistical data from the market. In April the Energy Ministry limited access to its statistics on oil and gas production and exports.

The loading schedule for June 1-5 would have been issued by now, but this time traders were told that there is nothing to wait for, the sources said. The document is normally put together based on Russian oil companies' requests and issued by Transneft. The loading schedules are issued for the Baltic Primorsk and Ust-Luga ports, the Black Sea's Novorossiisk and the Far East Kozmino ports.

Transneft did not immediately reply to a Reuters request for comment.

Transneft didn't used to publish the monthly loading plans from Russian ports on public platforms, but it did provide them to a wide range of interested market participants. In June, however, even oil companies won't have access to the full loading plan, the sources said.

The loading plans are crucial for participants in the Russian oil market including shippers, insurers and buyers of the oil, traders said.

UK Jobless Rate Drops to 48-Year Low

LONDON (Dispatches) - The number of unemployed people in Britain dropped to a nearly five-decade low in the first three months of this year, official data showed Tuesday.

But soaring inflation has led to the biggest annual fall in real earnings for most workers since 2013.

The jobless rate dropped to 3.8% through the end of March and the number of people out of work was less than job vacancies on offer for the first time on record, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

That was the lowest level since 1974 and was compared with a rate of 3.8% in the quarter to the end of February.

"Despite a slowdown in growth this March, the U.K.'s labor market remains red-hot with record vacancies and job-to-job moves," the Confederation of British Industry's director for people and skills, Matthew Percival, said.

The Bank of England (BoE) is watching the strength of Britain's labor market warily, as it fears that higher-than-normal pay growth is a key channel through which the current energy-driven surge in inflation might become entrenched.

Consumer price inflation was 7% in March and official figures due on Wednesday are expected to show it hit 9.1% in April when a 54% rise in energy tariffs took effect.

The BoE expects further price rises will push the economy close to a recession by the end of the year, pushing up unemployment.

Tuesday's data showed soaring pay in some sectors - with total pay up a record 9.9% in March alone - but the rewards from a tight labor market are unevenly distributed.

Bankers and builders are doing especially well, while public-sector workers face the biggest pay squeeze.

Total pay in the first quarter was up 7% from a year earlier, far above economists' average forecast of a 5.4% rise as companies resorted to bonuses to attract or keep staff. Regular pay rose only slightly more than expected, up 4.2%.

Adjusted for inflation, basic pay was 2% lower than a year ago, the biggest fall since the three months to September 2013. The ONS said wages continued to sink in real terms as Britain, like other countries, faces runaway inflation.

"There continued to be a mixed picture for the labor market," said Darren Morgan, ONS director of economic statistics.

Governor Andrew Bailey has said a fall in living standards is inevitable due to the energy price shock, and that a widespread push for higher pay would disproportionately benefit workers who were already in a strong position in the job market.

ECB to Hike Deposit Rate 25 bps In July

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - The European Central Bank (ECB) is expected to raise the deposit rate for the first time in over a decade in July and bring it out of negative territory at its following meeting in September, despite a 30 per cent chance of recession within a year, a Reuters poll of economists showed.

With inflation hitting a multi-decade high of 7.5 per cent in April and almost every other major central bank having already raised interest rates, ECB President Christine Lagarde backed calls for an early rate hike by policymakers last week.

The bank is now expected to end its bond purchases program in July and follow that with a 25 basis-point deposit rate hike a few weeks later, according to a majority of economists polled from May 10 to 16.

Until recently, forecasters were expecting the ECB to wait until the final quarter of the year to raise the deposit rate, currently at -0.50 per cent.

Of the 46 of 48 economists who expect the deposit rate to rise in the third quarter, 26 said rates would rise by 50 basis points by the end of the period, implying quarter-point moves at both the July and September meetings.

Another 18 respondents said the deposit rate would only rise 25 basis points in Q3 and two said it would only climb 10 basis points to -0.40 per cent by the end of the quarter.

An even clearer majority expect rates to no longer be negative by the end of the year. About 90 per cent of economists, or 43 of 48, said the deposit rate would be 0 per cent or higher by then, with 44 per cent, or 21 of 48, saying it would be at 0.25 per cent by then and 8 per cent, or 4 of 48, saying it would be at 0.50 per cent.

