

**IRAN NEWS Extends Its Condolences on the Occasion of The Demise Anniversary of The Late Imam Khomeini. The Next Issue Will Hit the News Stands on Monday, June 6**

# IRAN NEWS

**Health Ministry Announced on Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From the COVID Pandemic In Iran Increased to 141,318 With 3 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

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**Nadal Downs Djokovic To Reach 15th French Open Semis**



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## India-Iran Facing Difficulties Over Payment

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Iran is one of the major markets for Indian orthodox tea, accounting for nearly 21 per cent of the country's total exports of tea.

Despite the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) allowing use of third-party currency for doing business with Iran, Indian tea exporters are facing difficulties as Tehran is unable to make direct payment in euro or dirham.

The traders have asked Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal to work a way out, including dipping into the money lying, if any, for use of oil trade.

The third-party currency payment, which was allowed by RBI around 7-8 months back, has helped bring about some improvement in exports, however, the system is fraught with delays and additional costs are being incurred, complain merchant exporters of tea and basmati rice. The delay and additional costs are because Iranian banks are unable to transact in these currencies and therefore, have to route it through a third party.

Besides, Indian banks are not accepting hard currency from Iran so it has to be routed through a third party — who may not be the actual buyer in Iran. This creates some issues on the customs side and the process also takes longer and tends to become more expensive, said Anish Bhansali, MD, Bhansali & Company, one of the major exporters of orthodox tea to Iran.

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## 30% Surge in Domestic Wheat Purchase

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's purchase of domestically-grown wheat has increased by nearly 30% in the harvesting season that started in early April as a double increase in the guaranteed purchase price (gpp) for wheat announced by the government earlier this year has led to better yields across the country.

The Government Trading Corporation (GTC) of Iran said on Tuesday that purchase of wheat from domestic farmers had risen by 510,000 metric tons (mt) year on year in nearly two months to late May to reach a total of 2.246 million metric mt.

The GTC said its wheat purchases had expanded to cover 16 provinces that are mostly located in south of the country where harvest starts sooner because of warmer weather.

The state-run company said that it had spent more than 237 trillion rials (\$766 million) on domestic wheat purchases this year, up 250% compared to the April-May 2021.

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## Iran Non-Oil Exports Up 37% in 2 Months



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's export of non-oil products increased 37 percent in value during the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 -May 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) showed.

Iran exported 17.014 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$8.516 billion in the said two months, also registering a 1.6-percent rise in weight as compared to the first two months of the previous year, the data indicated.

Based on the IRICA data, Iran traded over 22.196 million tons of non-oil products worth \$16.631 billion with other countries in the mentioned period, IRNA reported.

The Islamic Republic imported 5.182 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$8.115 billion in the first two months of the present year, with a 24-percent growth in value and a 3.37-percent decline in weight year on year.

Among the country's non-oil export destinations, China was the first, importing \$2.720 billion worth of products, the United Arab Emirates was the second with \$1.502 billion worth of imports, Iraq the third importing \$1.312 billion, Turkey the fourth with \$766 million of imports, and India the fifth importing \$290 million worth of products in the mentioned period.

Iran's top sources of non-oil imports in the mentioned two months were China, Turkey, India, and Russia.

Considering the amounts of exports and imports in the mentioned two months, the country's foreign trade balance became \$401 million positive.

The value of Iran's export of non-oil products increased 25 percent in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 - April 20), as compared to the same month of the past year, the deputy head of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Customs Administration announced.

Foroud Asgari also said that the country's non-oil trade with other countries registered an \$875-million positive balance in the first month.

Iran exported 7.324 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$3.699 billion in the said month, with a 10 percent drop in weight as compared to the first month of the previous year, the official stated.

The country's monthly non-oil import stood at 2.252 million tons worth \$2.824 billion, with a one percent rise in value and a 10 percent growth in weight year on year, he added.

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

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

## Iraq to Cut Electricity as Iran Gas Supply Reduced

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The Iraqi Ministry of Electricity announced yesterday that it would reduce the electricity supply to citizens after Iran cut gas provided for generating electricity.

"The reduction of five million cubic meters of the supplied Iranian gas has led to limitations to the system's loads, and caused the reduction in the hours of electric power supply," the ministry said in a statement.

It explained that Iran has demanded that Iraq pay off its overdue financial obligations for the imported gas, however with the delay in approving the general budget, and the search for an alternative solution to the Food Security Law, the only available solution was to reduce the power supply hours.

The statement said parliamentary and governmental efforts will be made for the Ministry of Electricity to communicate with the Iranian side "to search for satisfactory solutions to pay off the dues and continue pumping gas, without leading to a deterioration in the quality of energy services and harming the interests of citizens."

Last month, Iraq confirmed that it had reached understandings with Iran regarding the regularity of supplying gas used to operate electric power plants, as part of efforts made by Baghdad to improve energy production ahead of the summer season.

The Ministry of Electricity previously promised to improve energy and increase processing hours, during the summer season, including increasing power generation capacities from 3.5 megawatts to 4.5 megawatts and repairing strategic transmission lines between governorates.

Iraq relies on Iran to secure a third of its gas needs. But US sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic have complicated Iraq's payment mechanisms for imports, which prompted Iran to respond by stopping provisions.

This has led to long interruptions in the electricity supply in most regions of the country, especially in the summer when temperatures reaches 52 degrees Celsius.

## ViewPoint

### By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Great Man Great Successor

Every year since 1989, Iranians and even the Islamic Revolution lovers and freedom-seekers worldwide commemorate June 3 and pay homage to the late Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, who passed away on June 3, 1989 at the age of 89.

On Saturday, Iranians and the world will commemorate the 33rd demise anniversary of the late Imam Khomeini through holding different special programs.

The late Imam Khomeini was the leader of one of the most influential movements in the world who helped the genuine Islam to be promoted and spread around the world and it laid the stones of one of the most powerful political systems which turned the country into a powerful regional and even world power.

Words are unable to explain the wisdom and vision of this lovely leader and founder of the Islamic Revolution but his brave uprising against a pro-West regime of Pahlavi one again proved this point that God's men do not fear dictators or threats and they continue their jihad despite threats and they are ready for sacrificing their lives for their cause.

Imam Khomeini was born in Khomeyn, in what is now Iran's Markazi Province. His father was murdered in 1903 when Khomeini was two years old.

The late Khomeini was a marja ("source of emulation") in Twelver Shia Islam, a Mujtahid or faqih (an expert in Sharia) and author of more than 40 books. He spent more than 15 years in exile for his opposition to the last Shah of Pahlavi Dynasty. In his writings and preachings he expanded the theory of welayat-el faqih, the "Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist (clerical authority)", to include theocratic political rule by Islamic jurists. This principle, though not known to the wider public before the revolution, was appended to the new Iranian constitution after being put to a referendum.

Khomeini has also been lauded as a "charismatic leader of immense popularity", a "champion of Islamic revival" by Shia scholars Khomeini held the title of Grand Ayatollah and is officially known as Imam Khomeini inside Iran.

He actually opened the way for the prosperity and success as well as independence of the country and his demise on June 3, 1989 was a heartbreaking shock for the country but his successor Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei followed his path and kept the flag of the Islamic Revolution hoisting as everybody admits Ayatollah Khamenei was the best and the right successor for the late Imam.

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## Moscow Blames Washington Over Revival of JCPOA

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says the United States has been bargaining for some "additional clauses" in talks between Iran and the P4+1 group of countries, thus creating barriers to reviving the multilateral 2015 deal that it has abandoned.

"Certain obstacles have been mounted here, mostly because of the US that has been bargaining for some additional clauses to be able to modify the initial idea and contents [of the deal] approved by the UN Security Council," Russia's top diplomat said on Tuesday.

He emphasized that Moscow proceeds from the idea that it would be just "to revive the JCPOA without any omissions or additions," referring to the landmark deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Several rounds of negotiations between Iran and the five remaining parties to the JCPOA - Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia - have been held in the Austrian capital of Vienna since April 2021 to bring Washington back into the deal. The American diplomats were not allowed to directly join the talks due to Washington's unilateral withdrawal.

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## Iran to Have Bolder Contribution to Int'l Space Regulation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iranian Space Agency (ISA) said that Iran was going to have a more active participation in international meetings on space, as the meeting of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) kicked off on Wednesday.

Hassan Salarieh said that Iran would actively participate in the 10-day meeting which is held via video to contribute to international programs on space.

He said that there might be issued regulations in such international meetings that end up to the detriment of Iran. Therefore, he noted, ISA would engage if there was a regulation to the detriment of Iran.

## Iran Reliable Partner For African States

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said in a phone conversation with his Senegalese counterpart on Tuesday that Africa is one of the main axes of Iran's foreign policy.

President Raisi in his phone talk with his Senegalese counterpart who is also the rotating head of the African Union (AU) congratulated the African National Day to him, the people of Senegal, and the African people.

He also commemorated the African leaders and all those heroes who despite tolerating hardships have kept alight the torch of freedom and independence in Africa.

Raisi referred to the role that the AU is playing against unilateralism and the sanctions imposed by colonialists, ensuring this counterpart that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a reliable partner for the entire African nations.

The president referred to the high level technical and engineering capabilities of Iran, reiterating that although Tehran-Dakar relations are good, but they are not at an acceptable level yet, and need to be elevated to a satisfactory level.

Senegal's President Macky Sall, too, asked the Iranian president to convey his best regards to Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and appreciated President Raisi for his congratulation on National Day of Africa and



the Islamic Republic of Iran's special attention to Africa.

