

**Iran's Ministry of Health on Friday Put the Daily Coronavirus Deaths in The Past 24 Hours at 9 Which Take The Country's Total Fatalities From The Respiratory Disease to 141,262 Since the Pandemic Began**

# IRAN NEWS

**The Islamic Republic of Iran Matches Advanced Countries in Crisper Gene-Editing Technology And the Country Will Hold Second International Crisper Symposium on June 20-21, an Iranian Official Said**

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## Human Rights in Iran Severely Affected by U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A top UN human rights official has slammed the United States for its brutal sanctions regime against the Islamic Republic of Iran, asserting that harsh economic sanctions have had a damaging impact on human rights in the country.

Alena Douhan, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights, who is on an official visit to Iran these days, convened a press conference in Tehran on Wednesday afternoon.

Speaking to reporters, Douhan noted that decades of sanctions have wholly affected Iranian people's lives and have particularly hit the low-income section of the society.

While presenting her assessment of the unilateral coercive measures (UCM) against Iran, the UN official who works under a mandate from the United Nations Human Rights Council, called on Washington to abandon its hard-nosed policy of maximum pressure against Iran and other countries.

"Iran has been subjected to a broad scope of unilateral sanctions for a long period of time." **See Page 7**

## Iran Working On Producing 60%-Enriched Fuel

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran has announced the country's complete self-sufficiency in the nuclear fuel cycle, saying the Islamic Republic is now working on producing nuclear fuel with 60% purity.

Iran started the process of enriching uranium to 60% fissile purity at an above-ground nuclear plant at Natanz, the UN nuclear agency confirmed in April 2021. It made the step in response to an explosion that damaged equipment at the underground Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz. The country had previously only reached 20% purity.

"The efforts of the enemies by committing sabotage in the field of nuclear technology have made it the frontline. Our scientists stood up at the order of the Leader who said, 'Build yourselves'.

"They acted on the issue of 20% fuel, which was needed by Tehran's research reactor, and today we produce not only 20% fuel but also working on producing 60% fuel," Mohammad Eslami said. **See Page 7**

## President Unveils 82 Projects in Free and Special Economic Zones



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said that some free and special zones at times became places for imports, adding, "Reports show that the free and special economic zones are becoming close to their main philosophy of production, employment, entrepreneurship and capital attraction".

Speaking on Thursday at the ceremony of simultaneous operation of 82 industrial, civil and agricultural projects of the Supreme Council of Free, Commercial, Industrial and Special Economic Zones, President Raisi thanked all those involved in the implementation of these projects and expressed hope that these plans and measures bring about production, employment and entrepreneurship with a focus on science and technology for the people.

The President added, "The philosophy of establishing free trade zones is to make the most of the existing capacities for production, employment and economic activities. This goal has been neglected at times, and some of these areas have become places for imports, while these areas are the best opportunity for exports".

Raisi emphasized the existence of high standards and quality as essential features of manufactured products in free zones and emphasized, "The presented reports promise that free and special economic zones have approached their main philosophy of production, employment, entrepreneurship and capital attraction".

"Domestic and foreign investment and increased productivity are the two basic conditions for economic growth," the President said.

Raisi described it necessary for the private sector to be active in the country's economic field and stated, "The presence of the private sector, investment of banks and large companies in the economy is one of the successful steps that must be strengthened".

Pointing out that giving ground to the private sector is one of the government's duties, the president said, "Guiding, supervising and supporting are the government's three duties to harmonize the private sector with the economy".

Appreciating the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance and other executive bodies involved in facilitating the issuance of business licenses, Raisi said, "The field for investment and economic activities should be facilitated more than before and launching a comprehensive system for issuing business licenses is an effective step".

Referring to the report on the employment of 8,000 people in the projects inaugurated today, the President said, "I am very happy to hear such news in a year decorated with the slogan of "Production, job creation, knowledge-based".

The President referred to the need to use domestic human resources in free and special economic zones and said, "The activities of free zones are generally near the borders. We have many efficient and educated human resources in different regions of the country that can be used in plans and projects, but the priority is to attract efficient and local forces in each region".

Referring to the legal powers of the heads of free and special economic zones, Raisi said, "Apart from every authority and right given to managers, there must be accountability and every manager must be accountable for the duties and responsibilities he has". **See Page 7**

## Iran Supports UN Efforts to Address Global Food Insecurity

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's envoy to the United Nations (UN) says the Islamic Republic supports the world body's efforts to address global food insecurity amid the acute hunger crisis gripping the world.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the UN, speaking at a UN Security Council meeting on conflict and food security in New York on Thursday said the food, climate, and health crises have like other countries affected Iran too.

"Food insecurity, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the adverse impacts of various international conflicts have all affected many countries, including Iran, which has suffered from US sanctions for more than four decades," the envoy remarked.

He said the presence of millions of refugees from neighboring Afghanistan has also put pressure on the Iranian economy, and placed a burden on its food supplies.

Takht-Ravanchi called on the United Nations, the international community, and aid organizations to honor their commitments and to provide necessary technical and financial assistance to foreign nationals residing in Iran.

The senior Iranian diplomat stressed that disruptions in the supply chain, displacement of people, increased pressure on natural and economic resources, and dramatic decline in the tolerance of affected populations are all long-term side effects of the crises.

"The global level of hunger continues to rise at an alarming rate, and acute food insecurity has increased significantly over the past six years," the envoy noted. **See Page 7**

## Indigenously-Developed Simorgh Light Transport Aircraft Unveiled

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A new light transport aircraft, designed and developed by experts at the Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company (HESA), was unveiled on Thursday in the presence of high-ranking dignitaries.

Named 'Simorgh' - a benevolent bird in Persian mythology and literature - the aircraft was showcased during an impressive ceremony in the central Iranian city of Isfahan in the presence of Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari, President of the Civil Aviation Organization Ali Abedzadeh and other senior officials.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, Brigadier General Ashtiani said the aircraft will be of great assistance in serving the country and its executive agencies, both in the civil and military spheres.

The top defense official stressed that Simorgh is a redesigned and advanced version of the same generation aircraft, which perfectly fits the growing needs of the country's armed forces.

He said it has been equipped with high-tech, indigenous technology and designed in accordance with the country's climatic conditions as well as international safety standards and regulations. **See Page 7**

## Constructive Relations Among Neighbors Bolster Regional Security

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says the most important factor that can strengthen regional security is the existence of constructive relations between neighboring countries.

Raisi made the remarks in a Thursday meeting with Azerbaijan's First Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Abdulla Oghlu Mustafayev in Tehran.

During the meeting, Raisi highlighted Iran's "principled position" on supporting the unity and territorial integrity of all countries, including the neighboring Republic of Azerbaijan.

"The existence of constructive relations on the basis of mutual interests between neighboring countries, including Iran and Azerbaijan, is the most effective factor in maintaining and bolstering the regional security," Iran's president said.

He added that the United States and the Zionist regime are not sympathetic toward regional countries and other nations across the world. **See Page 7**

## China to Receive 2m Barrels of Iran Oil

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A very large Iranian crude carrier is set to discharge 2 million barrels into an oil terminal in China this week after Western media reports claimed that Beijing might be replacing Iran's barrels with cheaper Russian shipments.

The carrier Diona, owned by the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), will arrive in Zhanjiang of Guangdong province, where the cargo will be pumped into a reserve base in the southern port, Reuters reported, citing tanker tracker specialist Vortexa Analytics.

"This would be the third Iranian oil cargo destined for government stockpile following two similar-sized shipments in December and January," the news agency said.

Chinese customs, due to release detailed commodities import data for May on June 20, is likely to report the shipment, it added.

China officially reported the first imports of Iranian crude oil in a year in January. However, the country has been buying large amount of Iranian oil over the past two years despite ongoing sanctions by the United States government.

The shipments are on the rise. Iran is an integral part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, a trillion-dollar infrastructure investment program across Asia, Europe, and Africa to link the economies of those continents. **See Page 7**

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## Iran Warns of Misaddressing to Destroy Tehran-Islamabad Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Embassy in Pakistan warned in a statement on Thursday that allegations to link Karachi terrorist bombings to Tehran to destroy the two countries' friendly relations.

The statement was issued in response to questions asked by some Pakistani media reporters about allegations that the perpetrators of the Karachi terrorist bombings may have links to Iran.

The statement categorically rejected and dismissed such allegations, stressing that the allegations were made in public and in the media without providing any evidence, proof or documents to the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran through official means and this is completely unprofessional and unacceptable.

## Iran Ready to Mediate Between Russia and Ukraine

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has described Tehran's relations with Moscow as excellent, saying the Islamic Republic supports any effort aimed at finding a diplomatic solution to the Ukraine war.

Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a phone call with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, on Thursday, during which the two sides discussed bilateral, regional and international issues as well as the latest situation of negotiations between Iran and other signatories to the 2015 deal in the Austrian capital.

"Based on its excellent ties with Russia, the Islamic Republic of Iran supports any effort to settle the Ukraine conflict through diplomatic means and is ready to mediate and help resolve this crisis," Iran's foreign minister said. Expounding on Iran's position against the use of war and sanctions as tools of diplomacy, Amir-Abdollahian underlined Tehran's support for a ceasefire in Ukraine and a return to the negotiating table.

Elsewhere in his remarks, pointing to the talks on the removal of anti-Iran sanctions in the Austrian capital of Vienna, Amir-Abdollahian said, "If the Americans act reasonably, a nuclear deal will be within reach."

He also called on all parties to offer initiatives in this regard.

Stressing Iran's firm resolve to reach a good, strong and lasting agreement, which would also respect the country's red lines, the top Iranian diplomat lauded Russia's positive stance in supporting a deal that is approved by Tehran.