"There is widespread support for ending negative interest rate policy at the ECB, but they will take a very cautious approach to policy normalization, in light of substantial macro uncertainty and concerns about a growth slowdown," said Jens Eisenschmidt, chief European economist at Morgan Stanley.

"This will be the first time in over a decade that the ECB is lifting rates — with no support from asset purchases — so taking smaller steps would allow the ECB to observe the reaction in markets, with a possible fragmentation of financing conditions in the euro area likely a key concern".

The latest poll results are still lagging rate futures, which are pricing in a cumulative 90 basis points of rate increases for the rest of the year or between three and four 25 basis-point moves.

U.S. Slams Canada Over Dairy Quotas, Looking at Next Steps



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The top U.S. trade official slammed a Canadian decision to keep in place restrictions on imports of American dairy products, and said Washington is considering "next steps" in response.

Ottawa published policies that Washington says do not resolve the complaint over restricting a large share of American products, including milk, butter, yogurt and ice cream, to Canadian processors, limiting market access for US dairy under a system known as tariff rate quotas (TRQs).

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai said she was "deeply disappointed by Canada's announcement."

"Our top priority remains ensuring that U.S. workers, producers, farmers, and exporters benefit from the market access they were promised under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement," she said in a statement.

American dairy groups are calling for the administration to retaliate with tariffs on Canadian goods, saying it is required by the USMCA trade pact, which came into force July 1, 2020, replacing the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement.

"Canada made a clear choice to thumb its nose at both the United States government and its international treaty obligations. It has completely disregarded the USMCA agreement signed just a few short years ago," said Jim Mulhern, president of the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF).

Tai said her office "will evaluate all options... as we determine our next steps in the coming days."

Washington in January won a dispute against Ottawa in the first case resolved under the new trade pact — known in Canada as Cusma — over the dairy TRQs, which reserve dairy products imported under preferential tariffs to domestic producers.

USTR said the policy undermines the ability of US exporters to sell a wide range of products to Canadian consumers.

Iran Selling Oil at Good Price

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran has its own customers in the oil market and continues selling oil at a good price, Iranian Minister of Petroleum Javad Owji announced.

New markets have been identified, Owji told reporters after the cabinet session today.

Asked about the government’s plan for knowledge-based

companies, the minister said that regulations have been planned to support the companies active in the areas of oil and gas.

Also about Arash Gas Field, the petroleum minister said consultations from Iranian Foreign Ministry with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are underway to settle dispute over the issue.



Experts Warn Arms for Ukraine Could End Up in Wrong Hands



be an overwhelming challenge for any government, let alone one that is still fighting an existential threat,” he added.

Even before the current conflict, the U.S. military’s inspector general in 2020 questioned the level of surveillance of weapons sent to Ukraine.

Annie Shiel of the Center for Civilians in Conflict (Civic) warned that “there has been very little transparency around what risk mitigation or monitoring steps the US and other countries sending weapons to Ukraine have taken, if any... to ensure the protection of civilians”.

The aid group has called for deliveries to be tied to human rights commitments and for the arms to be tracked after they are handed over.

Other experts see the task of following arms through conflict zones as all but impossible.

“It’s an illusion to think that in a context of war you can actually have control of weapons there. We know that many weapons will not return to the official forces but they will remain in the region for many years,” said Nils Duquet.

“Look at Yugoslavia, success has been made but these weapons are still being smuggled in all parts of Europe,” he added, predicting similar outcomes for Ukraine.

One senior French military officer evoked a lurid possible outcome.

“We’ll be laughing on the other side of our faces once we’re seeing bank robberies with Javelins,” he said, referring to the U.S.-made anti-tank missiles.

PARIS (Dispatches) - Western countries have been ramping up weapons and ammunition shipments to Ukraine as Kyiv fights off a Russian invasion, but arms trade experts warn some of the lethal assistance could end up falling into the wrong hands.

Ukraine in particular has a history as a hub of the arms trade during the 1990s, setting off alarm bells for those who study illicit flows.

“There are very significant risks associated to the proliferation of weapons in Ukraine at the moment, in particular regarding small arms and light weapons,” said Nils Duquet, a researcher and director of the Flemish Peace Institute.