President Macky also referred to the long record of his country's bilateral ties with Iran, said he was agreed with President Raisi that the current level of bilateral ties is below the satisfactory extent, and announced Dakar's readiness for any cooperation to further elevate it.

The president of Senegal referred to the excellent cooperation between his country and some Iranian companies, reiterating that he has visited Iran twice and seen personally the progress achieved in Iran in various fields.

## Iran, Iraq, Syria to Sign MoU to Control Dust

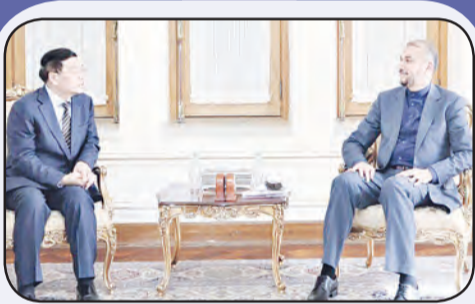
TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice-President and Head of the Department of Environment (DOE), Ali Salajegheh, said here on Wednesday that Iran, Iraq and Syria will sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and broaden cooperation to combat dust storms.

On the sideline of Iran's Cabinet session on Wednesday, Salajegheh referring to the latest consultations with Iraqi and Syrian officials to combat dust storms, said that DOE's officials have had effective meetings with these countries' officials and have discussed the ways to control dust.

He added: "In Iraq, we had meetings with the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Environment, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Agriculture and Water Resources, who all stressed the need for cooperation in this field to combat the problem.

Head of the Department of Environment (DOE) in his remarks announcing the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Syria that will be implemented in the city of Deir ez-Zur, added that a MoU will be signed with the Iraqi side on July 12, 2022 to control the foreign sources of the dust storms.

## FM Urges Close Contact With China



IRAN NEW POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian urges enhanced cooperation with China in international fields, saying it is important that the two countries maintain close contact in this regard.

In a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday, Amir-Abdollahian and External Security Commissioner of the Chinese Foreign Ministry Cheng Guoping discussed the latest developments pertaining to the implementation of a 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership agreement between the two sides.

Iran and China signed the landmark agreement in March last year in defiance of the US's unilateral sanctions, in a move aimed at bolstering their long-standing economic and political alliance.

The deal officially documents the Sino-Iranian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership that had been announced during a visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to boost economic cooperation between the two countries for the next 25 years, and paves the way for Iran's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, a massive infrastructure project stretching from East Asia to Europe.

Beijing has long sought to boost ties with Tehran, with President Xi describing Iran as "China's major partner in the Middle East" on a rare visit to the country in 2016.

Iran and China started implementing the deal during the Iranian foreign minister's visit to Beijing in January.

Cheng, for his part, commended growing strategic ties between Iran and China and invited Amir-Abdollahian on behalf of his Chinese counterpart to pay a visit to Beijing.

The top Iranian diplomat and Chinese diplomat also exchanged views about ways to promote regional and international cooperation and issues of common interests.

## Local Crew Involved in Making "Holy Spider" to Be Punished

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad Mehdi Esmaeili has said that the possible domestic elements who have backed the creation of the controversial movie "Holy Spider" will be punished.

Esmaeili said that the major crew members of the film reside in foreign countries and if anyone inside the country assisted in making the movie, will face punitive measures from the Iranian organization of Cinema and Audiovisual Affairs.

The movie is a joint product of France, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, and was shot in Jordan.

Earlier, the Cinema Organization of Iran has termed the 75th Cannes Film Festival's act of honoring "Holy Spider," that depicts a dark image of the Iranian society as "biased" and "politically motivated".

Commenting on another cinematic work named Leila's Brothers, he said that the crew of the drama has not taken the notes of the Cinema Organization of Iran on receiving necessary permission for attending festivals into consideration.

The work directed by Saeed Roustayi will face legal restrictions according to law, he underlined.

## Being Independent Iran's Main Policy

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said that the slogan of "Neither East, nor West" doesn't mean isolationism and avoiding east and west, but rather the main goal is being independent of East and West.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks on the threshold of the 33rd demise anniversary of the late Imam Khomeini which was held at the Holy Shrine of Imam Khomeini on Tuesday.

Referring to the prominent motto of "Neither East, Nor West", Amirabdollahian said that the Islamic revolution's slogan does not mean isolationism and

avoiding east and west, but rather the main goal is not being dependent on East and West.

Stressing on the prominent slogan of "Neither East nor West", Amirabdollahian noted that Iran's main policy is cooperating with all sides on the basis of its national interests.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he referred to the Vienna talks and added that the negotiations that have been halted in Vienna are due to the issue of unilateral sanctions which was imposed by the US.

The negotiations in Vienna talks are underway through the EU representative to remove obstacles and find a way for lifting the sanctions.

## Japan Ready to Help Solving Anzali Lagoon Problem

RASHT (IRNA) - Japan's Ambassador in Tehran Aikawa Kazutoshi stressed cooperation between Japanese experts and Anzali environment office to revive Anzali Lagoon, saying his country can provide effective assistance by transferring new experiences and technology.

Kazutoshi made the remarks in a meeting with head of environment protection office of Gilan Province Reza Zamani.

He emphasized cultivating the culture and training people for managing waste.

He said his visit to Gilan was aimed at reviewing the results of 17-year activities of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Anzali Lagoon.

Meanwhile, Zamani said Japan can make a significant contribution to reviving Anzali Lagoon by transferring experiences and technology.

He also criticized some of JICA's unfinished projects in Anzali Lagoon.

He referred to domestic waste, sediment and waste as three main causes of Anzali Lagoon destruction.

Anzali Lagoon is one of the most beautiful natural attractions of the northern Iranian province of Gilan. The lagoon, which is actually a wetland, divides the city of Bandar-e-Anzali into two parts and is considered to be one of the best locations for bird watching. That is to say, until 2012, around 187 bird species have been observed and recorded here.

It is also home to more than 80,000 wintering birds such as ducks, geese, swans, and coots. This astonishing wetland is surrounded by paddy fields and fish ponds and about two-thirds of the whole lagoon is covered by reeds.

In addition, the lotus and yellow flag iris flowers have created a very picturesque view and have turned this wetland to a great destination for nature lovers and photographers.



## Human Being Has Made Mistakes in Terms of Moral Education

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Education said that in the world of modernity, the human being has made mistakes in terms of spiritual and moral education.

The Virtual Consultative Summit of West Asian Countries was held on Tuesday evening, June 30, to identify the prospects for the evolution of education and the exchange of educational experiences.

The ministers of education of Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and several other Islamic countries addressed the summit.

Iranian Minister of Education Yousef Nouri said that in the world of modernity,

human beings have made mistakes in terms of spiritual and moral education.

"One of these errors is secularization under the idea of pluralism and the other is destroying families under the idea of individualism."

He explained Iran's valuable experiences in drafting and implementing the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE).

Nouri concluded: Spirituality and morality are the two missing links in the contemporary world; The epidemic of oppression, corruption, and undue discrimination is rooted in a vacuum of spirituality and morality; Hence, man today must return to the religious teachings that guarantee spirituality and morality.

## Germany, France Statements On Greek Tankers "Unjustifiable"

TEHRAN (MNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesperson condemned the statements issued by Germany and France over releasing the two seized Greek tankers, saying that such statements are one-sided and unjustifiable statements.

Saeed Khatibzadeh said that Tehran strongly denounces the issuance of one-sided and unjustifiable statements, which seem to have become a constant habit for these countries.

"We advise these countries to uphold legal proceedings based on international laws to ensure freedom of navigation and maritime security, instead of misguidedly defending violations committed by Greek ships," Khatibzadeh said.

"Unfortunately, these countries remain silent in the face of the illegal seizure of the Iranian-flagged ship by the Greek authorities and the unloading of its cargo in accordance with the transnational law and regulations of another country," the Iranian senior diplomat said.

"Such inappropriate interventions in the independent judicial processes of our country will not help to resolve the issues," he stressed.

As Iran has told the Greek authorities, it is appropriate for the competent authorities of Iran to resolve the issues through legal and judicial means, he noted.

Germany's Foreign Ministry claimed in a statement on Monday, "The German Government condemns the seizing of the two Greek-flagged oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. Iran's actions are an unjustifiable interference in commercial shipping and therefore constitute a severe violation of international regulations."

France's foreign ministry also claimed in a statement on Sunday that Iran's seizure of two Greek-flagged oil tankers in Gulf waters is a "violation of international law", calling for the immediate release of the ships.

## Abadan to Rise From Metropolis Rubble, Defeat Enemy Psywar

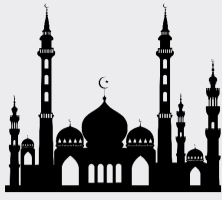
TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's security chief offers sympathy with families of the victims of a tower block collapse in Abadan, saying the iconic city will eventually rise from the rubble of the Metropolis Building and overcome the psychological warfare being waged by enemies against the country in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani said those who lost their loved ones in the disaster were currently grappling with "two types of debris," one left from the building collapse and the other caused by the "politically bankrupt" elements loyal to the ex-Pahlavi regime.

Shamkhani was speaking during a ceremony joined by Iranians originally from Khuzestan Province residing in Tehran. The senior official was himself born in Khuzestan and played a key role as a commander in the province's defense campaign against the invading Iraqi military in the 1980s war.

"While authorities are doing their utmost to remove the physical debris and investigating the technical aspects that led to the incident, the elements who are creating [psychological] rubble, are at work to fabricate and spread maximum rumors in order to disturb public opinion," he warned.