Lavrov, for his part, underscored Russia's continued support for the the 2015 Iran deal and Moscow's efforts to reach a fair agreement in line with the interests and demands of the Iranian side.

Blasting the unconstructive positions of the United States and the West, the Russian foreign minister briefed his Iranian counterpart on the latest developments in Ukraine and welcomed any initiative that would push Ukraine towards negotiations. He also described Iran's role as constructive in this regard.

Ukraine and Russia have held intermittent peace talks since late February, but there has been little communication between them in recent weeks.

The previous rounds of talks had failed to produce a breakthrough, as both the warring sides had refused to compromise on their respective red lines.

## Prosecution of Martyr Soleimani Assassins on Judiciary Agenda

KERMAN (Dispatches) - Iran's Judiciary is seriously following up the case of the assassination of Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani to bring its perpetrators to justice.

The announcement was made by first Deputy Chief Justice Mohammad Mossadeq in the southeastern city of Kerman on Thursday, during the inaugural ceremony of the new head of Kerman Province's Justice Department.

Mossadeq said that any fair lawyer, even those against the Islamic Republic, believe that the US assassination of General Soleimani lacked a logical reason, despite the fact that Washington attempted to show that it was lawful.

He added that more than two years into the assassination, the US attempts have been unfruitful.

The Iranian judiciary official stressed that the martyrdom of Soleimani showed the true image of terrorists to the world.

Lieutenant General Soleimani along with Senior Iraqi Commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhanddis was killed during a U.S. drone attack near Iraq's capital Baghdad on January 3, 2020.

Both of them were key anti-terror figures and played a crucial role in defeating Daesh terrorists in Iraq.

Soleimani also played a key role in fighting terrorism in other parts of West Asia.

## Enemies Do Not Even Contemplate Attacking Iran



TEHRAN (IFP) - The commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps says the guards' ground force is now a strong bulwark of security against the enemies of God and Islam.

Major General Hossein Salami was speaking at the Amir al-Momenin University of the Sciences and Skills of ground Force in Isfahan on Thursday.

He said today no power in the world can invade Iran or even contemplate attacking the country.

Salami underlined the IRGC's readiness to defend Iran, saying Jihad is a continuous path and as long as the enemy is full of hate and enmity due to its defeats, jihad will continue.

He referred to the localization and mass production of combat and defensive might in Iran by the IRGC, saying this power completely belongs to the Iranian people and is meant to serve them and the realization of the Islamic Revolution's ideals.

The general described the IRGC as a servant of the people and a thorn in the enemy's side.

He said the IRGC is a protection shield against disasters, a stronghold and a shelter for the people.

## Islamic Revolution Introduced Religious Democracy to World

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Iran's Islamic Revolution introduced religious democracy to the world, the results of which should focus on re-creating the great Islamic civilization, said Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh in a seminar in the holy city of Mashhad.

The two-day seminar began a day earlier and discusses ways to introduce Islam to the world.

Khatibzadeh highlighted changes that are taking place in communication and said that in order to leave a great impact, entities should recognize their audience and the tools they can use to convey their messages.

He said that Al-Mustafa International University is one of the bodies actively engaged in religious research and dissemination as well as introducing the Holy Qur'an to the world.

The seminar in Mashhad was organized by the city's branch of Al-Mustafa International University.

Established in Qom in 1979, Al-Mustafa is an academic, Islamic, and university-style seminary institute, which has international branches and affiliate schools.

## Tehran-Havana Ties Strategic, Need to Expand

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says Iran favors expanding its cooperation with Cuba through drawing on the "diverse capacities" that exist in each country.

The president described Iran and Cuba's ties as "strategic" in nature, saying those capacities have to be used towards expansion of the mutual cooperation "in the commercial, economic, agricultural, healthcare, and medical areas."

"Iran and Cuba's positive and constructive relations can be extrapolated to the area of the countries' international interaction too," Raisi told Cuba's visiting Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas in Tehran.

The Iranian president made special references to the countries' successful cooperation in the healthcare area. In January 2021, Iran and Cuba signed an agreement to cooperate on a coronavirus vaccine project amid crippling sanctions imposed on the two countries by the administration of former United States President Donald Trump.

The cooperation led to the development of the Pastu Covac vaccine, which has been successfully used against several mutations of the highly infectious virus.

"By relying on their domestic potential, Iran and Cuba can reach self-sufficiency in various areas and production of strategic products," Raisi said.

Press TV exclusive: Cuba enjoys 'best condition' of ties with Iran

He touched on existing areas and potentials of cooperation with Latin American countries, saying "Iran intends to develop its relations with independent countries that resist the global arrogance's excessive demands, including Cuba."

The Cuban official, for his part, described mutual ties as "deep and strategic" in nature, underlining Havana's will to develop its economic and commercial relationship with Tehran.

He also called for the implementation of "medium-term and long-term" projects that would enhance mutual relations to the level of "multilateral relations across the Latin American region."

## Iran, Ghana Call for Strengthening Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber said that Iran welcomes the comprehensive expansion of relations with African countries, including Ghana.

Mokhber met and held talks with Ghana's Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism Mohammed Awal Ibrahim on Wednesday in Tehran, Iran.

Emphasizing that the Iranian government's interest is in strengthening relations with Ghana, Mokhber said that the volume of economic relations between the two states, like extensive political relations, should boost because the development of exchanges and relations with African countries is one of the priorities for Iranian foreign policy in the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Referring to the health services of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ghana, especially the activities of the Red Crescent Society, he stressed that Iran is ready to have a wider presence and activity in the various fields in Ghana.

Pointing to Ghana's pivotal role in advancing world peace, especially in the Non-Aligned Movement, Mokhber stressed that Ghana always played an effective role in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mohammed Awal Ibrahim, for his part, stressed that increasing the volume of economic and trade relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran is very important, adding that the Government of Ghana is ready to strengthen and expand cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Iran, Iraq Provincial Officials Discuss Boosting Ties

KERMANSHAH (IRNA) - Governor generals of Iran's Kermanshah province and Iraq's Diyala Governorate held a meeting aimed at discussing ways to enhance cooperation and trade exchanges.

The meeting took place in Kermanshah, the capital city of Kermanshah province, western Iran.

Bahman Amiri-Moqaddam, the governor general of Kermanshah, said that Iran and Iraq have close relations and enjoy religious, cultural and historical commonalities, which pave ground for further cooperation between the two sides.

He added that Kermanshah and Diyala can further boost their trade exchanges through developing border infrastructure as well as passenger and goods terminals, among other measures.

Amiri-Moqaddam said that two provinces have already reached agreements on how to develop their economic relations, which definitely will help improve employment and the livelihood of people living at the border areas.

Iran's Kermanshah province shares a 371-km border with Kurdish and Arab parts of Iraq, and makes up around half of non-oil exports to Iraq per year.

## Syria Encouraging Arab States to Have Good Ties With Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad has said that there is no justification for disagreements between Iran and Arab countries, and that his country encourages other Arab states to have good and balanced ties with Tehran.

Mekdad made the comments in an interview with Syrian News Channel Alikhbaria Syria.

The top diplomat spoke about other issues as well.

He said that Syria's enemies launched a war on the country and spread terrorism there after they failed to weaken Syria and force it into abandoning its basic principles.

Mekdad also said that the liberation of the Golan Heights from Israel's occupation is on Syria's top political agenda.

The Syrian diplomat meantime expressed support for the Palestinian cause and its people's struggle to free their land from Israeli occupation.

Mekdad referred to US presence in Syria too, calling it illegal.

He said that America's presence is coming to an end and the occupied parts of Syria would be back again under the sovereignty of the Syrian government.

He also denounced the US for putting pressure on Arab countries to prevent them to have ties with Damascus. Mekdad stressed the need for unity among Arab countries to resolve the challenges they are currently facing.

## Fighting Terrorism Focus of Gen. Bagheri Visit to Tajikistan

TEHRAN (MNA) - Fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, the strengthening of border security were the main focus of General Bagheri's trip to Tajikistan, the spokesman for the Iranian Armed Forces said.

Tajikistan is of great strategic importance due to its geographical location in Central Asia including its border with Afghanistan, Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said, referring to the recent visit of the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces to Tajikistan.

Saying that Iran shares borders with Afghanistan and Tajikistan, Shekarchi added, "Given the recent changes and developments in Afghanistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan must work together to achieve their goals."

The fight against regional and international terrorism was one of the topics discussed during Bagheri's trip, General Shekarchi said.

The United States, the Israeli regime, and their allies in the region seek to destabilize countries and support terrorist groups, including ISIL, he said, calling for boosting regional coordination to fight terrorism.

Strengthening the border security of Iran and Tajikistan was also one of the main topics discussed during this trip.

In this regard, joint exercises were planned to be held in the future to strengthen border security and to enhance readiness to fight terrorism and drug trafficking.

Given the pressure from the United States and the West to expand NATO, Iran and Tajikistan could have a significant influence on regional developments, he argued.

## Qatar to Host Persian Carpet Fair During 2022 World Cup

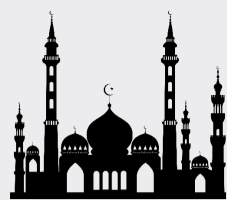
TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian deputy minister says Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani has promised to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to hold a Persian carpet fair during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Mehdi Baradaran, Iran's deputy minister of industry, mine, and trade, said Sheikh Tamim Al Thani made the promise during a recent meeting with Raisi in Tehran and after the Iranian president offered a handwoven silk Persian carpet to him as a token of friendship and peace.

The emir of Qatar traveled to Iran and met with senior Iranian officials last week. Raisi called that visit a turning point in the relations between the two countries.