Western nations, above all the US, have announced successive shipments of both light and heavy weapons for Kyiv’s forces since Russian troops crossed the Ukrainian border on February 24.

Washington alone has delivered or promised military gear including hundreds of Switchblade kamikaze drones, 7,000 assault rifles with 50 million rounds of ammunition, laser-guided missiles and radar systems to detect enemy drones and incoming artillery fire.

“While the response to provide more weapons to Ukraine is understandable..., it would be prudent to consider the immediate and long-term security implications,” the US-based Stimson Center think-tank said in March.

“We’ve seen time and time again how arms aimed at aiding an ally in one conflict have found their way to the frontlines of unforeseen battlefields, often in the hands of groups at odds with US interests or those of civilians,” it added, pointing especially to small arms.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many weapons stockpiled in Ukraine were shipped off to other countries and conflict zones around the world.

That looting of the country’s arms supplies resumed following Russia’s 2014 annexation of the Ukrainian Black Sea peninsula of Crimea and the seizure of two regions in the east of Ukraine by pro-Moscow separatists.

According to the Small Arms Survey (SAS) by the Geneva-based Institute of International and Development Studies, 300,000 light weapons were stolen or lost between 2013 and 2015, with just 4,000 retrieved since then.

Rather than being shipped abroad as in the 1990s, most of these ended up on the black market within Ukraine, the SAS found.

“The unresolved conflict in the eastern part of the country and general anxiety towards local security conditions” could explain increased demand for weapons among ordinary people, SAS researcher Matt Schroeder said.

Looking ahead, “collecting these weapons and disposing of them properly would

Iraq Concerned About Greater Chinese Control of Its Oil Fields



BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq’s oil ministry thwarted three prospective deals last year that would have handed Chinese firms more control over its oil fields and led to an exodus of international oil majors that Baghdad wants to invest in its creaking economy.

Since the start of 2021, plans by Russia’s Lukoil and U.S. oil major Exxon Mobil to sell stakes in major fields to Chinese state-backed firms have hit the buffers after interventions from Iraq’s oil ministry, according to Iraqi oil officials and industry executives.

Selling a stake to a state-run Chinese company was also one of several options being considered by Britain’s BP, but officials persuaded it to stay in Iraq for now, people familiar with the matter said.

China is Iraq’s top investor and Baghdad was the biggest beneficiary last year of Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative, receiving \$10.5 billion in financing for infrastructure projects including a power plant and an airport.

But when it comes to further Chinese investment in major oilfields, Baghdad has drawn a line in the sand.

Iraq’s government and officials at state-run firms are concerned that further consolidation of fields in the hands of Chinese companies could accelerate an exodus of Western oil companies, a total of seven Iraqi oil officials and executives with companies operating in Iraq told Reuters in interviews.

Supported by state-run oil company officials, Iraq’s Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul Jabbar dissuaded Lukoil last year from selling a stake in one of the country’s largest fields, West Qurna 2, to Chinese state firm Sinopec, three people familiar with the matter said.

Iraqi officials also intervened last year to stop Chinese state-backed firms from buying Exxon’s stake in West Qurna 1 and to persuade BP to stay in Iraq rather than offloading its interest in the giant Rumaila oilfield to a Chinese company, people familiar with the matter said.

Combined, Rumaila and West Qurna produce about half of the crude coming out of Iraq, which sits on the fifth-largest oil reserves in the world.

Iraq’s oil ministry did not respond to requests for comment about the deals or the minister’s role in any interventions.

Chinese Scientists Work on Hypersonic Missile That Can Hit Moving Car

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China is developing a heat-seeking hypersonic weapon that will be able to hit a moving car at five times the speed of sound, according to scientists involved in the project.

The research team, led by Yang Xiaogang from the PLA Rocket Force University of Engineering in Xian, said “important progress” had been made towards solving the main problem of how to pinpoint a moving target at extreme speeds.

Yang and his colleagues from the university’s College of Missile Engineering have been given a deadline of 2025 to come up with solutions to the seemingly intractable challenges of hypersonic technology.

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Because a superfast missile can travel long distances in a split second, a tiny error in the positioning and guidance system can lead to a huge miss, they explained in a paper published in Chinese peer-reviewed journal Infrared and Laser Engineering.

