

**Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Said That Iran's Possible Military Dimension Case Was Closed When the JCPOA Was Signed in 2015 and Reopening the Case Wouldn't Help The Talks to Revive the Deal**

# IRAN NEWS

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## Iran Economy Grows by 4.3% in Year to Late March

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian statistics agency figures show the economy grew by 4.3% in the year to late March. Figures by the Iranian government's statistics agency the SCI show the country's economy grew by 4.3% in the year to late March.

SCI figures published on Wednesday showed that Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) had increased to 7,569 trillion rials (\$199.18 billion) at the end of the past calendar year, up from 7,254 trillion rials reported in late March 2021.

The Statistical Center of Iran considers 2011, when one US dollar was equal to 38,000 Iranian rials, as the baseline year for calculation of economic growth rate in Iran.

The agency said Iran's GDP without oil had increased by 3.5% over the year to late March to reach 6,511 trillion rials (\$171.3 billion).

The manufacturing and mining sector reported the highest rate of growth compared to other sectors of the Iranian economy over the past calendar year with a 6% surge in GDP, said the statistics agency, adding that the rate covers activities in the petroleum sector as well as electricity generation and construction activities.

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## Iran, Russia Reach Initial Agreement for Joint Ship Production

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and Russia have reached an initial agreement for launching a joint shipbuilding venture in the Caspian Sea region.

A report by Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) published on Thursday said that TPO's head Alireza Peymanpak had reached agreements on the issue with Russian authorities during meetings had held in the city of Saint Petersburg earlier in the day.

"The Russian side has committed to help the Iranian side in the joint manufacturing of ships and also to supply the ships needed by the Islamic Republic of Iran," read part of the report published in the local media.

It said Iran and Russia had also reached an agreement under which Iranian companies will supply ship parts they manufacture to shipyards in Russia.

The report added that the agreements are in line with a broader understanding between Iran and Russia to increase their trade relations along the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a major corridor that connects trade hubs in the region.

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# Tehran Warns IAEA Chief Not to Complicate Matters



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has advised the UN nuclear agency's director general to refrain from complicating the situation through political statements.

The warning by Behrouz Kamalvandi came after the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) called on Iran to resume talks "now" on reviving the 2015 nuclear accord before things get "much more problematic".

"I amicably advise Rafael Grossi, the director-general of the [International Atomic Energy] Agency, to take distance from making unprofessional statements of political hue and color intended for media" consumption, Kamalvandi said.

"It is clear that if there is a technical issue, it should be presented professionally within the framework of the Agency's duties and followed through its own channels and through the usual mechanisms of the Agency. Obviously, the arena for such interactions is not the media," he said.

Kamalvandi was apparently referring to Grossi's interview broadcast on June 12 on CNN, in which he made unusually menacing tropes against Iran.

"Recent history tells us that it is never a good thing to start saying to international inspectors, go home. Things get much more problematic," the IAEA chief was quoted as saying.

"The director-general of the Agency, as the head of an international legal body, is expected to distance himself from political statements and positions and to be careful that his statements do not complicate the relationship between the members of the Agency," Kamalvandi said on Wednesday.

Grossi sparked a controversy after he traveled to Israel and met the regime's leaders late last month.

The IAEA has been on the receiving end of documents supplied by Israel about Iran's nuclear program, which Tehran has rejected as fake and fabricated by MKO terrorists.

Following the visit, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution, accusing Iran of not cooperating with the agency which caught the Islamic Republic by surprise.

"There is no doubt that some unconstructive statements and political stances will complicate matters," Kamalvandi warned.

## All U.S. Sanctions Against Syria Must Be Lifted

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A senior aide to Iranian Foreign Minister, Ali-Asghar Khaji said on Thursday that all the US sanctions against Syria must be lifted without political preconditions and any discrimination.

The UN delegations met with Khaji on Thursday on the second day of the 18th round of the Astana peace negotiations that were initiated by Russia, Iran, and Turkey in 2017 to find a political solution to the years-long crisis in Syria.

Referring to the latest international developments, Khaji called for special attention of the international community, the United Nations, and its specialized institutions on the humanitarian aspects of the Syrian crisis and the increase in aid to the Syrian people without any political preconditions and discrimination.

Criticizing the U.S. discriminatory behavior about the sanctions, he called for the immediate lifting of all sanctions in all parts of Syria, welcoming the Syrian president's amnesty order, describing it as a positive step toward making confidence and showing the Syrian government's positive approach to peaceful settlement of disputes.

In this meeting, the two sides reviewed the eighth session of the Syrian Constitution in detail and welcomed the holding of its ninth session on July 25, 2022.

The Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, led by Khaji, met with the Turkish delegation at the 18th session of the Astana process and reviewed the latest political and field developments in Syria.

Condemning the Zionist regime's growing aggression, he expressed the Islamic Republic of Iran's concern over the continuation of these attacks in Syria.

At the meeting, they stressed the need for a commitment to preserve Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Wednesday and on day one of the 18th round of Astana talks on Syria in the Kazakh capital Nur-Sultan, Iran's representative stressed uniformity of views on Syria between Moscow and Tehran.

Khaji, a senior aide to Iran's foreign minister, told Russia's Sputnik News that the Iranian and Russian delegations discussed all the important issues concerning Syria in a "very good" meeting. "Our view is close to the Russian side, and there are common views that will be reflected in the final statement," the senior diplomat noted.

The new round of peace talks on Syria in the Astana Format, which commenced on Wednesday, is attended by high-level delegations from Iran, Russian, and Turkey - the three guarantor countries.

A United Nations delegation led by Robert Dunn, political affairs officer of the special envoy for Syria, a Jordanian delegation, representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Committee of the Red Cross is also attending as observers.

## Iran's Blows to Israel Have Grown Multiple Times

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The former chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) says Iran's undercover strikes on Israel have multiplied, but the country cannot reveal the details.

"The Zionist regime and its authorities know better what blows they have received from the Islamic Republic," Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari told Tasnim news agency.

"Some of these blows are still continuing and they (the Zionists) are being hit," he said, adding "These are the blows that the Islamic resistance has inflicted on them in the region and in different countries, and even inside the occupied territories".

Gen. Jafari was commenting on statements by Israeli officials about some recent incidents in Iran, for which they have tried to imply responsibility.

"When they commit terror, they openly declare it, like the cowardly assassination of Martyr Sayyad Khodaei, that took place while he was in his car in front of his house without a bodyguard, "His assassination has no technical operational value for the Zionist regime. It is similar to the blind assassinations by the Hypocrites in the 80s," he said, referring to MKO terrorists who have a history of numerous attacks against Iranians.

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## Iraq Pays Back \$1.6b of Its Natural Gas Arrears to Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has received from Iraq a sum of \$1.6 billion the Arab country owed to Iran for imports of natural gas in the past years, according to remarks by the Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji.

Owji said on Thursday that the new payment by Iraq is related to an outstanding debt for natural gas imports that had taken place before the current Iranian administration came to office in August.

He said that Iraq has settled all payments related to supplies it has received from the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) since the summer of last year.

"This figure of \$1.6 billion had not been anticipated in their 2022 budget but they got an approval from their parliament and paid the sum to the NIGC account," Owji said during a live broadcast by the IRIB News.

The minister said the payment will allow Iran to increase its supply of natural gas to Iraq over the summer months when the Arab country is expected to face a record demand for energy in its power plants.

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## Saudi-Led Coalition Seizes Another Yemeni Fuel Tanker

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Saudi-led coalition has seized yet another Yemeni fuel tanker with thousands of tons of fuel on board, the second in less than 24 hours, violating the UN-brokered ceasefire once more.