Qatar will be hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup in November-December this year.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:27
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:13
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:54

34. Those who will be gathered to Hell (prone) on their faces,- they will be in an evil plight, and, as to Path, most astray.  
35. (Before this,) We sent Moses The Book, and appointed his brother Aaron with him as minister;

Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (34 - 35)

## Free and Especial Zones Account for 17% of Foreign Investments

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Vice-President and secretary of Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones says some foreign investment worth of \$148m in free trade zones and some \$15m in special economic zones have been done which totals \$163m and it accounts for 17% of the total foreign investment of the country in the past year.**

Speaking at a press conference, Saeed Mohammad said according to the statistics, exports from free trade zones last year were around \$1.2b and the figure stood at \$15.6 for the special economic zones, adding that the total exports from these zones last year were \$15.7, reiterating that these figures do not include the transit and it is just for the products of the zones.

He refuted the claims that free and special economic zones turned into a launching pad for imports last year, noting that last year we witnesses imports worth of \$1.106b in free trade zones and \$3.59b in the special economic zones and the total imports stood at \$4.7b.

He went on to say that the license to establish the first offshore bank in the country has been issued by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).



An offshore bank is a bank regulated under international banking license (often called offshore license), which usually prohibits the bank from establishing any business activities in the jurisdiction of establishment.

Mohammad said Thursday that the establishment of an offshore bank will provide financial resources for various projects in the free zones.

He added: "As I said, the shareholders of the offshore bank are foreigners, but Iranians outside of Iran also can transfer their currencies to these offshore banks without worrying about problems in the banks under the supervision of the Central Bank of our country, because these banks are independent of the Central Bank."

Therefore, he said, the Iranians abroad are expected to welcome the transfer of currency to offshore banks in the free zones.

Referring to the investment of 6.1 trillion in free trade, industrial and special economic zones in the form of 82 projects, the adviser to the president said that these projects were in five free trade and industrial zones and seven special economic zones.

According to Mohammad, a large number of projects in free trade, industrial and special zones would be put into operation every season, which would be in line with the boosting of production and job creation.

According to Mohammad, foreign investment in free and special zones is 17% of the total foreign investment in the country in 2021.

## NICICO Among Top 5 Companies on IME



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) was chosen among the top five companies on Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) in terms of value.

According to the reports, in the first ceremony for honoring the top companies on the IME which was held in the presence of Finance Minister Seyed Ehsan Kandouzi, the CEO of NICICO Mr. Ali Rostami received the statue for the top company in terms of value on the IME.

The first conference and ceremony for honoring the top offerers on the IME was held in the presence of the government and private sector and NICICO as well as Mobarakeh Steel Company, Khuzestan Steel Company, Esfahan Steel Company and Esfahan Oil Refining Company were chosen as the top five companies on the IME in terms of value of their offered goods on the exchange and they were honored with awarding states.

## Iran, China's Economies Integrate Each Other

TEHRAN (IP) - The Chairman of the Iranian-Chinese Joint Chamber of Commerce in Iran says the Iranian economy in the Persian Gulf integrates with the Chinese economy.

The second conference on the development of economic cooperation between Iran and China was held in Tehran on Wednesday, where a group of economic activists of the two countries examined the capacities for shoring up economic relations.

Mohammad-Reza Hariri said the economic ties between Iran and China showed the high potential of the trade ties, noting that good political relations could lead to the betterment of economic relations. Hariri said that despite the sanctions, the two countries recorded over \$30 billion of trade.

The Deputy Head of Political and International Studies Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the mutual image of the Chinese and Iranian from each other in their countries were

manipulated by the West, creating a gap between the two nations.

Khalil Shirgholami stated that the depth of China's developments in Iran was not yet fully understood, and stressed that the cultural and popular attachments should be added to Iran-China relations.

Shirgholami also pointed to the 25-year agreement between Iran and China and called it a difficult starting point for the relevant cooperation, but it could turn into a comprehensive agreement fully covering the political, technological, and economic relations of the two countries.

Signed on 27 March 2021, the Iran-China 25-year memorandum of understanding is a long-term road map that defines the two countries' cooperation in various economic, political, cultural, and parliamentary sections.

### Iran-Ghana Annual Trade Could reach \$1b

TEHRAN (MNA) – The volume of economic cooperation and trade exchanges between Iran and Ghana will reach one billion dollars by the time the eighth meeting joint economic summit is held, according to the Iranian agriculture minister.

Iranian Minister of Agriculture Jihad Seyyed Javad Sadati Nejad made the remarks closing of the seventh two-day meeting of the Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation between Iran and Ghana in Tehran on Wednesday.

The Iranian minister described the seventh meeting of the Iran-Ghana Permanent Cooperation Commission as one of the most successful meetings, adding that "Various agreements, memoranda of understandings and agreements were signed within the framework of this joint commission."

Referring to the trade relations between the two countries, Sadati Nejad said that the trade volume between Iran and Ghana increased from \$ 35 million in 2019 to more than 10 times to \$ 370 million in 2021.

### Iran, Iraq Cooperate to Combat Dust Storms

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Director of the Center for International Affairs and Conventions of the Department of Environment Hossein Mousavifar called for boosting cooperation between the two countries aimed at combating dust storms.

Mousavifar made the remarks in a meeting with the Iraqi ambassador to Iran Nasir Abdul Mohsen Abdullah.

The meeting was convened due to the recent environmental issues to achieve proper executive and operational solutions for resolving the dust phenomenon.

## Exploration, Driving Force of Chadormalu Developmental Projects

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company Eng. Nasser Taghizadeh in the meeting of exploration committee which was held at Chadormalu Mining Complex once again emphasized necessity of raw material provision to materialize production of 55m tons of steel in the country and said today in the country they need exploration and this issue is on the agenda of all companies like Chadormalu.

He went on to say that Chadormalu Co. by purchasing 8 drilling machines has gone deep 2500 meters and it is ahead of other companies and in the field of exploration, the company has taken good forward moves.

At the end of the meeting, Taghizadeh visited Ariz mine (D19) and during his visit he was informed of the trend of stripping process in the mine.

It should be noted that Ariz mine, which has started stripping operation for seven months, has been able to drill for 22500 meters in the two public and descriptive phases and it has done 39m tons of stripping and prepared and referred 2642 samples to the laboratory which is considered a record and it is 65% ahead of the schedule.

## First LPG Cargo Exported From South Pars Phase 13

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The operator of the developmental project of South Pars Phase 13 announced export of the first LPG cargo from this phase from Siraf Pars Port.

According to the public relations of Pars Oil and Gas Company, Mr. Payam Motamed on Wednesday announced that for the first time LPG of South Pars Phase 13 refinery was transferred to Siraf Pars Port via the pipeline and after a special ship was docked at the port, the 12-1000 ton LPG cargo was loaded on the ship in less than one day and it was exported via wharf No.1 of this port.

He added that at the early days of inauguration of LPG and separation units, this valuable product was exported in hot form, but with completion of the cooling unit and detention reservoirs, export of this valuable product began in the cold form.

Motamed went on to say that sales of liquefied has and sulfur of refineries and petrochemical complexes in the South Pars region has earned the country considerable forex in the sanctions era and it helps the national economy a great deal.

The goal behind developing South pars Phase 13 is to annually produce 56m cubic meters of sour gas, 75,000 tons of condensates and 400 tons of sulfur as well as annual production of 50,000 tons of LPG and one million tons of Ethane gas for feeding the petrochemical units.

## The top teams of the fourth national competition for rescue and first aid were determined; Goharzamin, the conqueror of the peaks of relief and first aid of the country



The opening ceremony of this competition was held on the evening of Tuesday, May 17, 1401, hosted by Goharzamin Company and accompanied by Iran Minerals Production Company in the hall of Ghaem Hotel in Sirjan. The competition started with the presence of 96 people and in the form of 25 teams from all over the country in the open area of Ghaem Hotel in Sirjan and continued for 2 days. «One of the important responsibilities of mining and industrial companies is to establish emergency and rescue bases,» he said. And due to the important point such as prioritizing the safety and health of the employees of companies and mines, the employees working in the emergency department of the mines should always improve their level of readiness and their individual skills should be updated. He added: «Holding these competitions annually, which you are currently witnessing for the fourth time in Sirjan city, is a great goal to achieve the safety and emergency forces in the best physical condition and fitness and to ensure the health of all employees working in the country's mines.» . Alhamdulillah, this year Goharzamin Company will host 25 of the best mining emergency teams in the country, which will compete for 2 days and test their level of readiness. In the end, the HSE manager of Goharzamin Company said: I would like to thank my colleagues in the welfare and public relations departments who worked hard and were responsible for the proper preparation, coordination and information of this competition. I would also like to thank the Iranian Minerals Production Company, which organizes this competition. Parham Khajehpour, Director of Safety, Health, Environment and Energy (HSE) of Iran Minerals Production Company, told our reporter on the sidelines of the competition: I would like to express my gratitude to Khezripour and Engineer Golsorkhi for the worthy hosting and magnificent holding of these competitions. He added: «As you know, this is the fourth round of the competition, which was supposed to be held annually, but the outbreak of the coronavirus caused the competition to be postponed for two years. Let's see these competitions again in Sirjan.

He continued: In this course, we have designed and considered 3 items for the participants;

\* Item 1 - Artificial respiration (PCR) to the injured person is performed with a simulated mannequin.

\* The second item - there are obstacles that we have considered to cross the tunnel obstacles because teams from the country's underground mines have also participated in these competitions.

\* The third item - crossing obstacles in height and carrying the injured, which requires high preparation of participants.