Over distance, the infrared signature of a small moving target “constitutes just a few pixels without detailed information such as shape, texture and structure”, making identification and tracking “extremely difficult”, they said.

The heat sensor needs an extremely cold environment, but the surface temperature of the missile can reach several thousand degrees Celsius, producing a huge amount of background noise.

But, with the new heat-seeking technology, the Chinese military will be able to eliminate high-value targets from long distances with unprecedented speed, to “significantly expand the scope of application of hypersonic weapons in a regional war”, said Yang in the paper, part of a series published by the journal.

Hypersonic weapons were initially developed to penetrate air defense systems and hit fixed targets on the ground. It was generally believed that limited maneuverability at such high velocity would make hitting a moving target impossible.

In recent years, China has shown an increasing capability against mobile targets, including a model aircraft carrier set up on rails at a firing range in the Gobi desert.

But a warship is relatively easy to track, with its size and predictable movement against a relatively stable background.

The problem is more complex on a street, where many similar vehicles are likely to be present. A car can turn at any time as it travels across a landscape which can also vary significantly, increasing the calculation burden



for on-board computers.

What are hypersonic weapons, and why is there a race to develop them?

According to Yang, his team has come up with a new identification and tracking method as it homes in on the target.

A traditional heat-seeker analyses the images produced by infrared sensors frame by frame. But at Mach 5 or faster, the difference between two adjacent frames can be huge, making it difficult for the computer to find a consistent pattern, especially when the target is small and moving.

The new hypersonic missile does not take a new image for granted, the paper said. Instead, it will use the data collected by motion sensors to adjust every pixel, so that most elements in the new image will remain consistent with those in earlier shots in terms of viewing angle, lighting or size.

This calibration technology is complex, but produces a considerably clearer, more stable background that makes the target stand out sharply, the team said.

The hypersonic heat-seeker would also be able to go after a target in the air, according to a separate paper in the series by Qin Hanlin from the school of optoelectronic engineering in Xidian University.

Qin and his team demonstrated a technology that would allow a hypersonic ground-to-air missile to hit a target as small as a commercial drone. The missile could distinguish the drone hanging low over buildings or trees with nearly 90 per cent accuracy, they said.

A number of hardware breakthroughs have made these achievements possible, according to the scientists, including improvements in sensor technology that mean heat signals can be detected over distance as a unique wave form, producing clear images at hypersonic speeds.

The Chinese scientists also found a low-cost replacement for the precious materials, including diamonds, used for the window of the infrared detector so that it can survive the harsh environment.

Glass made of zinc sulphide, at a fraction of the cost, also provides a crystal-clear view, they said.

The Chinese military increasingly believes hypersonic weapons will change the nature of battle and is investing heavily to achieve an edge in the technology.

According to some recent studies by PLA researchers, senior military commanders could find themselves directly exposed – even if they were more than 1,000km (621 miles) behind the front line and protected by multiple layers of air defence systems.

Expensive military platforms such as aircraft carriers and stealth warplanes would also lose their advantage, with little defence against hypersonic missiles able to manoeuvre and aim with precision.

World Urged to... FROM PAGE 1

Abu Akleh, a veteran of the Qatar-based Al Jazeera network’s Arabic service, was shot in the head on Wednesday, when she was reporting on an Israeli raid against Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp.

Her tragic death sent shockwaves across the region, drawing global condemnation. The United Nations and the European Union, among others, have called for a full investigation into what has been described as a deliberate killing “in cold blood.”

New footage has revealed Israeli forces’ brutality and violence at the funeral of the slain Palestinian journalist as they stormed a hospital prior to the procession, hitting and shoving people inside, including patients, and firing from the grounds of the medical facility.

In a tweet on Sunday, Iran’s top human rights official also said the Israeli regime, owing to the United States’ unswerving support, will continue its “unspeakable crimes” with no end in sight, urging the international community to make a stand to put an end to Tel Aviv’s atrocities.

Azerbaijani... FROM PAGE 1

The role of Iranian companies in the restoration and reconstruction of Azerbaijan’s liberated territories, as well as the steps taken in this regard, will be thoroughly examined.

The Azerbaijani-Iranian relations are developing dynamically based on the principles of good neighborliness, friendship, mutual respect, and effective cooperation.