The tanker, called Fos Power, had obtained necessary entry permits from the United Nations, but was barred from docking at Yemen's western port of Hudaydah, Essam al-Mutawakil, a spokesman for the Yemeni National Oil Company, said.

"The Saudi-led coalition, keeping up its breaches of the ceasefire, captured a fuel tanker carrying 30,148 tons of gasoline and did not allow it to enter Hudaydah port, while the tanker had received required permits from the UN," al-Mutawakil said, Alahednews website reported.

In a similar development on Tuesday, the coalition refused to authorize the Princess Halima tanker carrying 23,920 tons of gasoline to anchor at Yemen's western port of Hudaydah and offload its cargo.

The capture of fuel tankers comes as, according to terms of the UN-brokered ceasefire in Yemen, tankers carrying oil products are entitled to dock at the port of Hudaydah.

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## Iran Arrests Element Linked With 2 French Spies

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Intelligence Forces announced the detention of a person who was linked with the espionage operations performed by two French nationals in Iran.

Intelligence Forces of West Azarbaijan Province arrested the convict while trying to flee the country with the support of dissident groups.

The detainee had coordinated two French spies' actions who sought to foment chaos in the country last month. Earlier on May 12, the Iranian intelligence ministry said that its forces have arrested two French spies, Cécile Kohler, 37, and Jacques Paris, 69, for attempting to stoke chaos and social disorder in Iran during protests by teachers.

## Iran Determined To Boost Ties With Neighbors

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi has said that his country is determined to expand relations with friendly and neighboring states, including Armenia.

The president was speaking on Wednesday afternoon during a meeting with Armenian Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan here in the capital Tehran.

Raisi said that the two countries have good capacities that they can use to expand their ties in different fields such as transport, energy, industry, agriculture, as well as technical and engineering services.

He called on the Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee to assess further grounds of mutual cooperation.

The president also referred to parliamentary relations between Tehran and Yerevan, saying that those relations play an effective and constructive role in the promotion of cooperation between the two states.

Raisi spoke about Iran's role in promoting regional peace and security too.

He said that the Islamic Republic's basic policy is to support territorial integrity and national sovereignty of all regional countries, adding that Iran backs any initiative which promotes peace and tranquility involving regional nations.

"We believe that dialog among regional countries is the best way to resolve issues,



and foreigners' interference and presence not only solve problems but also complicate them," the president said.

On his part, the Armenian parliament speaker said that his country attaches paramount importance to expanding relations with Iran in the fields of economy, trade and transit, while there are also other capacities the two sides can use to boost cooperation.

Simonyan thanked Iran for its constructive stance on regional developments, and expressed hope that Tehran could play a more active role in future.

Before meeting with President Raisi, the Armenian parliament speaker held talks with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf.

## U.S. Planned IAEA Resolution to Get Concessions From Iran in Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says the United States was behind the recent anti-Tehran resolution, which was adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s Board of Governors, in order to mount pressure on Iran in the Vienna talks.

Iran's top diplomat made the remarks in a Thursday phone call with his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein, during which the two sides also discussed bilateral issues as well as regional developments.

Negotiations have been held in the Austrian capital since April last year to restore the 2015 Iran deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was ditched by former US President Donald Trump in May 2018.

In quitting the agreement, Trump introduced what he called the "maximum pressure" campaign to bring Iran to its knees. Tehran maintains that the policy has failed dismally. The Joe Biden administration agrees, yet it has not taken any tangible steps to deliver on its promise of repealing the policy.

In recent months, Iran has cited Washington's indecisiveness as the reason behind the protraction of the talks, as a number of key issues remain unresolved, ranging from the removal of all



post-JCPOA sanctions to the provision of guarantees by the American side that it will not leave the deal again.

"While exchange of messages through the European Union's representative continued between the United States and Iran, the White House suddenly came up with the idea of the adoption of a resolution at the International Atomic Energy Agency," Amirabdollahian said.

Iran's foreign minister added, "The goal that the United States sought through proposing it was to get political concessions [from Iran] at the negotiating table [in Vienna]."

Amirabdollahian said Iran has consistently invited the West to take the path of diplomacy and even a few days before the recent IAEA meeting, Tehran put forth a political initiative for the continuation of the Vienna talks until a final agreement is reached.

"However, faced with the United States' unconstructive behavior at the IAEA, the reciprocal measure that we took to boost Iran's peaceful nuclear activity fell within the framework of the law passed by the [Iranian] parliament," Iran's foreign minister said.

"We consider diplomacy as the best path toward achievement of a good, strong and durable agreement. However, in the face of bullying behavior [of the U.S.], our reaction is powerful," Amirabdollahian concluded.

## Iran Self-Sufficient, Independent in Ensuring Security

TEHRAN (MNA) - Unlike other dependent countries, the Spokesman for the Iranian Armed Forces said that Iran is self-sufficient and independent in ensuring its security.

Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi made the remarks in a meeting with the Friday prayers leader of Sanandaj in Kordestan province on Tuesday and stated that many countries, that are heavily dependent on the United States, Britain, Zionist regime and Western countries, have delegated the provision of their security to foreign countries with utmost humiliation.

Enemies have tried to demoralize the spirit of the people of the country, promote corruption and disappoint them by changing the method and launching the soft war, cognitive and media warfare in cultural and religious fields but Iran as a country, benefited from strong and powerful Armed Forces, has created a unique deterrent policy in the field of defense and security, he added.

Friday prayers leader of Sanandaj, for his part, pointed to the role of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in encouraging the Islamic Ummah to practice resistance and confront the Global Arrogance and said that the enemy launched an all-out war against Iran in the early days of the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution and imposed war on the country which dragged for eight years.

Under the wise leadership of the Islamic Revolution the late Imam Khomeini (RA), all plots and conspiracies waged by enemies against the country were foiled, Mamousta Fayegh Rostami added.

He pointed to the five components of security, sustainable economic development, 'presence of economic activists', unity and livelihood security and stated that these five components will reach the country to the pinnacle of development and progress.

Turning to the slogan of the current year named after by Leader of the Islamic Revolution entitled "Production: Knowledge-based, Job-Creating", the Friday prayers leader called on all government officials to make their utmost efforts to realize the objectives of the aforementioned motto.

## Iran's Tourism Income Sees 40% Growth in 2021

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Total contribution of travel and tourism to Iran's GDP saw 40-percent increase in 2021, with international visitors spending 2.5 billion dollars in Iran that year, data by World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) shows.

The WTTC said in a report that Iran's tourism industry grew by 40 percent in 2021, while it saw 45-percent decrease in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Iran's tourism industry earned 48.1 billion dollars in 2021, compared to the previous year's 34.4 billion dollars, while it had made 62.2 billion dollars in income in 2019.

The share of travel and tourism in Iran's total economy was 3.1 percent in 2020, but it reached to 4.1 percent in 2021 as the country witnessed a drawdown in the coronavirus spread.

There were 1.82 million jobs active in tourism sector in Iran in 2019, but it shrank to 1.2 million jobs in 2020. Tourism-related jobs increased by 5.1 percent to 1.29 million in 2021, as the country recovered from strict coronavirus-related limitations.

International visitors spent 2.5 billion dollars in Iran last year that shows a 31.3-percent growth compared to 2020, according to the report, while domestic visitors expended 33.3 billion dollars.

## Top General Urges Armed Forces To Be Ready for Future Wars

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri has called for planning and preparedness of the armed forces proportionate to future warfare and operations.