These competitions are being held with the participation of 25 teams, which

is an increase of 9 teams compared to the last period. About 96 people will compete in different teams of the country's mining emergency. It is worth mentioning that yesterday we took a scientific test from 72 people and asked 20 questions with 20 points, out of a total of 40 possible points, 20 points were questions. The teams participating in these competitions are mining emergencies and mining and industrial companies from all over the country, which are from mines such as; We have participants: iron ore, gold, copper, lead and zinc, titanium, coal, etc. Amir Hossein Garkani, head of the Iranian Natural Disaster Research Institute and a member of the Supreme Council for Crisis Management, said in a short interview: «Certainly, the purpose of holding such an event is to retrain and encourage employees in emergency centers of mines and mining and industrial companies And appreciation of these loved ones is another goal that is considered by the organizer and host of this competition in the closing ceremony. He continued: «Retraining can acquaint the participants in these competitions with the latest methods that have been presented in the field of rescue and rescue, and these loved ones will learn these skills and strengthen them through practice.» It is worth mentioning that on Wednesday evening, May 17th, the closing ceremony of the fourth rescue and first aid competition hosted by Goharzamin Iron Ore Company in Ghaem Hotel in Sirjan with the presence of the interim Friday Imam of Hajj al-Islam and Muslims Heydari, Amir Hassan Mardan, Commander of Sirjan Navy, Colonel Morteza Amir Sabatani, Sirjan Police Commander, Deputy Commander of Sirjan Resistance Corps, Colonel Hamid Sabzalipour, Member of the Board and Deputy Director of Management and Human Capital Development of Goharzamin Dr. Mohammad Reza Khezripour and other city officials and some deputies and managers of Goharzamin were held. Dr. Mohammad Reza Khezripour, member of the board of directors and deputy director of management and human capital development of Goharzamin, while welcoming the guests at the closing ceremony of the competition, said: In addition to creating a sense of empathy, these competitions are a way to measure the strength and readiness of the safety personnel of mining and industrial companies. He also pointed out that HSE Goharzamin unit was introduced as the top safety unit in Kerman province in the previous period; According to the judges and professors, these competitions were held at an excellent level in terms of quantity and quality, and the ability of our colleagues was at an excellent level. While thanking Goharzamin Iron Ore Company for hosting these competitions, Engineer Khajehpour stated that the purpose of these competitions is education, motivation and creativity. Dr. Garkani also evaluated the rescue job as very valuable and honorable and said that investing in the field of safety is not a cost and is a developing movement. He also referred to the systemic approach in reducing risks and increased the capacity of mines in terms of knowledge-based and start-up issues. Mohammad Ali Saadati, Director of Public Relations and International Affairs of Goharzamin Company, said on the sidelines of the competition: Training of trainers is to create rescue skills in the scene of accidents in mines and companies, as well as to motivate and speed up the work of rescuers and employees in mine emergencies throughout the country.

It is worth mentioning that at the end of these competitions, the jury introduced the top titles of these competitions as follows;

Goharzamin Iron Ore Company is ranked first

Sirjan Iranian Steel Company, second place

Mahan (Mine 5) and Alborz Markazi Central Coal companies jointly won the third place and were honored with statues, plaques and gifts.



## N. Korea Completes Preparation For Nuclear Weapon Test

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea has completed preparations for a nuclear test and is seeking the best moment to carry it out, a South Korean lawmaker said today, a day before U.S. President Joe Biden is due to arrive in Seoul.

Despite North Korea's recent Covid-19 outbreak, "preparations for a nuclear test have been completed and they are only looking for the right time", lawmaker Ha Tae-keung told reporters after being briefed by Seoul's National Intelligence Service.

The United States said earlier it believes there is a "genuine possibility" that North Korea could conduct a nuclear test while Biden is on his first trip as president to Asia.



## German School Shooting Leaves One Person Wounded

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Shots were fired at a German school in the northern city of Bremerhaven on Thursday and one person, who was not a student, was wounded, police said, adding an armed person had been taken into custody.

On its website, the Lloyd Gymnasium, which has around 1,150 students, posted a notice saying: "Dear parents, your children are safe." It gave a phone number that parents could call for further information.

German daily Bild said the injured person, who has been taken to hospital, was a woman. That could not immediately be confirmed.



## Biden Hosts Finnish, Swedish leaders



KYIV (Dispatches) - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan dug in over his rejection of Sweden and Finland joining NATO, casting a shadow over a White House visit on Thursday by the leaders of the Nordic nations who applied this week to join the U.S.-led alliance.

Finland and Sweden say they have been spurred into joining NATO by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, reversing generations of military non-alignment to bring about the biggest shakeup in European security for decades.

U.S. President Joe Biden hosted Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson and Finnish President Sauli Niinistö, a chance for Washington to demonstrate that Russia's invasion has backfired, bringing about the very expansion of NATO that Moscow has said it was fighting to halt. "This is a historic event, a watershed moment in European security."

Two nations with a long tradition of neutrality will be joining the world's most powerful defensive alliance," said White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

But Turkey has surprised its allies by objecting to the move, accusing the two Nordic states of harboring Kurdish militants.

"We will continue our policy in a determined way. We have told allies that we will say no to Finland and Sweden's NATO membership," Erdogan said in an interview with students late on Wednesday. "NATO is a security alliance and we cannot accept terrorists to be in it."

Washington has so far played down the Turkish objections, saying it expects the issues to be resolved.

The past week has seen Russia secure its biggest victory since the invasion began in February, with Kyiv announcing it had ordered its garrison in a steelworks in Mariupol to stand down, after a nearly three month siege of the city.

The ultimate outcome of the bloodiest battle in Europe for decades has remained publicly unresolved, with no confirmation of the fate of hundreds of Ukrainian defenders. Moscow said on Thursday that 1,730 Ukrainian fighters had surrendered so far, including 771 in the past 24 hours.

Ukraine, which says it aims to secure a prisoner swap, has declined to say how many were inside the plant or comment on the fate of the rest since confirming that just over 250 had surrendered in the initial hours after it ordered them to yield.

The Switzerland-based International Committee of the Red Cross said it has registered hundreds of prisoners from the plant now held by Russia, but it has not given a precise number.

The leader of Russian-backed separatists in control of the area said nearly half of the fighters remained inside the steelworks, where underground bunkers and tunnels had protected them from weeks of Russian bombardment.

"More than half have already left - more than half have laid down their arms," Denis Pushilin told the Solovoyov Live internet television channel. "Let them surrender, let them live, let them honestly face the charges for all their crimes."

## No Nuclear Arms or NATO Bases on Finland's Soil

HELSINKI (Dispatches) - Finland does not want NATO deploy nuclear weapons or set up military bases on its territory even if Finland becomes a member, the Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin told an Italian newspaper in an interview published.

Finland and Sweden formally applied to join the NATO alliance yesterday, a decision spurred by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but face objections from Turkey to an accession process that was originally expected to be relatively rapid.

Marin, on a visit in Rome to meet with her Italian counterpart Mario Draghi, said she believed the matter could be solved through dialogue.

"I think at this stage it is important to stay calm, to have discussions with Turkey and all other member countries, answering questions that may exist and correcting any misunderstandings," Marin told Italian daily Corriere della Sera.

Marin also said the question of NATO deploying nuclear weapons or opening bases in Finland was not part of Helsinki's membership negotiations with the Western military alliance.

"Nor do I think there is any interest in deploying nuclear weapons or opening NATO bases in Finland," she said.

Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson of neighboring Sweden, which like Finland is applying for NATO membership, has also said her country did not want permanent NATO bases or nuclear weapons on its territory.

Turkey, a NATO member since 1952, has expressed unexpected opposition to Finnish and Swedish memberships, accusing the Nordic neighbors of harboring individuals linked to groups it considers terrorist. Ankara also cited the countries' arms export embargoes on Turkey after its Syria incursion in 2019.

Finland's President Sauli Niinisto and the Swedish Prime Minister Andersson are expected to meet the US President Joe Biden in Washington later today.

Italy strongly supports Finland's and Sweden's application to join NATO and is willing to speed up any internal procedures for the two countries to join the alliance as soon as possible, Draghi said on Wednesday after meeting with Marin.



## Sri Lankan Police Clash With Protesters

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka's central bank has secured foreign exchange to pay for fuel and cooking gas shipments that will ease crippling shortages, its governor said, but police fired tear gas and water canon to push back student protesters.

Most of Sri Lanka's petrol stations have run dry as the island nation battles its most devastating economic crisis since independence in 1948. At some pumps in the commercial capital, Colombo, dozens of people stood in lines holding plastic jerry cans, as troops in combat gear and armed with assault rifles patrolled the streets. Traffic was extremely light.

Residents said most people were staying at home because of the lack of transport. Hundreds of students carrying black flags marched on Colombo's central Fort area, chanting slogans against the government. Police fired repeated rounds of tear gas and water canon to push them back, according to a Reuters witness.

Central bank Governor P. Nandalal Weerasinghe told a news conference adequate dollars had been released to pay for fuel and cooking gas shipments, utilising in part \$130 million received from the World Bank and remittances from Sri Lankans working overseas.

He was speaking after the central bank held interest rates steady at a policy meeting, citing a massive 7 percentage point increase in April that it said was working its way through the system.

The country was more politically and economically stable, Weerasinghe said, adding that he would stay on in his post. He told reporters on May 11 he would resign in two weeks in the absence of political stability as any steps the bank took to address the economic crisis would not be successful amid turmoil.

Opposition parliamentarian Ranil Wickremesinghe was named prime minister last week and he has made four cabinet appointments. However, he has yet to name a finance minister.



## Bush Gaffe on Unjustified War Draws Iraqi Ire

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - An embarrassing slip of the tongue by former U.S. president George W. Bush may have drawn laughter from his American audience, but it raised the ire of Iraqis.

In a speech Wednesday evening in Dallas about Russia's war on Ukraine, Bush called the invasion of Iraq, which he himself ordered, "unjustified and brutal" -- before quickly correcting himself.

The 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq toppled dictator Saddam Hussein and ushered in one of the bloodiest periods in the country's modern history, marked by sectarian warfare and the rise of jihadists.