The meeting of the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev with his Iranian counterpart Seyed Ibrahim Raisi within the framework of the ECO Summit of Heads of State in Ashgabat on November 28, 2021, gave an important impetus to the development of bilateral relations.

Currently, the involvement of Iranian companies in the restoration and reconstruction of the liberated territories of Azerbaijan is a manifestation of the dynamic development of bilateral relations.

Stolen Money... FROM PAGE 1

Police arrested the employee sumamed Jeon, who is in his 40s, on April 30, who was later found to have lost more than half of the stolen money from investments in high-risk stock derivative products. Jeon’s younger brother, who is not a bank employee, and a former employee of a Woori Bank affiliate were also arrested as suspected co-conspirators. Jeon lost 31.8 billion won after investing in futures option products, according to the police.

Financial authorities are currently taking the “necessary steps” to return the remaining money owed to Dayyani, sources said.

In 2018, the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes -- the World Bank’s settlement body -- ordered Seoul to pay Dayyani about 73 billion won after Entekhab failed in 2010 to purchase a majority stake in the now-dissolved Daewoo Electronics. Entekhab paid a 57.8 billion deposit as a preferred bidder, but had struggled to get the money back.

The financial authorities and Woori Bank received public flak for their lax oversight, as the embezzlement scandal was only discovered recently. The watchdog Financial Supervisory Service reportedly ran a total of 11 audits on Woori from 2012 and 2018 when the embezzlement took place, but failed to raise any red flags.

Iraq Preparing Pipelines To Import Iranian Gas

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Ministry of Electricity of Iraq said that it is preparing a pipeline inside the country over the next three days to import Iranian gas.

The spokesman for the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity, Ahmed Musa al-Abadi, said that Baghdad had recently reached an agreement with Tehran on the sale of gas to Iraq.

He told Al Sabaah newspaper that the amount of Iranian gas exports to Iraq will increase from 8 million cubic meters per day to 30 million cubic meters, although, this does not meet Iraq’s need for electricity on the verge of summer.

Al-Abadi also said that Iraq is set to pay energy debts to Iran over a three-year period.

The chairman of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Majid Chegini on the sidelines of a press conference in Tehran on Sunday said that negotiations are underway to extend the gas export contract to Turkey and Iraq, while the two countries have requested an increase in gas exports.

The NIGC chairman added that he will make the necessary efforts to resume the country’s gas trade with other countries and the necessary follow-ups will be made for gas exports to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey and Iraq.

Olympic Champion Ludwig Announces Retirement

LONDON (Dispatches) - Three-time Olympic champion Johannes Ludwig of Germany announced his retirement from luge on Tuesday, just over three months after winning gold in individual and team relay events at the Beijing Games.

The 36-year-old, who claimed gold in the team relay four years earlier at the Winter Games in Pyeongchang, also won world titles in 2017 and 2020.

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ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St. Marzadaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Hamza Banned for Nine Months Over Pill Mix-Up

CAPE TOWN (Dispatches) - South Africa test batsman Zubayr Hamza has been suspended for nine months after accidentally taking his father's heart medication that contained the banned substance Furosemide, ruling him out of the tour of England later this year.

Hamza, who has played six tests and a single One-Day International for South Africa, had intended to take his own anti-allergy medication, but ingested the wrong pill according to his submission to the ICC's Integrity Unit.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

THURSDAY MAY 19, 2022

Liverpool Beat Southampton To Take Title Race to Final Day

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool ensured the Premier League title race will go to the final day of the season as the under-strength quadruple chasers survived a scare to beat Southampton 2-1 on Tuesday.

After Liverpool defeated Chelsea on penalties in a gruelling FA Cup final just three days earlier, Jurgen Klopp took a gamble with nine changes at St Mary's.

Despite effectively fielding a reserve team and trailing to Nathan Redmond's early strike, Liverpool hit back through goals from Takumi Minamino and Joel Matip.

The Reds are just one point behind leaders Manchester City, with both teams having one game left.

A title race for the ages will go City's way if they win against Aston Villa at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday.

Klopp insisted at the weekend that he does not expect City to drop points against Villa.

But Liverpool would be crowned champions for the second time in three seasons if they beat Wolves at Anfield and City fail to win.