"Today's battles against terrorists and Takfiri groups are hugely different from wars of the past and have confronted us with new scenarios. Therefore, armed forces should plan their readiness and improve it proportionate to future wars," he said.

The general said the power of the armed forces have stemmed threats against the country. He warned, however, that Iran may face asymmetric warfare.

"We should know how well our logistics and support can resist hostile fire and we should conduct our support operations away from enemy fire," he said.

Bagheri said armed forces should monitor wars across the world and see, for example, what is slowing down the Russian army's advances in the war in Ukraine and why the Ukrainian army has failed to resist the Russia military well.

"We should identify the latest know-how and methods that are being used across the world and benefit from them," he said.

The general also underlined the need for identification of weaknesses and strengths during specialized drills.

He said the armed forces, in their logistics and support operation, should be more efficient and make better use of existing equipment and facilities, including through cooperation with other branches of the armed forces, to cut costs.

## Nigerien Official Amazed At Iran's Self-Sufficiency

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The mayor of Niamey, the capital of Niger, praised Iran's self-sufficiency in various fields as a model for other Islamic nations.

In a meeting with the mayor of Qom, Mayor of Niamey Oumarou Dogari Moumouni said if all Islamic countries follow Iran, a great power in the Muslim world will be formed against arrogance.

Lauding Iran's progress and development, the Nigerien official said he has been surprised by the development of Qom city.

The foreign sanctions have accelerated Iran's progress and development and failed to create obstacles for the talents of Iranians, he noted.

Describing Iran's progress as a role model for Niger, Moumouni said his country would try to use Iran's experience to solve problems.

In a telephone conversation with his Iranian counterpart in January, the foreign minister of Niger called for plans to convene a session of the Joint Commission with Iran in the capital of the African country.

Hailing his country's close relations with Iran after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Nigerien minister also called for the promotion of ties with Tehran in various fields.

### Iran Not to Allow Zionists to Promote, Legitimize Their Iranophobic Agenda



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani says the Islamic Republic will not allow the Israeli regime to promulgate anti-Tehran ideologies and accord legitimacy to its Iranophobia campaign.

Bagheri Kani made the remarks in a meeting of the Academic Association of Islamic Iran at the University of Tehran in the capital on Thursday, during which the senior diplomat expounded on the strategic features of the country's foreign policy apparatus in the current Iranian administration.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister for political affairs also echoed the same comments in a thread of posts on his Twitter page.

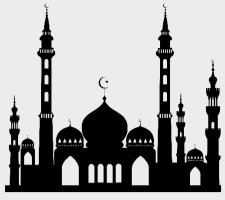
"The enemies of the Iranian nation should know that the Iran, which was able to defeat the 'US' maximum pressure campaign' and force the White House leaders to admit this disgraceful failure, will not allow the Zionists to promote Iranophobia through a 'maximum blackmail game' and legitimize their anti-Iran sentiments," Bagheri Kani said.

During the meeting, the senior diplomat also stressed that among the strategic features of the foreign policy apparatus in the current Iranian administration is to avoid "spending its foreign policy treasures" for the success of diplomacy.

"In other words, in order to show we are not successful in the field of diplomacy, we are not willing to compromise on the principles and foundations of the [Iranian] foreign policy and the red lines of the [Islamic] establishment," he added.

In Iran's foreign policy apparatus, Bagheri Kani explained, having close ties with other countries does not hinge on whether they are Eastern or Western nations, but on their capability to help Iran meet the country's national interests and security as well as welfare of its people.

The "strategic intelligence", "decision-making courage" and "power of action" vested in the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of foreign policy showcase the successful model of Iranian diplomacy.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:43
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:01
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:48

76. Dwelling therein;- how beautiful an abode and place of rest!  
77. Say (to the Rejecters): "My Lord is not uneasy because of you if ye call not on Him: But ye have indeed rejected (Him), and soon will come the inevitable (punishment)!"

Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (76 - 77)

## Helsinki Can Share Experience With Tehran in Water Resources Management

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Ambassador of Finland to Tehran Kari Kahiluoto says his country is one of the leading countries in the fields of water resources management and wastewater, and it can share its experience with Iran in the field of managing energy resources.**

Speaking in the meeting with Khorasan Razavi Chamber of Commerce officials in the city of Mashhad, Mr. Kahiluoto pointed to the good relations between the two countries and blamed sanctions for decline in the economic ties of the two countries but expressed hope soon an opening would happen in this relation.

He announced readiness of Embassy of Finland in Tehran for preparing the ground for restoration and keeping the ties and interactions for better days especially in the economic issues.

He then elaborated economic capacities of his country and said that Finland is an EU member located in the north of the European continent and it is considered as one of the leading countries in the fields of sustainable energies, protection of resources and environment, and development of the knowledge-based infrastructures and technology. He added that Finland in the issues like creativity and renovation, digital infrastructures, industrial and logistic equipment and it has good capabilities.

Kahiluoto then said that Finland can share its experience with Iran and especially with Mashhad in the field of water resources management. He then pointed to the issue of reconstruction of Afghanistan and said that this issue will definitely be the main issue in the world and Khorasan Razavi Province which has a good strategic geographical position can play constructive role in this regard.

He then pointed to the growing number of young work force in the world and announced readiness of Finland to have good cooperation with Iran and especially Razavi Khorasan Province in terms of exchange and training specialized forces.



He reiterated that there are good capacities for more cooperation between Iran and Finland in this field.

Meanwhile in the meeting, Head of Iran-Finland Joint Chamber of Commerce Mr. Gholam-Hossein Jamili, for his part, said that the meeting was aimed at for acquaintance for capacities of the two countries for joint cooperation, adding that the current trade volume between the two countries is not acceptable but the current trade balance has good potentials especially the Finnish tend to buy Iranian products.

He added that Finland has progressed significantly in science and technology and especially in the food industries and hi-techs and expressed hope the economic cooperation between the two countries would broaden. He hailed the positive efforts of the Finnish ambassador in painting true picture of Iran and its economic capacities and expressed hope such visits and meetings can lead to more acquaintance and interactions between the two states.

Jamili announced readiness of the private sector of Iran and especially Khorasan Razavi for interactions with Finland.

Later Mohammad Reza Tavakolizadeh, a member of presiding board of Khorasan Razavi Chamber of Commerce, highlighted properties of Khorasan Razavi and called the province a special one in the country, adding that almost 90% of industries in this area belong to the private sector and the private sector plays a very valuable and colorful role in the field of industry. He noted steel, concrete and machinery are major active heavy industries in this province and expressed hope cooperation between this province and Finland in different fields would happen.

## Implementation of Infrastructural Projects Worth of 8,000b Rials in LSEZ in Q1

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Lamerd Special Economic Zone (LSEZ) announced operationalizing 6 infrastructural projects in the zone with a credit over 8,000b rials in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year.

According to the public relations of the LSEZ, Mr. Ehsan Ansari announced the news and said this issue has been put on the agenda in line with materializing the outlook for development and expansion of the infrastructures.

He went on to say that with operationalization and expansion of the infrastructural projects, they will witness more colorful presence of investors in this economic and industrial center and then he highlighted major actions taken in the zone.

He noted that with announcement of the winners of tenders in the current year, some projects in this zone have been carried out that he mentioned them like the projects for construction of the 132-kilovolt line, provision of equipment and construction of the distribution network, feed of four stations for reducing gas pressure in the LSEZ, implementing the operation for construction of the 132/20-kilovolt power sub-station based on the method of design and build, construction of water transfer line from water desalination to South Aluminum Plant, construction of warehouse for reserving sulfuric acid and construction of roads and surficial water canals in the northern part of Mehranshour River.