Shamkhani said monarchists, members of the anti-Iran Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) terrorist organization, and separatists had entered the scene to fuel the psychological warfare using cyber space and satellite channels as a propaganda tool.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:02
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:35
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:05
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:49

52. Therefore listen not to the Unbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost strenuousness, with the (Qur'an).  
53. It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water: One palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter; yet has He made a barrier between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed.

Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (52 - 53)

## Iran Works to Boost Trade With Russian Republic of Karelia

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN-** A delegation from Republic of Karelia, one of the 85 republics of Russia, met with the Iranian businessmen at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce and explored ways for broadening economic ties.

The Republic of Karelia is a region in northwest Russia, bordering Finland and trade with this republic can be a gateway for Iranians to reach Northern Europe market.

The delegation was headed by deputy prime minister of Republic of Karelia, and representatives of businesses like wood industries, wood and paper, minerals, fishery and pre-fabricated houses accompanied the delegation.

Before the B2B meeting of business activists of the two countries, Deputy Prime Minister of Karelia Mr. Dmitry Rodionov met the secretary general of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Bahman Eshqi and during the meeting the Russian pointed to some fields for cooperation like in the aquatic products, adding that Karelia accounts for 70% of Russia's trout production. He said that since Russia is unable to provide fish products from Europe, it looks at Iran's market to meet its demands. He added that exploring ways for re-export of Karelia's caviar via Iran to the export target markets is the priority of the delegation during his meeting in Tehran.

Meanwhile in the forum held at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Rodionov said that before the EU sanctions on Russia, Finland accounted for almost 50% of Karelia's exports and some of its exports were also done via Finland to other European states but the sanctions closed the gateway.

He then pointed to the north-south transit corridor which connects Saint Petersburg and Astra Khan Ports in Russia and Amirabad Port in Iran's North and Banda Abbas in south of Iran and ultimately to Mumbai Port in India. He added that revival of this corridor is very important for Karelia government and said that derange of a water channel in Karelia which is connected to this corridor has been put on the agenda.

Rodionov went on to say that statistics show that the trade between Iran and Republic of Karelia was around \$3.5m in 2021 which is not considerable and exports of paper and cellulose products to Iran have been the major items of trade.

Then Secretary General of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Eshqi, for his part, said that economies of Iran and Russia are complementary and pointed to the cruel sanctions against the two countries which make necessary expansion



of bilateral economic cooperation. He then pointed to the role of chambers of commerce in developing bilateral cooperation and noted that Tehran Chamber of Commerce is ready to meet the goods demands of the two sides via constant interaction with Karelia.

Then Head of Iran Exports Confederation Mr. Mohammad Lahooti pointed to the significance of boosting the relation between Iran and Russia and said that after meetings of presidents of Iran and Russia, the trade volume between the two countries has increased to some extent although the trade volume is not considerable due to their economic capacities. He added that the current conflict between Russia and the West is an opportunity for Iran and Russia to increase their trade volume easily.

He reiterated that launch of regular shipping lines is the main priority for increasing the trade exchanges and participation of Russia for compensation of ship shortage in the Caspian Sea in the current condition is very important. He also criticized some restrictions for ply of trucks and it leads to rot of some goods.

Lahooti also called for setting up a consortium for rail transportation between Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan which is aimed at facilitating and guaranteeing the pace for transit of goods via Turkmenistan.

Meanwhile in the meeting, Russia's Commercial Representative in Iran Mr. Rustam Gaganshin pointed to the strong capacity of Republic of Karelia in exports, adding that Karelia's exports are in the EU standards and they were used to be exported to EU countries before recent sanctions.

He added that Karelia can cooperate with Iran both in exports and imports, adding that currently talks are underway between Iran and Russia for adjusting standards, reiterating that Iranian and Russian traders are keen the north-south corridor to be activated soon to deepen the trade cooperation.

He also announced imminent visit of Russian Central Bank's representative to Iran for adjusting the standards for transfer of financial information and connecting two banking and payment systems of Mir and Shetab.

## Iran Receives \$7.5b Oil Revenue in April, May

TEHRAN (Shana) - The governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said in the first two months of the current calendar year, which began on March 21, over \$7.5 billion has been received by Iran from the sale of crude oil and petrochemicals which is \$3 billion higher than the same period last year.

Ali Salehabadi said: "CBI, as a government banker, bought oil-driven hard currency from the government in previous years and provided it to the government in Iranian rials, but in this year's budget, in addition to the central bank, other banks are expected to supply government hard currency to the market. This action can control the monetary base."

He added: "Last year in the Nima system, we also had a market of more than \$57 billion in hard currency supply to supply commodities, and this figure has increased significantly compared to the same period last year."

Nima system is the Iranian central bank's currency trading system for importers and exporters.

The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran stated: "In the first two months of this year, in the field of oil and petrochemicals, more than 7.5 billion dollars was received from sales, which was 4.5 billion dollars in the first two months of the last calendar year."

## North Khorasan Province, Afghanistan To Create Joint Commerce Chamber

BOJNOURD (IRNA) - North Khorasan, Iran's north easternmost province, has plans with Afghanistan to establish a joint commerce chamber, a trade official in the province said.

Saeed Pourabadi, head of North Khorasan commerce, industry, mining and agriculture chamber, said that the chamber in question will be headquartered in Bojnourd, capital of the province.

Afghanistan is close to Iran's North Khorasan Province and Afghan investors, therefore, are willing to invest in the province, he said, adding that a joint commerce chamber would facilitate exporting Iranian goods to Afghanistan.

The province has 344 hectares of farmlands with over 2 million tons of agricultural products as well as livestock, according to the official.

He also noted that the official correspondence and administrative work has been done and the joint commerce chamber will be launched soon, facilitating visa issuance for businesspeople in both sides.

## Ferdowsi Commemoration Held in Turkmenistan

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Iran's Embassy in Turkmenistan in collaboration with Devletmammad Azadi Turkmen National Institute of World Languages in Ashgabat held a ceremony on Tuesday to commemorate the great 11th-century Persian poet Ferdowsi.

The commemoration ceremony, jointly organized by Office of Iran's Cultural Attaché and Devletmammad Azadi Institute's Persian Language group, was attended by Iran's Ambassador to Turkmenistan Gholamabbas Arbab Khales, Iran's Cultural Attaché Navid Rasouli and the staff of Iranian embassy.

Maral Guliyeva, the dean of the institute, gave a keynote address in the ceremony, highlighting the Iran-Turkmenistan relationship and the mutual determination to expand the ties between the two nations.

She said that the Persian Language group was established in 1990 in the institute and has attracted many students who are eager to study literary works of great Persian language poets and authors, including Ferdowsi, Saadi, Khayyam, Rumi, Roudaki and Anvari.

She also mentioned the cooperation agreement between Devletmammad Azadi Institute and Iran's Ferdowsi University, calling for the expansion of scientific and cultural cooperation.

## Iran, Pakistan Sign Agreement on Border Trade Cooperation



ZAHEDAN (IRNA) - Iranian and Pakistani officials signed an agreement on expansion of cooperation at the 9th Joint Border Trade Committee Session in this southeastern Iranian city.

The signing ceremony was held by the caretaker of the office of trade, mine and industry of the southeastern Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan, Iraj Hassanpour, and the chief collector of Pakistan's Balochistan Customs, Muhammad Sadiq, on Tuesday evening.

Iran's Consul General in Quetta, Hassan Darvishvand, and Pakistan's Consul General in Zahedan, Abdul Jabbar Detho, were also present at the ceremony.

The 9th Joint Border Trade Committee Session between Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan and Pakistan's Balochistan was held on May 30-31 in Zahedan.

The 10th round of the session is slated for October in Gwadar, a southwestern Pakistani port.

## Iran Successful Participation in 3 Int'l Handicrafts Events in Uzbekistan

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian Deputy Minister of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts said: "Holding three major international events in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, with a focus on handicrafts has had a significant impact on boosting our regional and international credit in the field of handicrafts and has increased the willingness of tourists from other countries to travel to Iran."

According to the General Directorate of Public Relations and Information of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Pouya Mahmoudian said on Saturday, May 28, 2022: "Holding three major international events in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, with a focus on handicrafts has had great achievements for Iran's handicrafts, especially compared to regional countries, in a way that it has had a significant impact on boosting our regional and international credit in the field of handicrafts and has increased the willingness of tourists from other countries to travel to Iran."

The international event was held in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, from May 21st to 25th. The event was organized by the Artists Union of Uzbekistan in various sections, including exhibition, handicrafts competition, fashion show, cultural and educational events and a practical and scientific meeting to set out the vision for traditional gold and jewelry designing.

Mahmoudian stated: "The first event included the judging section for the World Crafts Council's Award of Excellence, in which 48 works were submitted from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Fortunately, 38 of the works were granted the Award of Excellence by the judges."

The festival was attended by 58 countries, some of which are members of the World Crafts Council, and booths were set up to introduce the works by the artists. Eight artists from the Islamic Republic of Iran participated in the competition.

Mahmoudian said: "58 countries competed in the second event, which included holding the International Jewelry Festival. In this event, Ali Asghar Khaksari from Mashhad, the world-renowned city of cutting precious and semi-precious stones, won the top prize of the festival."

Mahmoudian stated: "I took part online in the third event, which included the third meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Crafts Council in 2022."

"It was ratified in the event that the 30th General Assembly of the World Crafts Council will be held in May 2023 in Shiraz, the internationally famed city of handicrafts."

He added: "Holding the Fajr Festival of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts in 2022 with the participation of representatives of the member states of the World Crafts Council and selecting top works of the council at international level were among other decisions approved in the third event."