Klopp's side will be expected to do their part of the equation against Wolves, especially now their refreshed key players can return to the team.

Sadio Mane, Luis Diaz, Andrew Robertson, Thiago Alcantara and Trent Alexander-Arnold were among those left out against Southampton, while Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk were sidelined with injuries suffered at Wembley.

City boss Pep Guardiola said he planned to watch the game on television and if he tuned in, it would have made for frustrating viewing as Southampton squandered the lead.

But it was Riyad Mahrez's missed penalty in the final minutes of City's 2-2 draw at West Ham on Sunday which had given Liverpool renewed hope of catching the leaders.

And the Reds, hoping to become the first English club to win all four major trophies in one season, will settle their history bid in the last two games of their incredible, marathon campaign.

First, Liverpool will try to avoid a repeat of 2019, when they beat Wolves on the last day but were still pipped to the title by City.

Then they head to Paris to face Real Madrid in the Champions League final on May 28.

No Tournaments in China as WTA Releases Updated Schedule

LONDON (Dispatches) - The WTA released an updated tournament calendar for the 2022 season, with no events taking place in China and the venue for the season-ending WTA Finals yet to be disclosed.

The Tour had said last month it was still working to find a resolution to the standoff with China over the Peng Shuai issue and would not return to the country this year.

Former doubles world number one Peng's safety became a big concern after she posted a message on social media in November accusing China's ex-Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli of sexual assault, before deleting it and disappearing from public view.

The WTA then suspended its events in China, a decision that is expected to cost the elite women's tour millions of dollars in broadcasting and sponsorship.

In the absence of tournaments in China, the autumn schedule includes a new WTA 1000 event in Guadalajara, Mexico in October and a WTA 500 event in San Diego, California which will take place earlier in the month.

Tunisia will also host a WTA 250 tournament.

"The 2022 WTA fall calendar will provide a robust amount of job opportunities for players in a regional calendar flow that will take us through to the end of the season," WTA chief Steve Simon said in a statement.

The WTA said that updates to the calendar would be provided shortly, including the location of the WTA Finals which is set to take place the week of Oct. 31. The tournament was held in Guadalajara last year.

The absence of WTA events this year is another blow to China, which is quickly becoming an international sporting wilderness after it withdrew from hosting the 2023 Asian Cup soccer tournament due to the COVID-19 situation in the country.

That move came after Asian Games organisers postponed the next edition of the multi-sport event, due to be held in the Chinese city of Hangzhou in September, until 2023.



Southampton had lost seven of their previous 10 league matches, giving Klopp belief that his bold selection could pay off.

He might have had second thoughts when Armando Broja weaved unchecked into the area, forcing Alisson Becker to save with his out-stretched leg.

It was a warning Liverpool failed to heed and Ralph Hasenhuttl's side took the lead after 13 minutes.

Redmond sprinted away down the left flank, cutting inside to the edge of the area and unleashed a fierce strike that took a deflection off James Milner as it flashed into the far corner.

Klopp complained furiously that Diogo Jota was fouled by Lyanco in the build-up but, although it did appear there was a trip, the German's protests fell on deaf ears.

Minamino has struggled to break into the Liverpool team on a regular basis and was sent on loan to Southampton last season.

The Japan forward made the most of a rare Premier League start with a brilliant equaliser in the 27th minute.

Joe Gomez fizzed a pass into Jota and his perfectly weighted lay-off reached Minamino, who beat Alex McCarthy at the near post with a ferocious rising drive.

Liverpool turned the screw and Milner's long-range effort was pushed away by McCarthy before Roberto Firmino fired over.

Klopp's men monopolised over 70 percent of the possession in the first half and it was the same story after the break.

Jota shot just wide from Kostas Tsimikas's cross, while Harvey Elliott smashed into the side-netting from an acute angle.

Liverpool's relentless pressure was rewarded in the 67th minute.

Matip and Kyle Walker-Peters challenged for Tsimikas's corner and the ball looped in over McCarthy, forcing City to keep the champagne on ice for now.

Nadal Ready For Roland Garros Despite Injury Issues

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rafa Nadal has moved to ease concerns about his injury problems ahead of the French Open, posting a picture of himself training in full flow at his academy in Mallorca with the caption: "See you on Wednesday, Paris."