Lamerd Special Economic Zone is situated at the southern part of Fars Province and it is one of the subsidiaries of Iranian Mines, Mining Industries Development and Renovation (IMIDRO).



## Iran Expects to Increase Trade With Oman by 50%



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's trade with Oman is expected to increase by nearly 50% in value terms in the calendar year to late March 2023, says a businessman watching over trade between the two countries, amid efforts by the two neighbors to deepen their economic ties.

Mohsen Zarrabi, who chairs the Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce, said during the annual meeting of the general assembly of the chamber that trade between Iran and Oman will hit a target of \$2 billion at the end of the current calendar year, up from \$1.336 billion reported for the year to March this year.

Zarrabi said Iranian exports to Oman are expected to reach \$1.2 billion over the same period.

He added that exports to Oman had increased by 28% year on year over April and June to stand at \$203 million while Iran's imports from the Arab country had surged by 187% over the same period to reach \$128 billion.

Zarrabi also reiterated that the direct shipping line between Iran's Shahid Beheshti Port and Oman's Sohar Port which had been halted due to the sanctions will resume its activities from June 20 and both countries will have direct access to their ports and therefore re-export from Oman or imports from this country will rise with lower costs.

He also pointed to the MoU which was signed last year with Oman's Chamber of Commerce for exchange of trade delegations between the two countries and especially between provinces and private sectors.

The businessman announced the figures during a meeting with Oman's ambassador to Tehran Ibrahim Ibrahim Ahmed al-Ma'aini. During the meeting, al-Ma'aini described as promising the bilateral trade between Iran and Oman considering the figures for the past two months.

He expressed hope the two countries can maintain the rising trend in exports and imports over the next months.

The ambassador noted that Oman does its best to remove all hurdles and to facilitate the trade exchanges with Iran and it welcomes any joint investment which meets interests of the two countries. A senior trade delegation from Iran traveled to Oman in mid-May to discuss bilateral trade ties just before Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi traveled to the Sultanate for an official visit.

The delegation led by Iranian deputy trade minister Alireza Peymanpak consisted of representatives from 30 Iranian companies as well as officials from Iran's ports authority and the country's Export Guarantee Fund.

## Iran-India Economic Ties Gathering Steam

TEHRAN (MNA) – The trade and economic relations between Iran and India is on upward trajectory.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Affairs held numerous meetings with high-ranking Indian economic officials to bolster trade and economic relations.

Mehdi Safari discussed some obstacles and challenges faced by the two sides in their economic cooperation and explored ways of expanding ties and areas of cooperation between Tehran and New Delhi and their private companies.

During the two-day visit, he held negotiations with some ministers, deputy ministers and heads of key economic institutions of India as well as companies active in trade, economic, technological, transportation, industrial and energy fields.

Public meetings of the two deputy foreign ministers and their entourage were meant to raise issues and problems and also to look into ways of resolving them and expanding trade and economic cooperation. Meanwhile, at the end of the visit, summing up the results and drawing a roadmap for relations were the most important parts of the agenda of the delegation.

Indian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs Damo Ravi, for his part, referred to the emphasis of the two heads of government on strengthening cooperation and also to the recent visit by Iran's foreign minister that paved the way for this purpose. He described the meetings of the economic official of the Foreign Ministry and his entourage in India as "very good".

Ravi stressed the transit cooperation between Iran and India and the huge potential of this field, saying, "We are able to continue cooperation and consultations, resolve the existing problems and boost trade between the two countries considerably."

During his meeting with the Indian shipping minister and deputy minister in which talks were held over port cooperation and development process of Chabahar Port, Safari also underlined the need for the Indian side to fulfill its commitment to commission installations put in place in Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar.

The other topics discussed were the efforts by the two sides to increase shipments transfer through Chabahar, investment by Indian companies in the Chabahar Free Zone and finalizing the long-term and temporary deals at the port.

During this trip, the officials of the agriculture ministries of Iran and India reached an agreement on the formation of a joint working group tasked with pursuing and implementing deals in the fields of agriculture, trade and transit of



crops through Iran, exchange of experiences, technical know-how and educational cooperation in the fields of agriculture and plant health and also cooperation between the quarantine centers of Iran and India.

As for port and navigation cooperation, the representatives of the Organization of Ports and Free Zones of Iran held a separate meeting with officials of the Indian shipping ministry and the Indian brokering company operating in Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar.

In the meeting, the two sides discussed operational steps to commission the installations put in place in the port, supply of other necessary equipment, to encourage the private sectors of India and Iran to participate in the future plans for cooperation and investment in the Chabahar and Makran Free Zones.

In the financial sector, too, the Iranian banking officials met with officials of the Indian ministry of finance. In the meeting, they exchanged views over resolution of some impediments to cooperation between the two sides and also the use of new banking technologies for the purpose of increasing financial exchanges and reached some important agreements.

In the summing up meeting of the economic delegations of the two sides during the trip, they expressed pleasure at their success in making important achievements (including in the fields of banking, energy, agriculture and transportation as well as the free zones and Chabahar). The two sides also underlined the necessity of swiftly and steadily pursuing

issues and planning of periodic meetings between the relevant authorities of Iran and India in order to further advance economic, trade and investment ties and also to use regional transit routes, especially the potential of the north-south transportation corridor, which have been emphasized by the heads of the two governments.

## Iran to Hold Exhibition on Technology Sector in Iraq

TEHRAN (IP) - Iranian knowledge-based and innovative companies will introduce their latest findings and achievements in an exhibition in the Iraqi Kurdistan region.

Iran's technology innovations and export achievements are locally built to provide hardware services such as shared and dedicated workspaces and conference rooms while Iranian companies, in terms of software services such as market research and product registration, have received numerous international standards.

The opening of the Iran-made Technology Innovation and Export House in Iraq is also the best opportunity for knowledge-based and creative companies interested in developing their market in this country and provides an excellent opportunity to introduce their capabilities and products. The center was established in collaboration with the Trade Development Organization and the Innovation and Prosperity Fund.

Moreover, the existence of many border terminals and the reciprocal determination of governments to expand their trading platforms have made it possible for Iranian companies to boost their exports to Iraq and enter the Iraqi market more quickly and directly.

Kurdistan, Baghdad, and Basra as the commercial areas with a high capacity for exporting Iranian knowledge-based and creative products. Also, Iraq is a country that has a high potential to receive Iranian products and has sufficient financial resources to meet these needs by relying on the Iranian market.

According to the office of Iran's Vice-presidency for Science and Technology, the exhibition will start from 3 to 6 July 2022 in Iraq's Sulaymaniyah.

## Iran Has 135,000 Cancer Patients

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of the Iranian health ministry's department for the prevention of cancer says there are 135,000 confirmed cases of cancer in the country.

Ali Ghanbari Motlagh said the most common cancer among women in Iran is breast cancer.

Ghanbari Motlagh added that the world is witnessing an upward trend in cancer cases but the rate of the disease in Iran is higher than the global average in this regard.

He added that the majority of people in Iran are young and the older they get, the higher the number of cancer cases goes.

Ghanbari Motlagh noted that apart from breast cancer, colon, stomach and thyroid cancers are also common among people in Iran.

He also spoke about the mortality rate of cancer patients in Iran, saying medical officials in the country use an index known as the 5-year survival for cancer patients who have received or are receiving treatment.

He said the 5-year survival index for breast cancer patients is nearly 68 percent while for those suffering from colon cancer is 41 percent.