Between 2003 and 2011, when the U.S. withdrew its troops, more than 100,000 civilians were killed, according to the Iraq Body Count tracker. The invasion cost the lives of nearly 4,500 Americans.

But on Wednesday it was the war in Ukraine that Bush talked about during an event organized by his foundation.

"The decision of one man to launch a wholly unjustified and brutal invasion of Iraq, I mean of Ukraine," he said in a speech, drawing laughter from the audience.

"Anyway -- 75," he added, referring to his own age, to another burst of laughter.

Video footage of the gaffe has since gone viral online, with one post on Twitter having been viewed more than 14 million times in less than half a day.

It was also picked widely up by Arab media, stoking anger among Iraqis.

"The specter of Iraq's invasion and destruction haunts Bush Jr. His subconscious exposed it when it took over his tongue," Iraqi journalist Omar al-Janabi tweeted.

"Yes it is a brutal and unjustified invasion which will remain your worst nightmare", he added.

Iraqis also took to Facebook to criticize the former U.S. president.

"The crime of your occupation of Iraq and its destruction will remain a nightmare that haunts your sleep and torments your dead criminal consciences," added Nahedh al-Tamimi.

## Cuba Denounces U.S. Partial Rollback of Restrictions

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba's vice foreign minister denounced the Biden administration's partial rollback of Trump-era restrictions on remittances and travel to the island, calling U.S. policy toward the island one of continued "hostility" and "economic blockade."

The U.S. measures, announced, mark the most significant changes in U.S. policy toward Cuba since President Joe Biden took office in January 2021. His administration said it would open the door to increased travel to the island, do away with a Trump-era cap on remittances and promises to further boost visa processing.

The measures, however, stop well short of the historic rapprochement under former President Barack Obama. Cuban Vice Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio, in a television program on state-run media on Tuesday, called the announcement "an information sheet sparse in detail, although with a heavy load of hostile language toward Cuba and a dose of demagoguery."

He warned against too much optimism until the fine print of the regulations is released, a process he said could take "days or months."

The United States said on Monday that the rule changes would be implemented "in short order."

Many Cubans on the island found reason to celebrate this week, as hopes of reuniting with family in the United States and the potential for even a minor uptick in its near-collapsed economy provided some room for optimism.

Cuba, a Caribbean island 90 miles from the United States, is suffering its worst economic crisis in decades, ravaged by Trump-era sanctions, two years of coronavirus and an ailing tourism industry that is struggling to recover.

Tens of thousands of Cubans have left the island in recent months for the United States, an exodus on par with the 1980 Mariel boatlift.

Cossio expressed skepticism that the announced changes would do much to improve the country's lot.

"The policy of the United States towards Cuba continues to be a policy of hostility and economic blockade...to isolate Cuba, and to {discredit} it," he said.

The United States said the policy shift announced Monday "will continue to focus on empowering the Cuban people to help them create a future free from repression and economic suffering."





**Shanon**  
(adviser)

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J, balcony  
marble fl  
Fully Furn

**Niavaran Villa (\$4000)**  
1000sq.m  
5bdrs, S/p  
S, J, & pkg  
yard, & F.F

**Parsian**

**Kamranieh Apt (\$2200)**  
230sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

**Elahieh bldg (\$6000)**  
4storey, 15bdrs, & pkg lots

**Velenjak (\$2500)** 300sq.m, 4bdrs, S/pool, S, J, balcony, & F.F

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(\$1800) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, F.F

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## Russian Sees Gas Prices for Outside CIS Rising 72% in 2022

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Russian economy ministry expects prices for Russia's natural gas for consumers outside the CIS countries to rise 72% in 2022 to \$523.3 per 1,000 cubic meters, RIA news agency reported.

Russia's gas exports will shrink 10% this year to 185 billion cubic meters (bcm), RIA said, citing the economy ministry's forecasts.

The economy ministry also expects Russia's gas output to decline to 721 bcm in 2022 from 764 bcm in 2021, Interfax reported, citing the ministry's forecasts.



## World Bank to Provide Additional \$12b to Address Devastating Global Food Crisis

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The World Bank announced an additional \$12 billion in funding to mitigate the "devastating effects" of severe growing global food insecurity driven by climate change and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The move, which will bring total available funding for projects over the next 15 months to \$30 billion, was unveiled hours before a major United Nations meeting on global food security.

Amid the growing shortages intensified by the war in Ukraine, a key grain producer, the new funding will help boost food and fertilizer production, facilitate greater trade and support vulnerable households and producers, the World Bank said.

"Food price increases are having devastating effects on the poorest and most vulnerable," World Bank President David Malpass said in a statement.

"It is critical that countries make clear statements now of future output increases in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine."

The bank previously announced \$18.7 billion in funding for projects linked to "food and nutrition security issues" for Africa and the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and South Asia.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and international economic sanctions on Moscow have disrupted supplies of fertilizer, wheat and other commodities from both countries, pushing up prices for food and fuel, especially in developing nations.

And India over the weekend banned wheat exports, which sent prices for the grain soaring. "Countries should make concerted efforts to increase the supply of energy and fertilizer, help farmers increase plantings and crop yields, and remove policies that block exports and imports, divert food to biofuel, or encourage unnecessary storage," Malpass said.

Washington welcomed the decision, which is part of a joint action plan by multilateral lenders and regional development banks to address the food crisis.

"The Russian war against Ukraine is the latest global shock that is exacerbating the sharp increase in both acute and chronic food insecurity in recent years driven by conflict, climate change and economic downturns, such as those associated with the Covid-19 pandemic," the Treasury Department said, applauding the institutions for working swiftly to address the issues.

The situation will only grow worse because of the Ukrainian war, experts warn, as Russia and Ukraine alone produce 30 percent of the global wheat supply.

Vellamvelly Muraleedharan, India's minister of state for external affairs, also is due to participate in the meeting. Washington's UN ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, on Monday urged New Delhi to revoke the ban announced Saturday in the face of falling production caused primarily by an extreme heatwave.

She said Wednesday's session aims to "bring countries together to look at what countries might be able to help fill the gap" in wheat supplies caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. But food insecurity had begun to spike even before Moscow invaded its neighbor on February 24.

UN data showed that 193 million people in 53 countries were acutely food insecure last year, meaning they needed urgent assistance to survive.

## China Calls for Urgent Boost to Virus-Hit Economy

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's premier called for greater "urgency" in rolling out measures to support the virus-battered economy, state media reported today, days after data highlighted the stark impact of Covid-19 restrictions.

China — the last major global economy sticking to a rigid zero-Covid policy — is battling an economic slump due to prolonged virus lockdowns that have constricted supply chains, quelled demand and stalled manufacturing.

"All localities and departments should step up their sense of urgency, and new measures that can be used should be used," Li Keqiang said at a symposium today, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

He added that efforts to support the economy should bring it "back to normal quickly" after admitting that indicators have "weakened significantly" since March, with a particular dip in April.

On Monday, data showed retail sales and factory output last month had slumped the most since the start of the pandemic, while unemployment edged back toward its February 2020 peak.

Beijing's unrelenting approach to Covid-19 outbreaks has snarled supply chains and locked down tens of millions of people, hitting major financial, industrial and tourist hubs.

The country's borders also remain closed to most foreign travellers and a slew of international sports events have been scrapped over pandemic concerns. China has targeted full-year growth of around 5.5 per cent, but data published in April showed that first-quarter growth slowed to 4.8 per cent after the world's second-biggest economy lost steam in the latter half of last year.

And the economic targets have a political dimension for Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who is eyeing another term in power.



## Qatar to Invest an Extra \$5b in Spain

MADRID (Dispatches) - Qatar said it plans to invest an additional US\$5 billion (RM21 billion) in Spain on the second day of a state visit by its emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

"The volume of investments agreed upon with the Spanish side amounts to US\$5 billion in various sectors," said Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani in a statement tweeted by his ministry.

Neither side gave a timetable for the investment, which amounts to some 4.75 billion euros, nor did they say which sectors would benefit.

"Qatar will invest close to €5 billion in our country in the coming years," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said during a business meeting with the Qatari delegation.

"It is a gesture of confidence in the Spanish economy and Spanish businesses which will strengthen bilateral ties," he said ahead of afternoon talks with the emir.

Before the pandemic, Qatari investment in Spain stood at €2.67 billion (RM12.3 billion), the Spanish government said, making it the country's 24th biggest investor. To date, Qatari funding has been notably invested in several sectors: civil aviation, construction, energy and communications.

According to a Spanish government source, the two sides will today sign around a dozen commercial contracts, notably concerning energy as Madrid seeks to diversify its gas supplies following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Qatar, one of the world's three biggest exporters of liquefied natural gas (LNG), is currently Spain's fifth-largest supplier after the United States, Algeria, Nigeria and Egypt.

## India's WPI Inflation at 17-Year High Threatens Small Businesses

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's wholesale prices accelerated at the fastest pace in at least 17 years as the Ukraine war and a weak rupee pushed up energy and raw material costs, raising risks for businesses that are unable to pass on costs.

While big retailers, food makers and consumer product companies including Hindustan Unilever, Britannia and Procter & Gamble are passing along higher costs to consumers, small companies are finding it hard to raise prices, industry leaders said.

Annual wholesale price inflation, a proxy for producers' prices, climbed to 15.08% in April, remaining in double-digits for the 13th month in a row, and higher than 14.48% forecast in a Reuters poll of analysts.

Wholesale prices are at the highest since at least April 2005, according to Refinitiv data. Some private economists said WPI inflation in April was the highest since 1991, according to an earlier series.

Economists said that with wholesale inflation picking up along with retail inflation at 7.79% in April - an eight-year high - the central bank was likely to push for aggressive rate hikes to tame prices. Higher rates will pose a drag on economic growth as well, they said.