"At the end of the meeting, it was also decided that the details of the programs approved by Iran will be sent to the World Crafts Council."

## ICT Minister Holds Meeting With Japanese, Nigerian Officials

TEHRAN (MNA) - On the first day of his visit to Geneva to attend the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), Iranian Minister of Communications and Information Technology (ICT) met and held talks with Japanese and Nigerian officials.

The Iranian ICT minister Eisa Zarepour met and held talks with Japanese Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications SASAKI Yuji and Nigerian Minister of Communications and Digital Economy in Geneva on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Iranian ICT minister referred to the history of cooperation between the two countries in the field of ICT and called for increased cooperation especially in the field of transfer of technical know-how and technology and also holding joint workshops.

In his meeting with Japanese Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, Zarepour called for Japanese support for Iran's candidacy in International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Council for a four-year term.

Iranian ICT minister also met and held talks with Nigerian Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Isa Ali Ibrahim who is the chairman of WSIS 2022 forum.

During the meeting, the two sides emphasized the importance of the cyber governance plan in 2022 Summit (WSIS). Iranian and Nigerian officials also considered this summit as a suitable platform for advancing cyber governance.

The Iranian and Nigerian ministers exchanged invitations to visit each other's countries.

Iran's Minister of Information and Communications Technology Isa Zarepour left Tehran for Geneva on Monday May 30 to take part in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

The latest edition of the Summit, with the theme "Information Technology for Prosperity, Inclusion, and Resilience" will be held virtually from March 15 to June 3.

At the end of the meeting, it was decided that the delegations of the two sides would discuss areas of cooperation.

## Brazil Storm Death Toll Rises to 100

RECIFE (Dispatches) - The death toll from torrential rains that triggered floods and landslides in northeastern Brazil has risen to 100, officials said Tuesday, as emergency workers searched for more victims.

The force of the landslides ripped apart houses in neighborhoods including Jardim Monteverde, a poor community just outside the city of Recife.

Rescue workers have found dozens of bodies buried in the mud that tore through the neighborhood on Saturday, and said they expect to find more.



## Saudi Crown Prince To Visit Turkey Soon

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that Ankara and Riyadh were in agreement for a visit by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Turkey in the coming period, but no date had been set yet.

"Saudi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman's visit to Turkey was actually going to happen this month, but we agreed to have it in the coming period," Cavusoglu told state media, and added he was working on setting a date with his Saudi counterpart. He added that efforts to normalize strained ties with Riyadh were moving fast. Ties between the regional rivals were strained after a Saudi hit squad killed Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul in 2018.



## Russia Assaults Sievierodonetsk Wasteland



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian forces were holding out in the eastern industrial city of Sievierodonetsk, resisting Russia's all-out assault to capture a bombed-out wasteland that Moscow has made the principal objective of its invasion.

Both sides said Russian forces now controlled between a third and half of the city. Russia's separatist proxies acknowledged that capturing the city was taking longer than hoped, despite one of the biggest ground assaults of the war.

Russia, responding to Western sanctions after its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine, widened its gas cuts to Europe on Tuesday with Gazprom (GAZP.MM) saying it would cut supplies to several "unfriendly" countries which have refused to accept Moscow's roubles-for-gas payment scheme.

EU leaders agreed overnight to cut imports of Russian oil by 90% by year-end, the bloc's toughest yet response. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy welcomed the move but criticized what he called an "unacceptable" delay.

"When over 50 days have passed between the fifth and sixth sanction packages, the situation is not acceptable for us," Zelenskiy said, speaking alongside Slovakian President Zuzana Caputova in Kyiv.

Western military analysts say Moscow has drained manpower and firepower from across other parts of the front to concentrate on Sievierodonetsk, hoping a massive offensive will achieve one of its stated aims, to secure surrounding Luhansk province for separatist proxies.

"We can say already that a third of Sievierodonetsk is already under our control," Russia's TASS state news agency quoted Leonid Pasechnik, the leader of the pro-Moscow Luhansk People's Republic, as saying.

Fighting was raging in the city, but Russian forces were not advancing as rapidly as might have been hoped, he said, claiming that pro-Moscow forces wanted to "maintain the city's infrastructure" and moved slowly because of caution around chemical factories.

A Russian air strike hit a nitric acid tank, Luhansk governor Serhiy Gaidai said on Tuesday. In a post on the Telegram app, he urged local residents not to leave bomb shelters because of the risk posed by toxic fumes.

In its evening briefing note on Facebook, Ukraine's military command said that Russian forces were "attempting to take full control of Sievierodonetsk" and surround Ukrainian units fighting there.

"Unfortunately ... the city has been split in half. But at the same time the city still defends itself. It is still Ukrainian," the head of the city administration, Oleksandr Stryuk, said, advising those still trapped inside to stay in cellars.

Ukraine says Russia has destroyed all of the city's critical infrastructure with unrelenting bombardment, followed by wave after wave of mass ground assaults involving huge numbers of casualties.

## Turks Clash With Police on Anniversary of Anti-Erdogan Gezi

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkish police clashed with protesters around Istanbul's main Taksim Square on Tuesday as they gathered to mark the anniversary of nationwide anti-government demonstrations that began nine years ago in nearby Gezi Park.

The 2013 demonstrations were the biggest popular challenge to then-Premier Tayyip Erdogan's rule. Erdogan, who is now president, has equated the protesters with Kurdish militants and those accused of orchestrating a coup attempt in 2016. A Turkish court sentenced eight people, including philanthropist Osman Kavala, to jail last month, finding them guilty of organizing and financing the so-called Gezi protests.

They denied the charges, saying the anti-government demonstrations erupted spontaneously nationwide and were protected by constitutional rights.

Some 1,000 people gathered on a street near Taksim Square on Tuesday evening, carrying pictures of those who were sentenced to jail.

They also held up pictures of those who died when police intervened in 2013, as well as a banner reading, "The darkness will go away, Gezi will remain."

The crowds were blocked by riot police carrying shields when they attempted to walk to Taksim Square and the main Istiklal Avenue. They also used tear gas to disperse the groups. "Erdogan is going to go. There is no other way," the protesters chanted.

Earlier, smaller groups of people clashed with police in other areas near Taksim as they attempted to walk to the square. A Reuters witness saw police detain dozens of people. Istanbul police did not immediately comment on the number of detentions.

Earlier in the day, members of parliament from the Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP) hung a giant banner from one of the bridges spanning the Bosphorus. After a scuffle, police took down the banner that read "Everywhere is resistance" - a popular slogan during the 2013 protests.



## Lebanese Parliament Re-Elects Berri as Speaker for Seventh Term

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanese lawmakers re-elected Nabih Berri as parliament speaker Tuesday for a seventh consecutive term, cementing the octogenarian politician's reputation as an immovable centerpiece of the country's political landscape.

Berri's candidacy went largely unchallenged but the 84-year-old clinched only the bare minimum number of votes needed for a win - one of his lowest counts since he first rose to the helm of Lebanon's parliament 30 years ago.

During the new parliament's first session on Tuesday, Berri won 65 votes in the 128-member parliament, where the role of speaker is reserved for a Shiite Muslim under the country's widely criticized sectarian political system.

Berri, who leads the Shiite Amal Movement, has held the role of speaker since 1992 and is a close ally of Hezbollah, earning him a moniker as an "untouchable" political figure.

The aging Shiite politician is widely viewed as the embodiment of a system that has spawned political paralysis, economic collapse, and the sort of rampant mismanagement that enabled the 2020 Beirut port explosion.

Lebanon's new parliament, elected on May 15, includes 13 independent politicians and members of some Christian parties who vowed not to vote for Berri as speaker.

Some lawmakers on Tuesday spoilt their ballots by writing slogans blaming the ruling class that Berri embodies for the country's successive crises. But although Hezbollah and its allies lost their majority in parliament, Berri was the heavyweight candidate for a post reserved for a Shiite Muslim.

In his address to parliament, Berri acknowledged the frustrations with the country's political system and vowed to work to heal the divisions.

"I will put the insults behind me... and approach blank ballots with a blank heart," Berri said after his victory, in one of his trademark quips.

He said he would extend his hand to all lawmakers so that, together, they can streamline overdue reforms and facilitate the appointment of a prime minister and a new president.

## U.S. National Guard Planning Cooperation With Taiwan Military

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - The United States is planning on "cooperation" between its National Guard and Taiwan's military, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen said, deepening security ties in the face of what Taipei's government complains is a rising threat from China.

The United States is Chinese-claimed Taiwan's most important international supporter and arms supplier, despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties. China has been stepping up its military activities near Taiwan and its military said last week it had recently conducted an exercise around Taiwan as a "solemn warning" against "collusion" with the United States.

Meeting visiting U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth in Taipei, Tsai noted that Duckworth was one of the main sponsors of the Taiwan Partnership Act, which has received bipartisan support though has yet to become law.

"As a result, the U.S. Department of Defense is now proactively planning cooperation between the U.S. National Guard and Taiwan's defense forces," Tsai said, without giving details.

"We look forward to closer and deeper Taiwan-U.S.

cooperation on matters of regional security," she added.

Taiwanese media has previously reported that Taiwan could partner with Hawaii's National Guard for the program.

The exercise by China's military came after U.S. President Joe Biden angered China by appearing to signal a change in a U.S. policy of "strategic ambiguity" on Taiwan by saying the United States would become involved militarily if China were to attack the island. U.S. officials said there had been no change in policy.

Tsai has been overseeing the modernization of Taiwan's armed forces, including reforming its reserve forces to make them more combat capable.