Ghanbari Motlagh maintained that the index can be improved provided that cancer is diagnosed in a timely manner.

He said this will make the disease more treatable.

## France Claims Capture of Senior IS Figure in Mali

PARIS (Dispatches) - French troops in Mali have captured a senior member of the Sahel affiliate of the Islamic State group, the French military said.

The arrest comes as France prepares to complete its withdrawal from Mali after almost a decade battling a jihadist insurgency in the country with the French-led Barkhane anti-insurgency force.

"In the night of 11-12 June, an operation of the Barkhane force allowed the capture of Oumeya Ould Albakaye, a senior figure in the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (IS-GS)," a spokesman for the chief of staff told AFP.



## Japanese PM's Support Edges Down

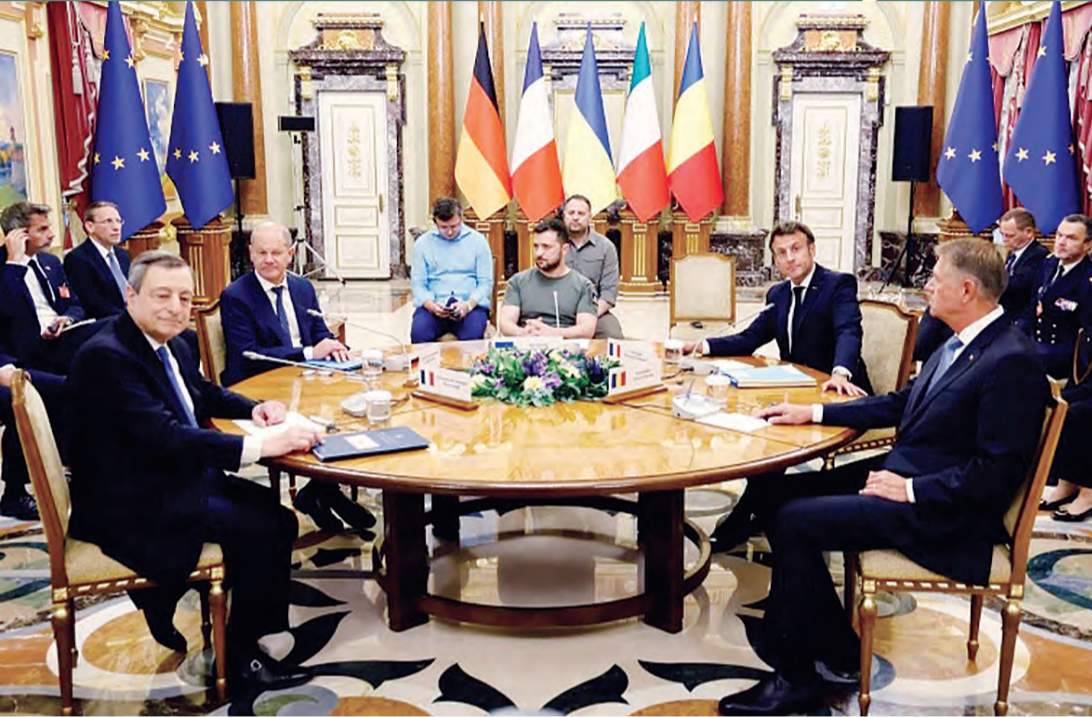
TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's support edged down less than a month before a parliamentary election, with more than half of voters critical of how his government is handling rising prices, according to a survey published.

Kishida took office last September and will be leading his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) through an election for the upper house of parliament on July 10.

Support has been consistently high, with voters largely approving of his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and his response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



## EU Leaders Vow to Back Ukraine In Visit to War-Torn Kyiv



IRPIN (Dispatches) - The leaders of major EU powers France, Germany and Italy vowed to help Ukraine defeat Russia and to rebuild its shattered cities, in a visit to a war-torn Kyiv suburb.

French President Emmanuel Macron, Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Italian premier Mario Draghi arrived in Ukraine by train and headed to Irpin, scene of fierce battles early in Russia's invasion.

"France has been alongside Ukraine since day one. We stand with the Ukrainians without ambiguity. Ukraine must resist and win," Macron told journalists.

Surrounded by the wreckage left by Ukraine's successful but hard-fought defence of its capital in the early stages of the 113-day-old conflict, Draghi said: "We will rebuild everything."

"They destroyed kindergartens, they destroyed playgrounds. Everything will be rebuilt," he promised.

It is the first time the three have visited Kyiv since Russia's February 24 invasion.

Ukraine has applied to join the European Union and, although no-one in Brussels expects this to be a quick process, the leaders of the bloc's most powerful countries were expected to bring President Volodymyr Zelensky a positive message.

Kyiv is also pleading with its western allies to step up supplies of weapons to its forces, which are outgunned by Russian artillery on the frontline in east of the country.

Germany, especially, has been criticized for slow weapons deliveries, but western defense ministers are meeting in Brussels to discuss what more they can do and on Wednesday U.S. President Joe Biden announced \$1 billion worth of new arms for Ukrainian forces.

Moscow was dismissive of the European visit, and of the arms supplies.

"Supporting Ukraine by further pumping Ukraine with weapons," warned Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov would be "absolutely useless and will cause further damage to the country".

The new US support package includes howitzers, ammunition, anti-ship missile systems, and additional rockets for new artillery systems that Ukraine will soon put in the field.

Fighting in eastern Ukraine is focused on the industrial city of Severodonetsk, and Russians forces appear close to consolidating control after weeks of intense battles.

Sergiy Gaiday - the governor of the Lugansk region, which includes the city - said Thursday around 10,000 civilians remain trapped in the city, out of a pre-war population of some 100,000.

Kyiv's army is "holding back the enemy as much as possible," he said on Telegram. "For almost four months they have dreamt of controlling Severodonetsk... and they do not count the victims."

Moscow's forces have destroyed the three bridges spanning a river between the city and Lysychansk.

Hundreds of civilians are trapped in a Severodonetsk chemical plant, which is under constant bombardment, according to Ukrainian authorities.

Russia said Ukrainian authorities had on Wednesday prevented an attempt at evacuating them.

From an elevated position in Lysychansk, an AFP team saw black smoke rising from the Azot chemical factory in Severodonetsk and another area in the city. The head of the Severodonetsk city administration Oleksandr Stryuk told Ukrainian television on Thursday that there were about 500 civilians trapped in shelters at the plant.

## North Korea Expands Work at Nuclear Test Site to 2nd Tunnel

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea appears to be expanding work at its nuclear test site to include a second tunnel, a U.S.-based think tank said, as South Korean and U.S. officials say North Korea might conduct a nuclear test any day.

Preparation work at the Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Facility's Tunnel No. 3 was apparently complete and ready for a possible nuclear test, the Center for Strategic and International Studies said in a report, citing commercial satellite imagery.

North Korea conducted six underground nuclear tests at the site from 2006 to 2017.

The research group said that for the first time, analysts spotted new construction activity at the facility's Tunnel No. 4, "strongly suggesting an effort to re-enable it for potential future testing".

Outside Tunnel No. 3, images showed a retaining wall and some minor landscaping with small trees or bushes, likely in anticipation of a visit by senior officials, it said.

The two tunnels were never previously used for nuclear tests and their entrances were demolished in 2018, when North Korea declared a self-imposed moratorium on testing nuclear weapons and its intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

## UN Warns of Alarming Rise of Hunger in Sudan

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Political and economic turmoil have helped drive a third of Sudan's population towards life-threatening food shortages, and the situation is likely to worsen, the UN said on Thursday.