"With WPI inflation remaining solidly in double-digits, the probability of a repo hike in the June 2022 review of monetary policy has risen further," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA, the Indian arm of ratings agency Moody's.

She expects a 40-basis-point hike in the repo rate in June followed by a 35-basis-point hike in August.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February has supercharged already rising commodity and fuel prices and kept global policymakers busy trying to contain red-hot inflationary pressures.

Private economists worry that rising prices that prompted the Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India to raise the repo rate by 40 basis points this month, and warn of further rate hikes, will hit demand and investments.

Nomura expects India's 2022 GDP growth could slow to 6.8% from 8.3% the previous year as broad-based inflationary pressures weigh on demand amid tightening monetary conditions.

Fuel prices, a big component of the increase, jumped 38.66% on year versus 34.52% in March. A more than 4% rupee depreciation against the dollar this year has also made imported items costlier.

Wholesale manufactured product prices rose 10.85%, against 10.71% in the prior month, while food prices accelerated at an 8.88% pace, versus 8.71% previously, data showed.

## EU Unveils Escape Route From Russian Fossil Fuels by 2027

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Commission unveiled a €210 billion plan for Europe to end its reliance on Russian fossil fuels by 2027, and to use the pivot away from Moscow to quicken its transition to green energy.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia, Europe's top gas supplier, has prompted the European Union to rethink its energy policies amid sharpened concerns of supply shocks. Russia supplies 40 per cent of the bloc's gas and 27 per cent of its imported oil, and EU countries are struggling to agree sanctions on the latter.

To wean countries off those fuels, Brussels proposed a three-pronged plan: a switch to import more non-Russian gas, a faster rollout of renewable energy, and more effort to save energy.

The measures include a mix of EU laws, non-binding schemes, and recommendations to governments in the EU's 27 member countries, who are largely in charge of their national energy policies.

Taken together, Brussels expects them to require €210 billion in extra investments by 2027 and €300 billion by 2030 on top of those already needed to meet the bloc's 2030 climate target. Ultimately, it said the investments would slash Europe's fossil fuel import bill.

Those investments include €86 billion for renewable energy and €27 billion for hydrogen infrastructure, €29 billion for power grids and €56 billion for energy savings and heat pumps.

The Commission said some investments in fossil fuel infrastructure would be required — €10 billion for a dozen gas and liquefied natural gas projects, and up to €2 billion for oil, targeting land-locked Central and Eastern European countries that lack access to non-Russian supply.

Brussels wants countries to finance the measures using the EU's €800 billion Covid-19 recovery fund, and said it will also sell extra carbon market permits from a reserve over the next few years to raise €20 billion.



To spearhead the plans, the Commission proposed a higher legally-binding target to get 45 per cent of EU energy from renewable sources by 2030, replacing its current 40 per cent proposal.

That would see the EU more than double its renewable energy capacity to 1,236 gigawatts (GW) by 2030, and be aided by a law allowing simpler one-year permits for wind and solar projects. The EU also proposed phasing in obligations for countries to fit new buildings with solar panels.

Another target would cut EU energy consumption 13 per cent by 2030 against expected levels, replacing its current 9 per cent proposal. The EU is negotiating laws to renovate buildings faster to use less energy, and said voluntary actions such as driving less or turning down thermostats could cut gas and oil demand by 5 per cent.

The legally-binding targets require approval from EU countries and lawmakers.

## Some Trump China Tariffs Impose More Harm on Consumers, Businesses



KOENIGSWINTER (Dispatches) - Some of the Trump-era tariffs imposed on China appear to hurt consumers and businesses more than address real issues posed by the Asian giant, U.S. treasury secretary Janet Yellen said today, as the Biden administration mulls lifting the punitive duties.

American tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of Chinese imports are due to expire in July, and President Joe Biden has faced growing calls to get rid of the punitive duties to help combat the highest U.S. inflation in over four decades.

Speaking at a press conference in Germany, Yellen voiced support for such a move.

Some of the tariffs imposed by former president Donald Trump "seem as though they impose more harm on consumers and businesses and aren't very strategic in the sense of addressing real issues we have with China, whether it concerns supply chain vulnerabilities, national security issues or other unfair trade practices," she said.

"And so I see a case not only because of inflation, but because there would be benefits to consumers and firms... that some relief could come from cutting some of them," she told reporters ahead of a G7 finance ministers meeting in Koenigswinter, near Bonn.

"But we're having these discussions," she added.

Biden said earlier this month he was "discussing" lifting trade tariffs on China, but that no decision had been made yet.

Supporters of the step argue that ending the tariffs would cut roaring U.S. inflation by making imports cheaper.

But lifting the measures would likely bring a political risk for the White House, which does not want to be branded weak on China. The tariffs were first imposed in 2018, eventually ramping up to cover about US\$350 billion in annual imports from China in retaliation for Beijing's theft of American intellectual property and forced transfer of technology.



## No Sign of Iran's Lack of Seriousness in Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (MNA) – IAEA Chief Rafael Grossi said that there is no sign that the Iranian side is not serious about the nuclear talks.

Grossi, speaking at a press conference in Tokyo, added, "We are currently awaiting convincing responses from Iran on a number of its nuclear activities."

"We are, of course, still hopeful that some agreement is going to be reached within a reasonable time frame, although we have to recognize

the fact that the window of opportunity could be closed any anytime," Grossi recently claimed, speaking to European Parliament committees via webstream.

Iran and the IAEA reached an agreement last March, which required the AEIOI to provide the IAEA with written explanations of the three alleged sites, along with supporting documents, by March 20.



## Climate Change Indicators Hit Record Highs in 2021

LONDON (Dispatches) - Four key climate change indicators all set new record highs in 2021, the United Nations said, warning that the global energy system was driving humanity towards catastrophe.

Greenhouse gas concentrations, sea level rise, ocean heat and ocean acidification all set new records last year, the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said in its "State of the Global Climate in 2021" report. The annual overview is "a dismal litany of humanity's failure to tackle climate disruption", UN chief Antonio Guterres said.

"The global energy system is broken and bringing us ever closer to climate catastrophe. We must end fossil fuel pollution and accelerate the renewable energy transition

before we incinerate our only home." The WMO said human activity was causing planetary-scale changes on land, in the ocean and in the atmosphere, with harmful and long-lasting ramifications for ecosystems.

The report confirmed that the past seven years were the top seven hottest years on record. Back-to-back La Nina events at the start and end of 2021 had a cooling effect on global temperatures last year. Even so, it was still one of the warmest years ever recorded, with the average global temperature in 2021 about 1.11 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level. The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change saw countries agree to cap global warming at "well below" 2C above average levels measured between 1850

and 1900 -- and 1.5C if possible. "Our climate is changing before our eyes," said WMO chief Petteri Taalas. "The heat trapped by human-induced greenhouse gases will warm the planet for many generations to come. Sea level rise, ocean heat and acidification will continue for hundreds of years unless means to remove carbon from the atmosphere are invented."

Four key indicators of climate change "build a consistent picture of a warming world that touches all parts of the Earth system", the report said. Greenhouse gas concentrations reached a new global high in 2020, when the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO2) reached 413.2 parts per million (ppm) globally, or 149 percent of the pre-industrial level.

## Iran Attaches Special Importance to Relations With India

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, during a phone talk, told his Indian counterpart that Iran attaches special importance to relations with India.

Amirabdollahian and India's foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar held a phone conversation on Friday, discussing Iran-India's bilateral ties and several regional and international issues.

Iranian foreign minister described Iran-India's cooperation in the direction of

comprehensive development and their consultations on regional and international issues as indicators of growing relations.

Jaishankar, for his part, referred to the good level of relations between the two countries of Iran and India, expressing hope that the cooperation and relations will be developed and promoted in various fields.

He also invited his Iranian counterpart to travel to India for a meeting and close consultation with high-ranking officials of his country.

### China to...

FROM PAGE 1

The Asian powerhouse has spent billions of dollars on its relationship with Iran and is positioning itself to spend billions more. This relationship is for the long term, covering the security, defense, and energy sectors.

The NITC recently announced that it will construct new crude tankers while it sends about 24 aging ships to be repaired in a bid to return to the global market.

Iran has one of the largest tanker fleets globally, with an approximate total deadweight of 15.5 million tons. In the wake of the Russian war with Ukraine and the

need for more global oil supply, there is rising appetite for Iranian oil.

China is reportedly buying more oil now than before the sanctions imposed on Iran in 2018.

India, the second largest client of Iran's crude oil before the sanctions, is also reportedly prepping its refineries for imports. The Indian government is said to have created a contractual template to swiftly reenter negotiations.

This is also the trend with Iran's other major Asian customers, such as South Korea, which was the largest buyer of Iran's condensate before the sanctions.

On Wednesday, Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji stressed that Russia is no threat to Iran's oil sales.

Russia is facing an EU ban on its oil exports following sanctions introduced by Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The specter of the ban on about half of Russia's

7.85 million barrels a day (bpd) of exported crude and refined oil to Europe has led to speculation that Russia would look for new markets in Asia, where China and India continue to buy Russian crude offered at discount.

Owji told reporters that it would take Russia time to find new markets to replace possible losses in exports to Europe or north America.

Moreover, while the Group of Seven (G7) nations, including Japan, have agreed to phase out Russian oil imports, the EU has been unable to reach consensus on following through the plan, mainly due to opposition from member states dependent on Russian supplies.

The push for a ban has put a group of three landlocked countries -- Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic -- in a bind: the trio are physically connected to the Russian-operated Druzhba pipeline and obtain the majority of supplies from the massive conduit.