Speaking later with Taiwan Premier Su Tseng-chang, Duckworth said she had brought with her the director of the U.S. National Guard's State Partnership Program "which will be working with you on setting up your all-out defense".

She did not elaborate. The State Partnership Program pairs U.S. National Guard units with other countries to help with training and interoperability.



## Tunisia's Union Announces Strike Against Proposed Spending Cuts

TUNIS (Dispatches) - Tunisia's powerful UGTT trade union has called for a national strike on June 16 to demand an increase in wages and oppose President Kais Saied's proposed spending cuts and privatization as the country faces an economic crisis.

"All staff" at 159 state institutions and public companies will stop work to demand "immediate negotiations to restore Tunisians' purchasing power" and guarantees that state firms will remain public, the UGTT's central committee said in a statement on Tuesday.

The UGTT has rejected proposed spending cuts and instead wants wage increases for state workers as inflation reached a record level of 7.5 percent in April, from 7.2 percent in March.

Tunisia faces its worst financial crisis and is seeking a \$4bn loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) seen as necessary to ward off national bankruptcy, in exchange for unpopular reforms, including food and energy subsidies cuts and wage freezes.

With more than a million members, the UGTT is Tunisia's most powerful political force. The strike will present the biggest challenge yet to President Saied after his seizure of broad powers and moves to one-man rule last July.

The union accused Saied's government of "undermining the principle of negotiation and backtracking on previously agreed deals", at a time when the North African country is experiencing "insane and ongoing price rises".

Saied, who took executive power and dissolved parliament to rule by decree, has since said he will replace the democratic 2014 constitution with a new constitution via referendum on July 25.

The president's opponents accuse him of a coup that has undermined the democratic gains of the 2011 revolution that triggered the Arab Spring, but he says his moves were legal and needed to save Tunisia from a prolonged political crisis.

Saied's plan to draft a new constitution has been met with strong opposition from political parties, which say they will not participate in unilateral political reforms and that they will boycott the referendum.

On May 23, the UGTT announced that it would not participate in a national dialogue proposed by Saied.



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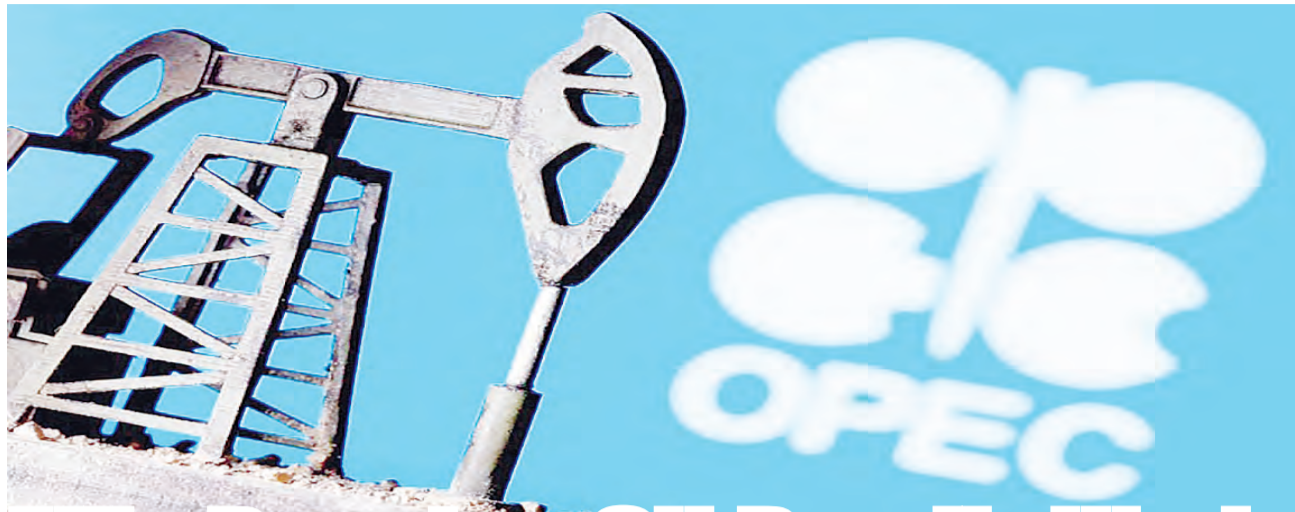
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## Norwegian to Buy 50 Boeing 737 MAX

OSLO (Dispatches) - Low-cost carrier Norwegian Air Shuttle said it would buy 50 Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes, in another boost for the crisis-hit US aircraft after two deadly crashes.

The 50 new aircraft will be delivered between 2025 and 2028, or around the same time that Norwegian's aircraft leasing deals come to an end, and the contract includes an option for 30 more, the company said in a statement.

The order is welcome news for the US manufacturer's flagship Boeing 737 MAX 8, which was grounded for 20 months following two fatal accidents and has been gradually returning to service since late 2020. Norwegian and Boeing have meanwhile been locked in a legal battle for several years, with the Norwegian carrier launching legal proceedings against the US giant for compensation following setbacks related to its 737 MAX and 787 Dreamliner long-range jets.



## EU's Russian Oil Ban Unlikely To Affect OPEC+ Decision

LONDON (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia, Russia and their allies are likely to stick to their policy of modest oil output increases when they meet Thursday after the EU banned most imports from Moscow.

European Union leaders agreed yesterday to ban more than two-thirds of Russian oil imports, tightening economic screws on the country over its invasion of its neighbor Ukraine.

This has caused oil prices, which have already hit record highs so far this year, to soar further amid pressure on the 23-member OPEC+ to open tabs more widely and relieve the market.

But analysts say OPEC+ will stick to its strategy of only slightly increasing output when it holds its monthly videoconference on Thursday as it remains united with Moscow.

"With Russia being one of the two most important members of the alliance (alongside Saudi Arabia), any decision on increasing output has become highly political," Craig Erlam, analyst at trading platform OANDA, told AFP.

"Both because (Russia) cannot sell what it's already producing as a result of sanctions and perhaps even because it wants prices to be uncomfortably high and maintain pressure on countries it considers 'unfriendly,'" he said.

The 13 members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries chaired by Saudi Arabia and their 10 partners led by Russia drastically slashed output in 2020 as demand slumped because of the coronavirus pandemic and worldwide lockdowns.

They have been increasing output modestly to the tune of around 400,000 barrels per day each month since last year and have resisted pressure by top consumers, including the US, to open the tabs wider.

Ipek Ozkardeska, an analyst with Swissquote bank, said Thursday's meeting "looks like a formality".

"There is little hope to see Opec countries announcing anything that would give a relief to the market," she said.

Analysts have also noted even if the group was willing to increase its output, several of its members have fallen short of the quotas, resulting in a lower supply to the market.

"Ultimately, the group is missing its already modest targets by increasingly large margins every month so you have to question just how impactful any increase would be if countries simply don't have the capacity to increase further," Erlam said.

In a statement Friday, the Group of Seven wealthy countries noted OPEC's "key role" and once again called on "oil and gas producing countries to act in a responsible manner and to respond to tightening international markets".

OPEC was set up in 1960 and joined by the 10 partners through a 2016 declaration. Its mission is to "ensure the stabilization of oil markets".

But OPEC+ is "expected to push back against calls by the West to speed up its oil output increases, sticking to its existing plans instead," said Victoria Scholar, an analyst at Interactive Investor.

## Bankrupt Sri Lanka Hikes Taxes

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Cash-strapped Sri Lanka announced steep, across-the-board tax hikes to shore up revenue as the country suffers its worst economic downturn and seeks an IMF bailout.

The value-added tax (VAT) applied on almost all goods and services was raised from 8.0 per cent to 12 per cent with immediate effect, while corporate taxes were also increased from 24 to 30 per cent.

The personal income tax exemption threshold was lowered from 3.0 million rupees a year to 1.8 million rupees.

The increases were a rollback of the generous cuts ordered by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa soon after he won the November 2019 elections.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is also the finance minister, said Rajapaksa's tax cuts cost the state some 800 billion rupees annually and widened the budget deficit sharply.

International rating agencies, as well as independent economists, have pointed to Rajapaksa's fiscal policy as having fuelled the current financial crisis.

Wickremesinghe, an opposition legislator, was made prime minister this month.

His predecessor and the president's elder brother Mahinda stepped down after months of anti-government protests turned deadly.

The South Asian nation is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout after running out of dollars to pay even for the most essential imports such as oil, food and medicines.

Sri Lanka has also defaulted on its US\$51 billion foreign debt.

Wickremesinghe said he was also removing several tax breaks granted to companies in recent years.

The government did not say how much it will raise from the new tax measures.

However, the prime minister had said they had run out of rupees to pay the salaries of 1.5 million civil servants and would have to "print money". That would in turn fuel inflation, which is already at a record 33.8 per cent.



## China-Swiss Trade Talks Stall Over Rights Issues

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Efforts by Switzerland to refresh its free trade agreement with China have stalled as Bern takes a more critical view of Beijing's human rights record, Swiss newspapers reported.

Switzerland and China signed a free trade agreement in 2013, Beijing's first such deal with an economy in continental Europe. The move was styled as a mutually beneficial pact aimed at contributing to increased trade between the two economies. Switzerland has been trying to update the accord to extend tariff reductions to more Swiss products and to include sustainability features. However, Beijing is not engaging in this effort, the newspapers said.

"So far it has not been possible to agree on a common list of topics that should be explored in greater depth," Switzerland's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) said in a statement to newspaper SonntagsBlick.