The 13-time Roland Garros champion had said last week that daily training was a challenge and he would take a doctor with him to Paris after a chronic foot injury flared up during his defeat by Denis Shapovalov at the Italian Open.

Nadal, 35, who only recently returned from a stress fracture in the ribs, struggled towards the end of his match against the Canadian as he went down 1-6 7-5 6-2 in the last-16.

But the world number five looks poised to launch another bid for a Grand Slam title at his favourite hunting ground, having won his 21st major at the Australian Open earlier this year.

That victory followed a difficult 2021 during which he missed Wimbledon, the Tokyo Olympics and the U.S. Open.

Nadal will be attempting to reclaim the title in Paris after he suffered a semi-final defeat last year against Novak Djokovic, only his third career loss at Roland Garros.

Pavlyuchenkova to Skip Rest of 2022 to Recover From Injury



LONDON (Dispatches) - Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova has decided to skip the rest of the season to recover from an injury that has limited her playing time this year, the 2021 French Open runner-up said.

Pavlyuchenkova, ranked 21 in the world, was out for 11 weeks earlier this year to undergo rehab for the knee injury. The pain in her knee had forced her to miss tournaments in St Petersburg, Dubai and Doha.

"I'm very sad to say that I'm forced to withdraw from Roland Garros and the rest of the tournaments this year," she said on Instagram. "Roland Garros was always very special to me, especially after a dream run last year."

"But due to the pain for a long time, now the injury is limiting me physically and mentally to compete and practice fully."

"The last two tournaments (in Madrid and Rome) has showed me that the pain was still there and I wasn't ready, so I have decided to take more time and come back stronger next year."

Pavlyuchenkova, 30, had a successful 2021 season in which she reached her maiden Grand Slam final in Paris, won the Olympic mixed doubles gold medal in Tokyo and led Russia to their first Billie Jean King Cup title since 2008.

Liverpool Interested In Mbappe

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool are not blind to the qualities of Kylian Mbappe but will not be drawn into a bidding war for the Paris St Germain striker, manager Jurgen Klopp said.

The France forward stayed at PSG this season despite interest from Real Madrid and has hit top form with 36 goals from 45 matches in all competitions.

The 23-year-old World Cup winner's contract expires in June and speculation about his future has ramped up in recent weeks, though Klopp was tight-lipped about any contact between the player and Liverpool.

"Of course, we're interested in Kylian. We're not blind," Klopp told reporters ahead of the Premier League game against Southampton. "I have nothing to say about that (the reported contact). Between Kylian and Liverpool ... it's all fine."

Klopp's comments come with Liverpool hoping to tie down Mohamed Salah to a new deal, while fellow forward Sadio Mane has been linked with a switch away from Anfield.

"We, of course, like him (Mbappe), if you don't like him, then you have to question yourself," Klopp added.

"But no, we're not ... we cannot be part of these battles. There must be other clubs involved, but that is fine. He's a great player."



Djokovic Delights in Sunshine Double

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic said his seven-year-old son Stefan had won his first tournament on the same day the Serb lifted his first crown in more than six months at the Italian Open, describing their success as a "sunshine double".

Djokovic beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-0 7-6(5) to triumph in Rome on Sunday, ensuring a perfect week for the world number one before the French Open starting on May 22, but the 20-times Grand Slam winner was equally pleased for his son.

"The journey started successfully. My son won a tournament today. A sunshine double," Djokovic said, adding that his son's victory at the small club tournament would stick in his memory.

"I wanted him to enjoy it on the court... He was on cloud nine with the family, my parents, my wife's parents, everybody supporting him. It's nice."

Djokovic said he would fully support his son if he decided to pursue a career in tennis.

"He's only seven... He shouldn't feel any pressure or expectations yet, though he's going to because it's part of his family. He's going to attract a lot of attention if he's playing tennis, particularly in our country," Djokovic added.

Turning the focus onto himself, the 34-year-old said he was hitting top gear as he aims to defend his Roland Garros crown and go level with Rafa Nadal on 21 major titles.

"I'd rate myself as one of the favourites. I don't spend much time thinking who's going to win it or who might have the best chance. I always think about myself," Djokovic said.