### Iran Supports...

FROM PAGE 1

"In 2021, nearly 193 million people in 53 countries experienced dire food insecurity and needed immediate help," he hastened to add, citing global statistics.

Iran's ambassador to the world body said the whole world has been affected by acute food shortages, but Africa undoubtedly suffers the most.

Importantly, despite hosting 60 percent of the world's arable land, the African continent is a major importer of food, which means that disruptions in the supply chain affect it the most. Iran's permanent representative to the UN also drew the world's attention to the food crisis in Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, and the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

"In Afghanistan, 22 million people suffer from food insecurity and are in dire need of help. Iran is cooperating with international organizations to address the emergency food security situation in Afghanistan," he said. "The international community is expected to help Afghans overcome their problems amid the current challenging situation."

Takht-Ravanchi said the acute food insecurity in Yemen recorded an 8 percent increase in the early part of this year, compared to the same period last year.

He said the decades of Israeli occupation and the apartheid regime's policies have led to a deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Palestine, calling for swift and unconditional removal of the siege on the Gaza Strip, which has severely restricted the access of people residing in the coastal enclave to food.

Iran's UN ambassador also said the ongoing foreign occupation of Syrian lands, terrorism, and unilateral sanctions have displaced millions of people in the Arab country, destroyed people's livelihoods, disrupted trade and agriculture, and damaged vital infrastructure.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Takht-Ravanchi pointed to the negative effects of sanctions on food security, saying unilateral coercive measures violate basic human rights, including the right to food, and result in food insecurity.

"Unfortunately, some countries continue to employ such illegal actions, which are prohibited under the international humanitarian law, as a weapon to starve the sanctioned countries," he said. "We believe that food supplies and food chains should not be disrupted by any means, even at the time of armed conflicts. Close adherence to international law, especially the 1949 Geneva Convention, is essential in this regard," Takht-Ravanchi said.

He said the UN sanctions should not be slapped in a way that would "endanger global food security".

"All parties to a conflict must respect and protect medical and humanitarian staff. The principles of humanity, impartiality, and independence must also be observed when providing humanitarian assistance," the envoy emphasized.

"We support the efforts by the leadership of the United Nations aimed at addressing food insecurity challenges and are ready to assist such attempts."

### Constructive Relations...

FROM PAGE 1

Noting that Iran welcomes all-out expansion of economic, political, cultural and trade ties with Azerbaijan, Raisi called for complete implementation of agreements between Tehran and Baku in various fields, especially economy and transit.

"Iran and Azerbaijan are more than mere neighbors as they share the same religion and the same culture.... No factor must be allowed to harm the two countries' friendly relations," Iran's chief executive said.

Mustafayev, for his part, underlined that the Republic of Azerbaijan is persistently pursuing the implementation of agreements between the two countries.

The Azeri official added that new plans are being drawn up to implement new rail, road and transit projects with the aim of developing relations between the two neighbors.

The relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, he said, have progressed and developed in all sectors.

Meanwhile at a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran assessed the energy and transportation sectors as the two main pillars for the promotion of economic cooperation between Tehran and Baku.

The Republic of Azerbaijan is one of Iran's neighbors, which in recent years has called for the expansion of cooperation with Iran in various fields, especially transport, energy and trade.

Relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan gained new momentum after the Presidents of the two countries met on the sidelines of the ECO Economic Cooperation Organization meeting in

Ashgabat on November 28, 2021, and continued to grow in the commercial and economic fields.

Hossein Amirabdollahian described the exchange of delegations between the two countries and the presence of the Vice President of the Iranian Parliament in Baku and Mustafayev in Tehran as expressing the two countries' determination to enhance cooperation in various fields.

Iran's top diplomat stressed making more efforts to accelerate developing relations.

Expressing satisfaction with the growth of trade between the two countries over the last eight months and he termed the implementation of the Turkmenistan gas swap to Azerbaijan by Iran, the energy and transportation sectors as two main pillars for increasing economic cooperation between the two countries.

The need to facilitate the movement of Iranian and Azeri citizens thanks to the management and relative control of the COVID19, financial exchanges between the two provinces and cooperation of border provinces were discussed by the Iranian minister.

Meanwhile, Mustafayev pointed to the meeting between Iranian and Azeri presidents on the sidelines of the ECO Summit in Ashgabat as a turning point for the beginning of a new phase in relations between the two countries and stressed the role and political will of senior officials in developing cooperation.

He also elaborated on the latest developments regarding the implementation of the agreements of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation and economic projects between the two countries in the fields of energy and transportation.

### President...

FROM PAGE 1

Raisi referred to the role of free and special economic zones in expanding relations with neighbors and said, "Expanding interactions with the Eurasian region is important for our country, so the actions of free and special economic zones in this region can increase economic and trade interactions with neighboring countries".

The President stated, "In the seventh development plan, the position of free and special economic zones should be redefined according to the requirements of the day".

Referring to the importance of tourism development in free and special economic zones, the President stressed, "Creating employment and increasing exports is not in conflict with the tourism industry in these areas".

The president unveiled a major power plant in its largest island in the Persian Gulf amid efforts to boost investment in the region.

The 320 megawatt (MW) power plant in the island of Qeshm was opened on Thursday by the President who used a video link from his office in Tehran to launch the facility.

The gas-fired power plant is part of Qeshm's Pasargad electricity station, a system that works on combined cycle basis, a system where the exhaust heat from the turbines is used to raise steam.

Local authorities said private companies had provided the 95 million euros (\$100.7 million) needed to finish the power plant over the 18 months to early April.

### Human Rights in...

FROM PAGE 1

Douhan, who arrived in Tehran earlier this month, said she had met with many civil society members, representatives of financial centers, diplomatic community during her visit.

She said she will address her concerns about the legality of US sanctions in her final report, which will be released at a later date.

Douhan's mission from May 7 to 18 is the first to Iran by a UN special rapporteur.

Before embarking on the trip, the UN official said she hoped to "gather first-hand information on the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the full realization of all human rights" in Iran.

"My visit will aim at covering all walks of life and sectors affected by such measures," she noted, dismissing speculation in the Western media that she was heading to Iran with a specific agenda.

She told reporters on Wednesday that the U.S. has since the 1970s imposed crippling economic and trade sanctions on Iran and significantly expanded them since the early 2000s.

According to the UN special rapporteur, the US continues to illegally ban trade and investment in Iran, forcing foreign companies to leave the country for the fear of sanctions.

Douhan's landmark visit to Iran came amid the stalemate over the nuclear deal, with the US showing reluctance to respond to Iran's proposals.

Decrying the U.S. decision to abandon the nuclear deal and continue with its sanctions regime, she said the deal was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

"Applying extraterritorial sanctions on Iranian companies or companies working with Iran ... is illegal under international law," she asserted.

Commenting on Iran's frozen assets abroad, the UN official said the assets estimated to be around \$120 billion need to be unblocked.

"I urge the states that have frozen the assets of Iranian Central Bank to immediately unfreeze Iran's funds based on international law."

Douhan began her 11-day visit to Iran on May 7, a day before the fourth anniversary of the US illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA.

In her Wednesday press conference, Douhan also welcomed Iran's efforts to support Afghan refugees, displaced by the 20-year US war, despite reeling under sanctions.

"I call on the sanctioning states, particularly the U.S., to abandon the unilateral sanctions," she stated.

She also referred to stalled negotiations in Vienna to bring the US back to the JCPOA, urging the JCPOA signatories and the U.S. to resume the negotiations."

### Indigenously-Developed...

FROM PAGE 1

Brigadier General Ashtiani stated that the homegrown aircraft's propulsion system, new components as well as controllability and maneuverability gear have been designed and manufactured by Iranian specialists and are distinctly superior to other similar models.

He also noted that all ground and aerial tests of Simorgh have been carried out inside the country.

The unveiling of Simorgh has prepared the ground for the design and manufacture of more advanced aircraft in Iran, the Iranian defense minister said.

He referred to light weight, good payload capacity and radius of action, compatibility with Iran's weather conditions, ability to take off and land on short and dirt runways, and agility in providing air medical services as distinguishing features of the homegrown Iranian aircraft.

Simorgh light transport aircraft would develop Iran's national interests in all spheres, can be absorbed by other markets, lower production and maintenance costs, create direct and indirect jobs, and allow the Iranian aviation industry to join the world club of manufacturers of heavy and high-tech aircraft, Brigadier General Ashtiani noted.

Given regional developments and threats against the Islamic Republic, aerial transportation plays a significant role as the armed forces need to enhance capabilities in logistical operations and transportation of cargoes, vehicles, and manpower on battlefields, he hastened to add.

"The Iranian Defense Ministry assigns high priority to beef up the country's deterrent power and fulfilling the needs of ground, naval, and air force units in areas that determine the fate of the asymmetrical warfare," the top defense official said in his remarks.



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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

## Jacobs Wins on Return to 100 Meters

SAVONA (Dispatches) - Lamont Marcel Jacobs made a swiftness return to the 100 metres at a meeting in Savona, cruising to victory in his first race over the distance since claiming double gold at the Tokyo Olympics. Jacobs crossed the line in a wind-assisted time of 9.99 seconds in the heats in front of a small crowd at the low-key meeting on the Italian Riviera. Italian Jacobs was due to go head to head in Nairobi last weekend with Fred Kerley for the first time since his shock win at last year's Tokyo Games.

## Vondrousova to Miss French Open

PRAGUE (Dispatches) - The French Open finalist from 2019, Marketa Vondrousova said she had undergone wrist surgery, which will rule her out of this year's edition of the Grand Slam tournament. "The last few weeks were not easy, I have been experiencing recurring pain in my wrist," the current world number 35 said on Instagram, posing with a bandaged left forearm. "After seeing a couple of doctors I decided to get this small surgery done to be able to play pain free," added Vondrousova, the silver Olympic medallist from last year.