Asked to respond about the stalling of the talks over human rights concerns, China's foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Monday: "The China-Swiss FTA is a mutually beneficial agreement, not a gift from one party to another."

"China hopes that Switzerland can exclude any man-made interference and work with China to move in the same direction," Zhao told a regular press briefing.

NZZ am Sonntag, under the headline "The Chinese impasse", said Switzerland had become more critical of China's human rights record.

A Swiss parliamentary initiative recently passed by the National Council's Legal Affairs Committee denounced forced labour of Uyghurs in northwest China as "a real problem".

## Foreign Demand to Keep Dubai Property Prices on Steady Upward Course

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - Dubai house prices are set to mostly rise steadily over the next two years, driven by demand from foreign investors, according to a Reuters poll of analysts, who cautioned that higher interest rates and lack of affordable homes could curb activity.

With an economic rebound propelled by higher energy prices and a revival in trade and tourism, the Dubai property market shrugged off a long streak of falls last year and has held on to upbeat momentum since then.

The latest May 11-26 Reuters poll of 13 property market analysts showed a median rise of 7.5% in Dubai house prices in 2022, unchanged

from the previous poll taken two months ago.

Market sentiment, lifted by the pandemic easing, "coupled with the successful hosting of the World Expo, the reopening of travel corridors...continues to underpin the market's rebound," said Faisal Durran, head of Middle East research at Knight Frank.

Data from the Dubai Land Department showed the emirate's real estate sector had its best quarter in more than a decade, with Q1 sales transactions at their highest since 2010.

However, price rises were expected to slow to 4.5% and 3.0% in 2023 and 2024 respectively, bringing stability to the market.

That stands in contrast to several other property markets which have experienced dizzying highs.

"What we have seen last year was more about recovery from the pandemic; this year seems to be slowing down to more healthy growth," said Haider Tuaima, director and head of real estate research at ValuStrat.

When asked what will drive Dubai's housing market this year and next, a majority of respondents, 11 of 13, said demand from foreign investors. Two chose local demand.

These expected price increases, even though modest, will pose challenges for first-time buyers as interest rates were expected to climb higher, hurting affordability.

The Dubai market, where prices are still well below their last peak in mid-2014, faces several downside risks like higher interest rates, lack of supply of affordable homes, and inflationary pressures this year and next.

All but one of 12 analysts who answered an additional question said affordability for first-time buyers in coming years would worsen.

A strong two-thirds majority also said rents in Dubai, which houses a large number of expatriates, will be less affordable in the next two years.

"Those who are looking to buy will be priced out of the market and will be forced to continue to rent. Rents have and will continue to increase, demand will increase and without affordable homes, this will contribute to the overall cost of living increasing," said Lynette Sacchetto, director of data and digital transformation at Allsopp and Allsopp.

## India Asked to Supply More Than 1.5m Tons Wheat

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India has received requests for the supply of more than 1.5 million tons of wheat from several countries that need the staple to overcome shortages triggered by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, trade and government sources said on Monday.

"More than half a dozen countries have approached India for more than 1.5 million tons of wheat and we will see how to go about these requests," said a government official who didn't wish to be identified in line with official rules.

"India is keen to help vulnerable countries and anyone who needs wheat," said the official involved in decision making.

The bulk of the request has come from Bangladesh, a regular buyer of Indian wheat, the sources said. India, which has banned private wheat exports, is open to specific requests for grain from foreign governments.

For Bangladesh, Indian wheat is at least 30% cheaper than supplies from other origins, and it takes just about a week for Indian cargoes to reach there, said the chief of the Indian unit of a global trading firm. He didn't wish to be identified as he's not authorized to talk to the media.

Bangladesh recently floated a wheat import tender but Dhaka cancelled it later due to high priced bids.

Bangladesh imported a record 4 million tons of wheat from India in the fiscal year to March 2022 against 1.2 million tons bought a year earlier.

Other than Bangladesh, Egypt, the world's biggest wheat importer, has also requested the supply of 500,000 tons of the grain through diplomatic channels, they said.

Jamaica and a few Asian countries are among other buyers looking for wheat from India, they said.

Bangladesh needs a lot of wheat and India might not be able to fulfil the entire requirement, said another dealer with a global trading firm.

India has also received requests for wheat from the United Nations' World Food Program for the supply of the grain to countries such as Uganda and Ethiopia.

## Japan Gov't Drops Timeframe For Budget Balancing Target



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's government made no mention of a timeframe for balancing the primary budget in its draft mid-year annual long-term economic policy roadmap, two government sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The government has previously pledged to achieve a primary budget surplus, which excludes new bond sales and debt servicing costs, by the end of fiscal 2025, which was seen as an elusive target given the state of Japan's public finances.

The budget balancing target has served as a key gauge for the government to finance policy expenditures without relying on debt -- as part of efforts to rein in the industrial world's heaviest public debt at twice the size of Japan's economy.

The absence of the target year in the mid-year policy roadmap could raise questions about Japan's resolve to fix its tattered public finances.

"This means the government may deliver a message that it will prioritize growth and growth-oriented investment," said Daiju Aoki, chief Japan economist at UBS Sumi Trust Wealth Management. "That would boost fiscal spending in the name of growth investment near term."

Jiji newsagency reported that the draft said the current target year could "distort" macroeconomic policy options depending on situations at the time, while removing the words such as "fiscal 2025" which was included in the previous roadmap.

The draft paid consideration towards fiscal refractionists within Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the government sources said.

Kishida has come under pressure from those fiscal doves over the COVID-19 pandemic and rising cost of living.

They remain at loggerheads with fiscal hawks within the LDP.

The draft also said the government would not abandon the flag of fiscal reform and it would tackle the previous fiscal target, apparently out of consideration towards fiscal hawks within the LDP, Jiji newsagency reported.

## Iranian Documentary Goes To Doc Edge in New Zealand

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian documentary 'Water, Wind, Dust, Bread' directed by Mehdi Zamanpour Kiasari will be screened at the DOCNZ International Documentary Film Festival in New Zealand. The 25-minute documentary 'Water, Wind, Dust, Bread', which took more than a year to produce, is a delicate narrative of the life of two children named 'Abolfazl' and 'Setayesh' who experience a different life.

The documentary has been previously screened at the 18th edition of ZagrebDox, the International Documentary Film Festival and the 24th edition of the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in Greece, a special screening section of the 15th Miradasdoc International Film Festival in Spain and the 19th edition of the Millennium Film Festival in Poland.



# Big Tobacco's Environmental Impact Is Devastating

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The tobacco industry is a far greater threat than many realise as it is one of the world's biggest polluters, from leaving mountains of waste to driving global warming, the WHO charged Tuesday.

The World Health Organization accused the industry of causing widespread deforestation, diverting badly needed land and water in poor countries away from food production, spewing out plastic and chemical waste as well as emitting millions of tons of carbon dioxide.

In its report released on World No Tobacco Day, the UN agency called for the tobacco industry to be held to account and foot the bill for the cleanup.

The report, "Tobacco: poisoning our planet", looks at the impacts of the whole cycle, from the growth of plants to the manufacturing of tobacco products, to consumption and waste.

While tobacco's health impacts have been well documented for decades -- with smoking still causing more than eight million deaths worldwide every year -- the report focuses on its broader environmental consequences.

The findings are "quite devastating," Ruediger Krech, WHO director of health promotion, told AFP, slamming the industry as "one of the biggest polluters that we know of."

The industry is responsible for the loss of some 600 million trees each year, while tobacco growing and production uses 200,000 hectares of land and 22 billion tons of water annually, the report found.

It also emits around 84 million tons of carbon dioxide, it said.

In addition, "tobacco products are the most littered item on the planet, containing over 7,000 toxic chemicals, which leech into our environment when discarded," Krech said.

He pointed out that each one of the estimated 4.5 trillion cigarette butts that end up in our oceans, rivers, sidewalks and beaches every year can pollute 100 liters of water.

And up to a quarter of all tobacco farmers contract so-called green tobacco sickness, or poisoning from the nicotine they absorb through the skin.

Farmers who handle tobacco leaves all day consume the equivalent of 50 cigarettes worth of nicotine a day, Krech said.

This is especially worrying for the many children involved in tobacco farming.

"Just imagine a 12-year-old being exposed to 50 cigarettes a day," he said.

Most tobacco is grown in poorer countries, where water and farmland are often in short supply, and where such crops are often grown at the expense of vital food production, the report said.

Tobacco farming also accounts for about five percent of global deforestation, and drives depletion of precious water resources.



At the same time the processing and transportation of tobacco account for a significant share of global greenhouse gas emissions -- with the equivalent of one-fifth of the global airline industry's carbon footprint.

In addition, products like cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and e-cigarettes also contribute significantly to the global build-up of plastic pollution, WHO warned.

Cigarette filters contain microplastics -- the tiny fragments that have been detected in every ocean and even at the bottom of the world's deepest trench -- and make up the second-highest form of plastic pollution worldwide, the report said.

And yet, despite tobacco industry marketing, WHO stressed that there is no evidence filters provide any proven health benefits over smoking non-filtered cigarettes.

The UN agency urged policy makers worldwide to treat cigarette filters as single-use plastics, and to consider banning them.

It also decried that taxpayers around the world had been covering the towering costs of cleaning up the tobacco industry's mess.

Each year, China for instance dishes out around \$2.6 billion and India around \$766 million, while Brazil and Germany pay some \$200 million each to clean up littered tobacco products, the report found.

WHO insisted that more countries should follow the so-called Polluter Pays Principle, as in France and Spain.

It is important, Krech said, that "the industry pay actually for the mess that they are creating."