An assessment by the UN's World Food Program showed that a record 15 million people in the country -- one-third of its population -- are currently facing "acute food insecurity," which WFP defines as "when a person's inability to consume adequate food puts their lives or livelihoods in immediate danger."

Eddie Rowe, WFP's country director, said in a statement that, "The combined effects of conflict, climate shocks, economic and political crises, rising costs and poor harvests are pushing millions of people deeper into hunger and poverty."

The WFP assessment said food insecurity has hit all of Sudan's 18 states but the most affected areas are in the Darfur region, which has seen an increase in deadly clashes among rival groups over the past few months. Hundreds have been killed there.

Economic and political turmoil in the northeast African country has been aggravated by an October military coup led by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.

Near-weekly protests since the coup led to a violent crackdown that has killed more than 100 people and wounded thousands.

Sudan is also especially vulnerable to the impact of global supply shortages in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

WFP expects the "already alarming food security situation is likely to worsen" in Sudan by September.

"By that time, up to 40 percent of the population, or around 18 million people, may slip into food insecurity," it warned.

The organization said that Sudan has so far been able to produce 5.1 million tons of cereal, "enough to cover the needs of less than two thirds of the population."

## French Left, Macron Allies Trade Barbs Ahead of Tight Polls

PARIS (Dispatches) - France's left-wing forces and allies of centrist President Emmanuel Macron exchanged bitter accusations ahead of the final round of tightly-contested parliamentary elections, where the French leader risks losing his overall majority.

Losing a majority in the 577-seat National Assembly lower house in Sunday's vote could be a heavy blow to Macron's hopes of reform, just two months after he triumphed against far-right leader Marine Le Pen in presidential elections.

Macron has endured a tricky start to his second term -- against a background of rising prices and Russia's invasion of Ukraine -- while the French left has finally united its disparate forces into a coalition.

The final campaigning is taking place with Macron out of the country as he visits Ukraine at the end of a three-day trip that has seen him travel to Romania and Moldova.

The first round on June 12 painted an inconclusive picture, with Macron's centrist Ensemble (Together) coalition and the left-wing Nupes alliance led by hard-leftist Jean-Luc Melenchon neck-and-neck on around 26 percent of the popular vote each.

Just five MPs -- four from Nupes and one from Ensemble -- were elected outright in the first round, leaving all to play for in Sunday's final stage of voting.

Polls project a range between either a slim majority for Ensemble or falling short by several dozen seats of the 289 MPs needed for an overall majority.

The nightmare outcome for Macron -- seen as unlikely but not totally excluded -- would be a majority for Nupes that would see Melenchon become prime minister in an uncomfortable "cohabitation".

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne told French television late Wednesday in a prime-time interview that the "seriousness" of the international situation meant it was vital to hold a "strong majority in the National Assembly to continue to hold our place in Europe and in the world".

She slammed Nupes as "the alliance of circumstance" hiding Melenchon's "extreme vision" that is "dangerous for our economy". But Manon Aubry, a European deputy for Melenchon's party, accused Borne of "coming up with one lie after another".

"She spent more than half of the interview talking about Nupes, which shows they are scared. The reality is that it's them who bring chaos," she told Franceinfo radio.

France's Europe Minister Clement Beaune, a close ally of Macron, accused Melenchon of "French Trumpism", after the former US president, and coming up with "fake news" especially on taxes.



## Protests Against India's New Military Recruitment System Turn Violent

LUCKNOW (Dispatches) -

Police in northern India fired shots in the air to push back stone-throwing crowds and authorities shut off mobile internet in at least one district to forestall further chaos, as protests widened against a new military recruitment system.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government this week announced an overhaul of recruitment for India's 1.38 million-strong armed forces, looking to bring down the average age of personnel and reduce pension expenditure.

But potential recruits, military veterans, opposition leaders and even some members of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have raised reservations over the revamped process.

In northern Haryana state's Palwal district, some 50 km (31 miles) south of the capital New Delhi, crowds hurled stones at a government official's house and police protecting the building fired shots to keep the mob at bay, according to video footage from Reuters partner ANI.

"Yes, we have fired a few shots to control the crowd," a local police official said, declining to be named.

There was no immediate information on casualties.

Mobile internet was temporarily suspended in Palwal district for the next 24 hours, Haryana's information department said.

Protesters in eastern India's Bihar state set a BJP office on fire in Nawada city, attacked railway infrastructure and blocked roads, as demonstrations spread across several parts of the country, police officials told Reuters.

Protesters also attacked railway property across Bihar, settling alight coaches in at least two locations, damaging train tracks and vandalising a station, according to officials and a railways statement.

The new recruitment system, called Agnipath or "path of fire" in Hindi, will bring in men and women between the ages of 17-and-a-half and 21 for a four-year tenure at non-officer ranks, with only a quarter retained for longer periods.

Previously, soldiers have been recruited by the army, navy and air force separately and typically enter service for up to 17 years for the lowest ranks.

The shorter tenure has caused concern among potential recruits. "Where will we go after working for only four years?" one young man, surrounded by fellow protesters in Bihar's Jehanabad district, told ANI. "We will be homeless after four years of service. So we have jammed the roads."



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## Gazprom Reduces Gas Flows to Italy by 15%

MILAN (Dispatches) - Russia's Gazprom cut its gas exports to Italy by around 15% on Wednesday from the previous day, Italian energy firm Eni said, adding no explanation had been given for the reduction. The move comes as the Russian group is also curbing its gas supplies via the Nord Stream 1 undersea pipeline to Germany, blaming Western sanctions for disrupting repair works it needs to do on the network. "Eni confirms that Gazprom has communicated a limited reduction in gas supplies for today, amounting to approximately 15%," a spokesperson said. Eni is constantly monitoring the situation, he added. Italy last year sourced 40% of its gas imports from Russia, or around 29 billion cubic meters.



## EU Takes Legal Action Against UK for Breaching N. Ireland Agreement



## EU Takes Legal Action Against UK for Breaching N. Ireland Agreement

BRUSSEL (Dispatches) - The European Commission launched new legal action against Britain today, accusing London of threatening peace in Northern Ireland by trying to overhaul the post-Brexit trade deal. "The UK government tabled legislation confirming its intention to unilaterally break international law," EU commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic said.

"More precisely to break an agreement that protects peace and stability in Northern Ireland," he said.

"Let there be no doubt. There is no legal nor political justification whatsoever for unilaterally changing an international agreement.

"Opening the door to unilaterally changing an international agreement is a breach of international law, as well. So let's call a spade a spade. This is illegal."

On Monday, the British government introduced legislation to rip up post-Brexit trading rules for Northern Ireland, in an attempt to override the EU withdrawal treaty that it had signed.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government insists it is not breaking international law, citing a "necessity" to act to restore Northern Ireland's power-sharing institutions.

But Brussels rejects this argument, and Sefcovic said that legal action would be taken, with two new cases joining those the commission had suspended.

"The UK Government's decision has left us with no choice but to act first," Sefcovic said.

"We are proceeding a step further with an infringement process we launched in March 2021 regarding for instance the movement of agrifood. If the UK doesn't reply within two months, we may take them to the Court of Justice," he warned.

"Second, we are launching two new infringements against the UK," he said, announcing cases that could see the British government brought before the European Court of Justice.

"One for failing to carry out the necessary controls at the border control posts in Northern Ireland by ensuring adequate staffing and infrastructure.

"And one for failing to provide the EU with essential trade statistics data to enable the EU to protect its single market."

## Euro Zone Trade Deficit Almost Doubles in April

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The euro zone's trade deficit almost doubled in April from the previous month after an already record expansion in March, and industrial production increased over the same period on the month, official data showed on Wednesday.