# Eintracht Frankfurt Beat Rangers to Win Europa League

SEVILLE (Dispatches) - Eintracht Frankfurt defeated Rangers 5-4 on penalties to win the Europa League after the final in Seville finished 1-1 at the end of extra time.

Aaron Ramsey missed for Rangers in the shoot-out after coming on as a substitute with only three minutes left of extra-time, before Rafael Borre struck the winning shot to complete Frankfurt's remarkable triumph.

Borre was the hero of the night, after already cancelling out Joe Aribo's opener for Rangers as Frankfurt won their first European trophy since 1980 and booked their place in next season's Champions League. "We are all heroes. Without the fans we wouldn't have made it," said Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp.

Both clubs were looking to win a second European title in their history, Rangers after clinching the Cup Winners' Cup in 1972 and Frankfurt after they lifted the Uefa Cup 42 years ago.

But Rangers came up just short at the end of an incredible run to the final. Only ten years ago this week, Rangers fell into administration before being liquidated and relegated to Scotland's bottom tier.

Frankfurt had already beaten Real Betis, Barcelona and West Ham en route to the final and they were probably deserving winners, shading a compelling contest that always seemed to lack real technical quality.

With a capacity of just under 43,000, Sevilla's Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan was never going to be big enough to house all the travelling fans, with Rangers bringing over an estimated 100,000 while around 60,000 followed Frankfurt to Spain.

The vast majority enjoyed the day in good spirits but security concerns were not unfounded, with skirmishes breaking out in the city centre during the day on Wednesday while five German fans were arrested late on Tuesday night after police said 200 Frankfurt fans launched an attack on Rangers supporters.

It was a scruffy opening 15 minutes as Joe Aribo almost got away after a neat pirouette by Scott Wright before John Lundstram scraped his studs down the dipping head of Sebastian Rode, leaving the Frankfurt captain with a bloody shirt that had to be changed and a head that had to be strapped.



The German team gradually took control, faster to the ball and slicker in their passing, suffocating Rangers, who were reduced to speculative punts forward to try to escape the press.

Frankfurt's Ansgar Knauff went close, the penalty box opening up for the winger at the end of a winding run forward, only for Allan McGregor to tip wide.

Rangers had their moments and improved before the break as Lundstram's header had to be pushed over and Ryan Jack drove too high. Frankfurt seemed rejuvenated for the start of the second half but it was Rangers who took the lead just before the hour, capitalising on two dreadful Frankfurt errors, each compounding the other.

First, Djibril Sow misjudged a header in midfield, sending it back behind his own defence for the lively Aribo to latch onto, and then as Frankfurt's Tutu chased, he slipped, gifting a free run to the Rangers striker, who calmly slotted home.

Lundstram might have equalised almost immediately but his finish was blocked and then Daichi Kamada looped onto the roof of the net when Rangers had failed to clear.

The pressure was mounting and in the 69th minute, it told, as Filip Kostic was given too much space out wide to cross and then in the middle, Connor Goldson and Calvin Bassey both hesitated to clear. Borre nipped between them and prodded in.

There were precious few opportunities in the final minutes but the contest became stretched in extra-time, with Borre almost capitalising on a Bassey stumble.

Rangers were the better team in the second period and their golden chance came in the 118th minute as the sprinting Ryan Kent arrived at the back post but somehow hit keeper Trapp from five yards. To penalties, and the Rangers fans roared when the coin toss put the shoot-out at their end. James Tavernier, Steven Davis and Scott Arfield all scored for Rangers as did Frankfurt's Christopher Lenz, Ajdin Hrustic and Kamada, whose shot squeezed in off the post.

But Ramsey fired too straight, hitting Trapp's left foot and after Kostic and Kemar Roofe converted, it was up to Borre to finish it. He made no mistake.

## Gasquet Spoils Medvedev's Return to Action in Geneva

GENEVA (Dispatches) - World number two Daniil Medvedev fell to a 6-2 7-6(5) defeat by Frenchman Richard Gasquet at the Geneva Open on his return to the ATP tour, having spent six weeks recovering from a hernia operation.

Russia's Medvedev, the U.S. Open champion had been out of action after undergoing surgery following the Miami Open quarter-finals.

The 26-year-old looked rusty in his first match back and Gasquet was in inspired form as he maintained constant pressure to outmanoeuvre the Russian in the opening set before taking a 3-1 lead in the second.

Medvedev found his rhythm with his powerful forehand and serve, winning the next three games on the bounce as he began to show signs of his pre-surgery form and looked to push for the decider but Gasquet prevailed 7-5 in the tiebreak.

The result earned the 35-year-old Gasquet his first win over a top-two player since 2005 and a place in the quarter-finals, where he will meet either Marco Cecchinato of Italy or Kamil Majchrzak of Poland.

Medvedev, who reached the quarter-finals of the French Open for the first time last year, will head into this year's tournament woefully short of match practice when the Grand Slam begins on Sunday.



## Ukrainian Flag on Summit of Everest

KATHMANDU (Dispatches) - On the roof of the world, Antonina Samoilova held up a blue and yellow panel emblazoned "Stand With Ukraine" while her father and brother were serving in the army defending their country against Russia's invasion.

The 33-year-old had tears in her eyes as she unfurled the Ukrainian flag on the summit of Mount Everest last week, she said on Wednesday after returning to Kathmandu.

The world's attention was turning away from her country's plight following Russia's invasion, she worried.

"It is a pity... it's not good for us Ukrainians because we need more help, we need all the world to help us," she told AFP. "It's not yet over in Ukraine."

"I knew already before the expedition that I am the only Ukrainian on Everest this year. That made me push myself to go to the summit because I knew if it's not me, then who?" she said.

Samoilova was at the summit of Pico de Orizaba, Mexico's highest mountain, in February when news of the Russian invasion reached her.

Her first updates on the war came from a Kyiv bomb shelter where her sister was hiding.

As she made her way to the top of Everest, days without contact with her father and brother who have volunteered to fight were weighing on her mind.

On her return, she learned that their region had been quiet. "I was like 'Who! Thank god!'" she said.

And her phone buzzed with hundreds of messages of support from friends and strangers once she reached base camp.

"Tonia, you are not only our pride, you are the pride of all Ukraine," her father said in a text.

Nepal has issued 319 permits to foreign mountaineers, each accompanied by at least one guide, for this year's Everest spring climbing season, which runs from mid-April to the end of May.

The country only reopened its peaks to mountaineers last year after the pandemic shut down the industry in 2020.

# Ibrahimovic to Miss Sweden's Nations League Matches



STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Swedish football legend Zlatan Ibrahimovic will miss Sweden's Nations League matches in June against Slovenia, Norway and Serbia due to injury, coach Janne Andersson said. "He's had injury problems for a while and hasn't played so much in Milan, so he's declined to play", Andersson told reporters as he presented Sweden's squad. Ibrahimovic, 40, returned to the Swedish

national team in March 2021 after a five-year hiatus.

In March, he said he wanted to continue playing international football for "as long as possible" despite Sweden's failure to qualify for the 2022 World Cup.

But speculation has since mounted that this may be his last season as a player due to his mounting injuries and has seen him rarely play for his Serie A club AC Milan.

His physical problems have prompted even former Italian star Francesco Totti, who aged 40 was dragged away from playing kicking and screaming, to suggest that the Swede should "listen to his body" before deciding to continue.

Ibrahimovic will be 42 by the time of the next major international tournament finals he could play in, Euro 2024 in Germany.

## Asian Football Chief Announces Bid for New Term

MANAMA (Dispatches) - Asia's football chief announced his bid for a third term in office, days after backing FIFA boss Gianni Infantino for a fresh mandate.

Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, who has led the Asian Football Confederation since 2013, said he would stand for a new term at the AFC Congress in his home country of Bahrain next February.

"I would like to inform you today that I will be standing for re-election in 2023," he told a virtual Congress.

"I hope to receive your trust and support once again for the next term as the AFC President," Sheikh Salman said, according to the AFC website.

The Bahraini royal was a rival candidate to Infantino when the Italian-Swiss was elected FIFA president in 2016 after a major corruption scandal ended the reign of Sepp Blatter.

Earlier this month Sheikh Salman, whose confederation includes 47 of FIFA's 211 associations, said Asian football was "united" behind Infantino's bid.

The AFC was also in chaos when Sheikh Salman took charge after predecessor, Qatari businessman Mohamed bin Hammam, was banned from football for life following bribery claims and conflict-of-interest violations.

After completing the last two years of bin Hammam's term, Sheikh Salman was re-elected unopposed in 2015 and 2019.

Asian football has been badly hit by the pandemic, with serious disruption to its competitions including China's withdrawal last week as host of the 2023 Asian Cup.



## Talks With Azpilicueta About His Future Go on

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea captain Cesar Azpilicueta is continuing to talk with the London club about his future, manager Thomas Tuchel said on Wednesday, amid media speculation Azpilicueta may be considering an offer from Barcelona.

If he departs, the Spain international would be the third defender due to leave Chelsea at the end of the season after Germany's Antonio Ruediger, a lynchpin of Chelsea's defence, and Andreas Christensen of Denmark.

Chelsea are unable to sign new players due to the sanctions imposed by the British government on Russian billionaire owner Roman Abramovich, who put the club up for sale after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"He is our captain. We are still in dialogue and at some point we are also selfish because we are not responsible to solve any other club's problems or to fulfil any other club's wishes," Tuchel said in an interview on the club's website.

"Given the fact that we lose key defenders already, it's not the ideal scenario to think about losing Azpi, even though I can understand his personal point of view."

Azpilicueta will be out of contract at the end of the season but Tuchel said there was no rush to reach a final decision.

Chelsea are third in the table on 70 points after 36 games and were to host Leicester City.