## Great Man...

FROM PAGE 1

Ayatollah Khamenei in his remarks has always repeated that Imam Khomeini was a great personality, a great man, an irreplaceable leader, a compassionate heart, a steely will, a determination full of strength, a deep and clear faith, a wise sage and a far-sighted and the nation and the country today and the future generations need to preserve this dear memory.



He says about Imam Khomeini, "The Imam had many initiatives, but the most important initiative of the Imam is the "Islamic Republic"; this was the initiative of the great Imam; this is the same religious. Democracy that became official under the title of the Islamic Republic and became the title of the system arising from the thought and will of the Iranian nation and the leadership of the great Imam."

Ayatollah Khamenei has proved he is a deserving and right successor for the late founder of the Islamic Revolution and continued his path as we can see the result of this path which has led the country to so many achievements in different fields.

Iranians and even brave Muslim nations worldwide owes their current courage for fighting with the world hegemony to the late Imam and his successor Ayatollah Khamenei.

The late Imam made unbalanced the then bipolarism and he introduced another power to the geopolitical scene and the Islamic Republic establishment emerged to compete with the East and West and now this religious establishment has its own enthusiasts in the world because of its nature of cutting dependence on the world powers and aliens.

Ayatollah Khamenei believes, "The great Imam did this religious innovation. He presented this progressive and new school, this beautiful and wonderful conception of Islam, which was rooted in that clear thought and deep knowledge. With this solid and logical plan, He was able to bring the Iranian nation, which had been accustomed to tyranny for centuries, on the stage. Bring, take control of the country and make the Iranian nation believe in itself. Dear young people who did not see the period before the revolution, it is very difficult for you to know what it was like; We lived there, we breathed in that time; At that time, people were nothing; In fact, if someone told the people that you have the right or can interfere in the affairs of the country, it would not be credible to the people; People were completely on the sidelines; They were nothing; Especially in the dark days of Pahlavi tyranny the last twenty years of which I was able to apprehend. This is how people were like; They lived with oppression. The Imam brought this nation, these people to the stage with a leaping movement, the youth believed in themselves. The nation believed in itself, the Imam used the great capacity of the nation's ability and will, and with his leadership was able to bring it to a stage where they could do great things, overthrow the rule of several thousand years monarchy, bring the people to the middle of the field and do something with the religion of the people, the knowledge of the people, the understanding of the people, that made them stand up and resist and become stronger day by day."

Now that the country is preparing to commemorate the late Imam's demise anniversary, the country under the leadership of his deserving successor Ayatollah Khamenei is concerning the summits of success one after the other and the country has turned into the pride of Iranians and Muslim nations and has turned into a thorn in the eyes of its enemies, namely the West and the Zionists and it has progressed in all cultural, scientific and military fields and we owe all these achievements to this great man and his great successor.

## Asia's Synthetic Drug Trade Booms, With Record Meth Seizures



BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Trafficking of synthetic drugs in East and Southeast Asia continued to expand last year, with more than one billion methamphetamine tablets seized by authorities, the United Nations said on Monday.

Prices of methamphetamine or meth, by far the region's most popular drug, fell last year even as interceptions rose, indicating supply had surged, the U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report.

"The region is literally swimming in methamphetamine and I think it's high time that the region start taking a hard look at policies in place to address the problem," said Jeremy Douglas, UNODC Regional Representative for Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

While seizures of crystallized, liquid and powdered meth declined in 2021, tablet confiscation spiked, the report said.

Overall, authorities in Asia seized a record 171.5 tons of meth in 2021, up from 170 tons last year. More than 90% of the tablet seizures occurred in Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia, where it is used both recreationally and by workers.

"There are a lot of seizures being made but no impact being made on the business itself. Organized crime just keeps cranking up the volume," said Douglas.

The report also noted a major change in trafficking routes from the center of meth production in Myanmar's Shan State.

Laos registered a more than a 660% jump in interceptions of meth tablets in 2021, as increased anti-narcotic operations in Thailand and Southern China drove crime syndicates to enlarge their operations in northern Laos.

Laos was "a soft target for traffickers", Douglas said. The report noted a record 2.7 tons of ketamine seizures in Cambodia, nearly fifteen times the amount seized in the previous five years combined.

## No Concern Yet Monkeypox Will Cause Pandemic

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The WHO said it was not concerned for now that the spread of monkeypox beyond the African countries where it is typically found could spark a global pandemic.

Since Britain first reported a confirmed monkeypox case on May 7, nearly 400 suspected and confirmed cases have been reported to the World Health Organization in nearly two dozen countries far from the states where the virus is endemic.

The UN health agency has voiced concern at this "unusual situation", but reiterated Monday that there was no reason to panic over the virus, which spreads through close contact and usually does not cause severe disease.

Asked during an epidemiological briefing whether the virus, which is endemic in a range of west and central African nations, might provoke another pandemic, WHO's top monkeypox expert Rosamund Lewis acknowledged that "we don't know." But "we don't think so," she said. "At the moment, we are not concerned of a global pandemic."

It was important, she said, to take rapid steps to rein in the spread of the virus.

"It is still possible to stop this outbreak before it gets larger," she told an online public forum.

"I don't think we should be scared collectively."

Monkeypox is related to smallpox, which killed millions around the world every year before it was eradicated in 1980. But monkeypox is much less severe, and most people recover within three to four weeks.

The initial symptoms include a high fever, swollen lymph nodes and a blistering chickenpox-like rash.

Experts are trying to determine why the virus has suddenly begun spreading in countries where it has never been seen before, and mainly among young men.

## Moscow...

FROM PAGE 1

Talks have been on hold since March as Washington insists on its refusal to undo its past wrongs through measures such as removing Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) from its foreign terrorist organization list.

Earlier this month, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Tehran and the P4+1 group of countries still have the opportunity to reach a "good and reliable" agreement on the JCPOA revival if the United States makes the necessary decision and honors its commitments.

Meanwhile, the head of the Russian negotiating team, Mikhail Ulyanov, said on Tuesday that Iran has shown a certain degree of flexibility in resolving the stalemate in the Vienna talks, emphasizing that the ball is in the US court.

In a tweet, Ulyanov, who serves as Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna, said the Vienna talks on the JCPOA revival remain on pause since March 10.

## 30% Surge in...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran has nearly doubled the gpp for wheat to 115,000 rials (\$0.4) per kilogram for the harvesting season to late July.

That came after a war between Russia and Ukraine that started in February sent the global prices of grains to record highs.

Iran imported around 8 million mt of wheat over the calendar year to late March with a bulk of shipments supplied from Russia.

However, the Iranian agriculture ministry hopes it could meet the growing demand for wheat this year with an increase in domestic crop.

A senior agriculture ministry official said on Tuesday that Iranian production of wheat from drylands could reach around 8 million mt per year.

Alireza Mohajer, a deputy agriculture minister, said the government will provide more support to dryland farmers in Iran to help boost wheat yields in coming years.

## India-Iran...

FROM PAGE 1

"The year 2021 came as a shocker since the rupee-rial mechanism was not working and there was no alternate payment system," Vinod Kaul, Executive Director, All India Rice Exporters Association, said adding that "Things have improved slightly over the last few months since the introduction of third-party currency payment. However, we are still far behind our 2019 levels in terms of export of basmati rice to Iran."

Though India has always maintained that its bilateral relations with Iran stand on their own and are not influenced by India's relations with any third country, ever since the US imposed sanctions on Iran, New Delhi could not engage in dollar-denominated trade with the country. Hence, a rupee-rial trade mechanism was put in place in 2018.

Under this, oil refineries from India would deposit rupees in the two designated banks - UCO Bank and IDBI Bank - for import of crude oil from Iran and the fund was used to clear dues of exporters from the country to Iran. However, since there have been no oil imports by India since May 2019 due to Western sanctions, the accumulations in the rupee-rial accounts have been depleting drastically and therefore, dipping into that fund may no longer be an option.

"When oil was being purchased, there was a lot of balance in the account, but now there is hardly any balance left," a senior official at UCO Bank told BusinessLine. The best option available according to traders was the revival of rupee-rial mechanism. According to Sujit Patra, Secretary, Indian Tea Association, the revival would help boost tea exports from India to Iran, particularly at a time when there is a crisis in Sri Lanka.

"We have urged the Commerce Minister to take this (revival of rupee-rial mechanism) up with the Central Bank of Iran and RBI. If this can be done then it will give a big boost to tea exports," he said.

Iran is one of the major markets for Indian orthodox tea, accounting for nearly 21 per cent of the country's total exports of tea. Orthodox tea accounts for less than 10 per cent of the country's annual tea production, which is close to 1,300 mkg. However, nearly 90 per cent of the 110 mkg of orthodox produced each year is exported.

## White Withdraws From England Squad

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal defender Ben White has withdrawn from England's squad for their forthcoming Nations League games after failing to recover from injury in time.

White, who has four England caps, has been dealing with a hamstring problem and missed Arsenal's last Premier League game of the season against Everton.

The centre-back was still selected by England boss Gareth Southgate ahead of next month's Nations League games.

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## Valencia President Sacked After Audio Leaks

MADRID (Dispatches) - Valencia confirmed Anil Murthy has been sacked as president after he was heard threatening a player and criticizing the club's owner, Peter Lim, in a series of leaked audio recordings.

In a statement, the club said "a change in leadership is required, in order to regain the trust of the fans and the community and to put Valencia CF in a position for success. Effective immediately, Anil Murthy will cease to be both President and an employee of Valencia CF."