The European Union's statistics office Eurostat said the 19 countries sharing the euro recorded a trade deficit, unadjusted for seasonal swings, of 32.4 billion euros in April compared with a 16.4 billion euro deficit in March. In April 2021 there was a surplus of 14.9 billion euros.

Adjusted for seasonal swings, the euro zone trade gap was 31.7 billion euros.

The unadjusted value of imports in April rocketed by 39.8% year-on-year, Eurostat said, while the value of exports rose only 15.7%. The EU's trade deficit with Russia - its main energy supplier - more than quadrupled to 62.6 billion euros in the first quarter from 14.7 billion in the same period of 2021.

The change in the value of EU energy imports was the most spectacular, with the deficit in energy trade almost tripling to 183.6 billion euros in the first four months of the year compared to the same period in 2021.

The trade gap with China, Europe's biggest trading partner, almost doubled to 122 billion euros in the January-April period from 65.8 billion a year earlier.

The trade deficit with Norway, another large energy supplier, surged to 23.9 billion euros in the first quarter from 500 million euros in the same period of last year.

Industrial production in the 19 euro zone countries increased 0.4% month-on-month, but saw a 2% year-on-year decline.

Economist polled by Reuters had expected a 0.5% monthly rise, and a 1.1% annual drop.

Production of energy rose the most month-on-month by 5.4%, followed by intermediate goods by 0.7%, non-durable consumer goods by 0.4% and durable consumer goods by 0.2% against March, while production of capital goods fell by 0.2%.

In year-on-year terms, capital goods plunged 9% in April and intermediate goods were down 0.3%, while production of energy rose by 1.5%, non-durable consumer goods by 4.7% and durable consumer goods by 5.7%.



## Russian Oil and Fuel Revenue Up Even as Exports Fall

LONDON (Dispatches) - Higher crude oil and fuel prices allowed Russian revenues to climb in May despite its export volumes slipping due to sanctions, the International Energy Agency said.

The findings underscore the difficulty of punishing Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine by banning Russian imports, moves which have exacerbated a supply crunch and driven up prices.

Crude exports held steady on the month at 5.4 million barrels per day (bpd) but refined product shipments slipped 155,000 bpd compared to April to 2.4 million bpd.

"With higher crude oil and product prices globally, Russian oil export revenues are estimated to have increased by US\$1.7 billion in May to about US\$20 billion," the Paris-based agency said in its monthly oil report.

The United States and the European Union agreed to ban imports of Russian oil and imposed escalating sanctions in

response to the February 24 invasion.

Despite the bans, the EU remained the main destination for Russian exports last month, making up 43 per cent of Russian flows followed by just over a quarter to China.

China's imports of Russian oil and fuel rose by nearly a quarter of a million bpd in May, topping 2 million bpd for the first time, with India taking Germany's place as the number two destination for Russian shipments in recent months.

Oil prices held above US\$120 a barrel today on persistent concerns about tight supply worldwide.

"Russian crude oil exports remain at elevated levels as domestic refining activity is constrained by lower product shipments," said the IEA, a grouping of 31 mostly industrialised countries but not Russia.

"China and India, which have both sharply increased crude oil purchases from Russia, are net product exporters and have no need to lift Russian products."

## China's Factories Perk Up, But Weak Economic Recovery

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's economy showed signs of recovery in May after slumping in the prior month as industrial production rose unexpectedly, but consumption was still weak and underlined the challenge for policymakers amid the persistent drag from strict COVID curbs.

The data, however, provides a path to revitalize growth in the world's second-biggest economy after businesses and consumers were hit hard due to full or partial lockdowns in dozens of cities in March and April, including a protracted

shutdown in commercial center Shanghai.

Industrial output grew 0.7% in May from a year earlier, after falling 2.9% in April, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Wednesday. That compared with a 0.7% drop expected by analysts in a Reuters poll.

The uptick in the industrial sector was underpinned by the easing of COVID curbs and strong global demand. China's exports grew at a double-digit pace in May, shattering expectations, as factories restarted and logistics snags eased.

The mining sector led the way with annual output up 7.0% in May, while that in the manufacturing industry eked out a meagre 0.1% growth, mostly driven by the production of new energy vehicles which surged 108.3% year-on-year.

"Activity data paints an economic recovery picture in May, but only a slow one," said Iris Pang, Chief China economist at ING.

"The government is likely to respond to this economic weakness by delivering more fiscal stimulus," Pang said.

Chinese shares rose after the data were released, with mainland China's bluechips up 1.8% and Hong Kong shares 1.4% higher, in contrast with a largely subdued session for most other Asian share markets.

Fu Linghui, a spokesman at NBS, told a press conference that he expects the recovery to improve further in June due to policy support.

However, "the international environment is still complex and severe," he said, highlighting the risks to the outlook.

"Our domestic recovery is still at its initial stage with the growth of key indicators at low levels," Fu said.

That caution was underscored in consumption data, which remained weak as shoppers were confined to their homes in Shanghai and other cities. Retail sales slipped another 6.7% in May from a year earlier, on top of an 11.1% contraction the previous month.

They were slightly better than the forecast of a 7.1% fall due to the increased spending on basic goods such as grains, edible oils and food and beverages.

## Turkish Houses Sales Double

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Residential property sales in Turkey more than doubled in May, official data showed, as purchases by foreigners leaped, with Russians topping buyers for a second consecutive month.

Home sales surged 107.5% year-over-year last month to 122,768 houses, data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) showed, despite high borrowing costs and spiraling prices.

Lockdown measures to curb the coronavirus pandemic in May last year had seen sales drop to 55,166 units.

The data also showed May mortgaged sales rose 177.8% from a year earlier to 29,335, accounting for 23.9% of the total sales in the period.

The rise comes amid declining supply and soaring prices, but households continue to view real estate as an attractive investment tool to shield themselves from inflation that runs at a 24-year high of nearly 73.5%.

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

Istanbul, Turkey's largest city in terms of population, had the lion's share with 22,148 units last month, marking an 18% increase. It was followed by the capital Ankara with 11,497 house sales and the Aegean province of Izmir with 7,159 sales.

Month-over-month, sales were down 7.73% in May, the data showed.

From January through May, sales were up 37.7% year-over-year to 575,889 houses.

Sales to foreigners jumped 235.7% year-over-year to 5,962 units, the institute said, following a 58.1% increase in April, as they sought to take advantage of a government scheme that awards Turkish citizenship to those who buy homes.

The scheme has made Turkish real estate more attractive in recent years.

Sector officials said sales to foreigners surged before a law raising the scheme's minimum purchase value to \$400,000 from \$250,000 went into effect this week.

Gül Gül, the founder of real estate sale company Golden Sign, said foreigners piled into the real estate market after the measure was announced last month.

"Foreigners made intense purchases so as not to be affected by the price increase," she said.

Russian citizens topped the list again in May with 1,275 houses, from 1,152 in April and 547 in March.

## Global Oil Demand Set to Rise 2% to New High in 2023



LONDON (Dispatches) - World oil demand will rise more than 2% to a record high of 101.6 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2023, the International Energy Agency said on Wednesday, although sky-high oil prices and weakening economic forecasts dimmed the future outlook.

The Paris-based IEA also said in its monthly report that supply was being constrained because of sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

"Economic fears persist, as various international institutions have recently released downbeat outlooks," the IEA said, forecasting demand would rise 2.2 million bpd, or 2.2%, in 2023 compared to 2022 and would exceed pre-pandemic levels.