# Nadal Downs Djokovic to Reach 15th French Open Semis

PARIS (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal edged a late-night classic against old rival Novak Djokovic in the early hours of Wednesday in four sets to reach his 15th French Open semi-final.

The 13-time Roland Garros champion won the pair's 59th career meeting 6-2, 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7/4) after a four-hour-and-12-minute quarter-final on a raucous Court Philippe Chatrier.

Nadal sealed his eighth victory in 10 French Open matches against last year's winner Djokovic at 1:16 am local time (2316 GMT Tuesday) to set up a last-four clash with third seed Alexander Zverev on Friday.

The 35-year-old has lost just three of his 113 matches on the Paris clay since his 2005 title-winning debut and now only trails Djokovic 30-29 in their career head-to-head.

The Spaniard, seeded fifth, remains on course for a record-extending 22nd Grand Slam title after lifting this year's Australian Open, which Djokovic missed after being deported from the country over his Covid vaccination status.

Djokovic overturned a double-break deficit to take an 88-minute second set and missed two set points when serving for the fourth to force a decider.

The world number one will rue those missed chances while he waits until Wimbledon for his next opportunity to take his Slam tally to 21.

Nadal was a slight underdog heading into the match after being taken to five sets in the previous round by Felix Auger-Aliassime and he had even hinted it could be his last appearance in Paris due to a persistent foot injury.

The colder, slower conditions of the night session were also expected to favor Djokovic.

But the 'King of clay' smashed 57 winners in a trademark performance to delight the crowd as he gained revenge for his semi-final loss to the same opponent 12 months ago.

The spectators quickly realised they were not going to be disappointed, as Nadal broke in a bruising 10-minute opening game before saving two break points to open a 3-1 lead.

A crushing forehand winner in the fifth game gave Nadal a double break and he went on to serve out the opener with relative ease, ending his opponent's winning run of 22 sets.

The first game of the second set was even longer than the first, but the result was the same as Nadal took his sixth break point.

A string of unforced errors from Djokovic and Nadal's cute winner at the net saw the reigning champion a double break behind again.

Djokovic finally took a break point for



the first time when Nadal netted a drop shot, before winning another gruelling return game -- in which Nadal was given a warning for a time violation -- on his fifth break point to level the set.

Opportunities came and went for both players, but Nadal fired long as Djokovic took his second set point in the 10th game.

Nadal came out fighting though and broke, to love, in the first game for the third successive set.

Djokovic saw another break point come and go before giving up his own serve again to slip 4-1 adrift.

Nadal served out for a two-sets-to-one lead in game eight as Djokovic blazed wide on the second set point, with the clock ticking past midnight and shivering fans reaching for blankets to keep warm.

Djokovic missed a simple shot early in the fourth set and lashed out at the net in frustration, drawing deafening boos from the crowd.

The top seed immediately refocused though and broke serve for a 2-0 lead when a hotly-contested line call went in his favor.

Djokovic had the chance to send the match into a decider on his own serve.

But Nadal saved two set points before gobbling up a second break point with a trademark forehand winner.

Nadal made a rapid start to the crucial tie-break to race into a 6-1 advantage.

Djokovic managed to save three of the match points, but Nadal got over the line at the fourth time of asking.

## French Open Organizers Favoring Alcaraz



BERLIN (Dispatches) - World number three Alexander Zverev has criticised French Open organizers, who he claims have favoured rising Spanish teen star Carlos Alcaraz, his quarter-final opponent at Roland Garros on Tuesday.

Zverev, 25, is unhappy about his lack of matches on Roland Garros' showpiece Philippe Chatrier court, which has a retractable roof, compared to Alcaraz.

The German feels organizers put him at a disadvantage ahead of his quarter-final with only one of his four matches so far on Chatrier.

"I played on Chatrier once, (world number one Novak) Djokovic played twice, (Rafael) Nadal three times, like Alcaraz," Zverev told German media after labouring to a last 16 win over Spain's Bernabe Zapata Miralles.

"Sure, he's the new superstar, the new face of tennis and it's nice to see something new too, but in our half of the draw it should be more divided who's playing when and where."

Zverev, the reigning Olympic champion, described playing on Chatrier in Paris as "completely different" compared to other courts. "It's like playing on another continent."

Zverev says he is not concerned if organisers gave Djokovic, the defending French Open champion, and Nadal, who has won Roland Garros 13 times, preferential treatment.

"It is clear, and rightly so, that Rafa and Novak get what they want," said Zverev.

## Frankfurt, Rangers Complain About problems At Europa League Final

PARIS (Dispatches) - Europa League finalists Eintracht Frankfurt and Rangers will work with UEFA and Spanish authorities on the problems faced by fans at this year's showpiece in Seville, they said.

Supporters at the May 18 final, which Frankfurt won 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw following extra time, reported a lack of food and water despite rising temperatures.

Fans also encountered other organizational problems including policing and body searches.

"These issues could easily have led to even more severe problems on the night," the clubs said in a joint statement issued with the Football Supporters Europe (FSE) group.

"It was only thanks to the calmness and mutual respect of both sets of fans towards each other that there were not more severe injuries suffered." UEFA was not immediately available to comment.

They added that the fans' expectations were not met at the final hosted in the Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan Stadium.

"Fans spend a lot of effort, time and money following their teams all over Europe and expect to be treated with respect and dignity while attending football games," the statement added.

## Perez to Stay With Red Bull Until 2024

LONDON (Dispatches) - Monaco Grand Prix winner Sergio Perez had more to celebrate when Red Bull announced a contract extension keeping the Mexican alongside Formula One world champion Max Verstappen until 2024.

Championship leader Verstappen's deal runs to the end of 2028 after the Dutch driver signed a five-year extension in March.

Perez, 32, triumphed on the streets of Monaco on Sunday, becoming the most successful Mexican Formula One driver of all time and also his country's first winner of the showcase race. He took his first F1 pole position in Saudi Arabia in March and has had four podium finishes in seven races so far this year.



## Di Maria to Retire From Int'l Football After World Cup

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina's Angel Di Maria will retire from international football after this year's World Cup in Qatar, the former Paris Saint Germain and Manchester United forward said.

"After this World Cup it will be time, there are a lot of lads who are at international level, who are getting

better and little by little they are going to show that they are at this standard," Di Maria told reporters ahead of Argentina's match against Italy on Wednesday at Wembley.

Di Maria, 34, played 121 times for the national side and scored 24 goals.

He scored the winner last July as Argentina beat Brazil 1-0 to win the Copa America and lift their first major title in 28 years.

Di Maria will leave PSG this summer and he has yet to decide where he will play his club football next season but he said continuing at international level "would be a bit selfish after so many years and having achieved what I wanted to achieve."

"After (Qatar) I'll certainly be taking a step sideways."

## South Korea Can Match Brazil in World Cup Warm-Up

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Son Heung-min has warned fans not to get too hung up on the result when South Korea host Brazil in a friendly on Thursday and says the important thing is that it helps the team in its preparations for the World Cup.

The 29-year-old forward has returned from a successful season with Tottenham Hotspur to captain his country in June friendlies against Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Egypt as they prepare for a 10th successive trip to the World Cup finals.

The 'Taeguk Warriors' have lost five of their six meetings with Brazil over the years, however, and Son cautioned against unrealistic expectations.

"Obviously, our fans would want us to win and score a lot of goals, but things don't always go the way we want them to," Son told reporters at the team's training camp, according to Yonhap news agency.

"I don't think results in these matches are important. Even if we don't play well, we should try to take as many lessons as possible. We should look towards the World Cup and try to build a perfect team for that tournament." That said, Son believes the South Koreans should be able to match the five-times World Cup winners at Seoul World Cup Stadium if they play to their full potential.

"If we can all play up to our capabilities, then we can be competitive," Son said. "We'll have a lot of fans on hand, and we'll try to show them everything we have."

"I hope we will all tackle this challenge head on, without being afraid," he added. "We should go into the stadium believing we can play our game. That way, we'll be able to identify things we're supposed to do." The match will pitch Son against Brazilian forward Neymar and, such is the rise in the South Korean's stock, some are billing it as a battle of equals.



## Benzema Deserves to Win Ballon d'Or

PARIS (Dispatches) - Real Madrid's French striker Karim Benzema deserves to win the Ballon d'Or this year after helping to guide his team to the Champions League title, seven-times winner of the award Lionel Messi said.

Benzema had the best season of his 13-year career at Real, scoring 44 goals with 15 assists in all competitions as they won a LaLiga-Champions League double.

The 34-year-old topped the scoring charts in both competitions and netted hat-tricks against Paris St Germain and Chelsea in the knockout stages to secure Real's progress.

"There are no doubts, it's very clear that Benzema had a spectacular year and ended up victorious in the Champions League," PSG forward Messi said on Argentine television.

"He was fundamental in all the matches from the round of 16 onwards. I think there is no doubt this year." The Ballon d'Or award for the best football player in the world will be presented on Oct. 17, with the nominees set to be revealed on Aug. 12.

The prestigious trophy will now be awarded on the basis of a regular season from August to July rather than a calendar year. Real Madrid's victory over Liverpool gave them their 14th European Cup triumph — twice as many as the next most successful team AC Milan.

Benzema's hat-trick in the second leg eliminated PSG 3-2 on aggregate in the last 16, yet again preventing the French club from winning Europe's elite club competition for the first time.

"The Real Madrid game killed us, me and everyone in the dressing room. We had a lot of hope. It makes me want to win again," Messi added.

"But the best team doesn't always win the Champions League. I don't take credit away from Real Madrid, they weren't the best in this competition and yet they beat everyone."