"Similarly, tightening central bank policy, the impact of a soaring U.S. dollar and rising interest rates on the purchasing power of emerging economies mean the risks to our outlook are concentrated on the downside," it said.

Advanced economies in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) would account for most demand growth in 2022, while China would lead the gains in 2023 as it emerges from COVID-19 lockdowns.

China's recent COVID-19 curbs put the world's largest oil importer on track for its first fall in demand this century, the IEA said.

The overall demand recovery and constraints on supply because of sanctions on Russia and cautious production increases by OPEC+ pushed oil prices above \$139 a barrel in March. Brent crude was trading around \$120 on Wednesday.

But the IEA said supplies would soon match demand, adding: "After seven consecutive quarters of hefty inventory draws, slowing demand growth and a rise in world oil supply through the end of the year should help world oil markets rebalance."

The IEA said the balance could be upset by tougher sanctions on Russia, a steeper recovery in Chinese demand, supply outages in Libya and limited spare production capacity among OPEC+ states.

## Pakistan Embassy in Iran Set Charity Exhibition

TEHRAN (IP) - Pakistani cultural, handicrafts, and food staff exhibition is being held at the Institute For Political And International Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran.

The exhibition aims to donate the revenue for charity purposes. In the exhibition, anyone can taste Pakistani food, apply Henna and buy Pakistani dresses too.

Pashmina, Rilli, Blue Pottery, Khussa, and Ajrak are the Pakistani handicrafts in the exhibition. It is open for all and starts its activity from 10:00 AM- 6:00 PM.



## Japan's Automakers Take Cost Burden Off Their Suppliers

TOKYO (Dispatches) - For decades, Japan's powerful automakers had a playbook to deal with deflation: press suppliers for lower prices on everything from seat belts to wire harnesses and promise volume.

Now, with inflation biting around the world, Toyota Motor Corp, Nissan Motor Corp and others are shouldering more of the burden of soaring raw materials prices, or extending other help to hard-hit parts makers, executives say.

The measures show how automakers are attempting to shore up already strained supply chains, wracked by COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and a global shortage of semiconductors, even at the cost of lower profit margins for themselves. The piecemeal support being negotiated across Japan's auto industry also highlights the potential disruption from the dramatic weakening of the yen, now at its lowest in two decades.

Japanese automakers, historically beneficiaries of a weaker currency through sales overseas, are now focused on managing the threat to suppliers. For many parts makers, the weaker yen compounds the pain of higher input costs for materials.

"Inflation is happening and definitely we have to address it," Nissan Chief Operating Officer Ashwani Gupta told reporters recently. "We are discussing with our suppliers because in the end their sustainability is our sustainability."

Tokai Rika Co Ltd, a maker of steering wheels and other parts that is partly owned by Toyota, is one supplier that has benefited from help.

Initially it expected higher materials costs to cut operating profit in the just-ended fiscal year by 9.1 billion yen (\$68 million). Instead its customers, mainly Toyota, absorbed almost 15% of the higher costs, and will take more this year, a spokesperson said.

Tokai Rika estimates its customers - again, mainly Toyota - will this year shoulder nearly two-thirds of an expected 7.9 billion yen hit from higher prices of metals, resin and other materials.

It continues to discuss higher semiconductor and logistics costs with customers, the spokesperson said.

Toyota is paying "closer attention" to the concerns and problems of business partners, the Tokai Rika spokesperson added. The world's biggest automaker by sales owns almost a third of the parts maker, and accounts for around three-quarters of its sales.

The automaker was taking measures to reduce the burden for its suppliers, Toyota spokesperson Shiori Hashimoto said, declining to comment specifically on Tokai Rika.

The semiconductor shortage and pandemic forced Toyota to make repeated cuts to its production plans, increasing the cost burden for parts makers. It has 400 primary suppliers and some 60,000 suppliers in total.

Toyota has warned "unprecedented" increases in raw materials prices could cost it \$11 billion this year and cut full-year profit by a fifth.

Nissan already shoulders much of the cost of increases in raw materials and precious metals, Gupta, the chief operating officer, told reporters recently.

It is now paying suppliers ahead of deadline and sending out production forecasts further in advance, both of which are a help to parts makers, according to an executive at one of its suppliers who declined to be identified so he could speak about a business partner.

Unipres Corp, which specialises in stamping technology, avoided price cuts this year after winning support from Nissan, Unipres President Nobuya Uranishi told a recent investor briefing that was not open to the general public, according to notes of his comments taken by an attendee and reviewed by Reuters.



Unipres declined to comment.

That approach marks a significant change for Nissan. Under ousted former chairman Carlos Ghosn, it was known for squeezing suppliers every year for cheaper parts in return for high-volume orders.

Nissan Chief Executive Makoto Uchida told Reuters in an interview last month that the investment needed to shift to all-electric vehicles demanded a more long-term approach to suppliers - not just a focus on "massive growth of volume".

For Unipres, that has meant getting to work with Nissan at an early stage on development of parts and technology, rather than winning on price alone, President Uranishi told the Unipres investor briefing, according to the notes.

Such collaboration doesn't guarantee contracts for parts, but gives the supplier critical feedback at an early stage in the development process, he said.

Honda Motor Co supplier Musashi Seimitsu Industry Co, a supplier of transmission gears and suspension parts, is negotiating with automakers to reflect the impact of higher shipping and materials costs, the company told Reuters.

Another Honda supplier, fuel tank- and sunroof-maker Yachiyo Industry Co, has seen little impact because it buys raw materials directly from Honda and factors higher costs into the price of parts sold to its parent, it said.

Honda declined to comment.

The automaker was working with suppliers to keep costs down in the face of a second straight year of rising prices, Chief Financial Officer Kohei Takeuchi said on a recent earnings call. Still, it was forecasting a lower full-year profit, he said.

Meanwhile Mitsubishi Motors Corp is meeting with its small- and medium-sized suppliers and will move quickly to help if they are being threatened by cost increases, a senior executive said, declining to be identified so he could speak openly about company policy.

The automaker will also step in if smaller suppliers have funding trouble, the executive said.

"We are communicating more closely than ever with our suppliers to ascertain if there are any problems," Mitsubishi Motors spokesperson Hiromu Hatanaka said.

## UAE to Suspend Exports of Indian Wheat for Four Months



DUBAI (Dispatches) - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has ordered a four-month suspension in exports and re-exports of wheat and wheat flour originating from India, the world's second biggest producer of the grain, state news agency WAM said.

The Persian Gulf nation's economy ministry cited interruptions to global trade flows as the reason for its move, but added that India had approved exports of wheat to the UAE for domestic consumption.

India banned wheat exports in a surprise move on May 14, except for those backed by already issued letters of credit (LCs) and to countries seeking to ensure food security. Since then, it has allowed shipments of 469,202 tons of wheat.

Companies wishing to export or re-export Indian wheat brought into the UAE before May 13, when India's suspension began, must first make an application to the economy ministry, it said in a statement.

The UAE and India signed a broad trade and investment pact in February that seeks to cut all tariffs on each other's goods and aims to increase their annual trade to \$100 billion within five years.

The pact, known as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Trade Agreement (CEPA), took effect on May 1.

## Brazil Likely to Waive Over \$20b in Tax Revenue

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Tax cuts are likely to cost over 110 billion reais (\$21.5 billion) in Brazilian tax revenue this year, as President Jair Bolsonaro tries to ease inflation and spur the economy in an election year despite economists' warnings of blowback in 2023.

The estimated revenue loss, calculated by Reuters based on Brazilian Treasury data, includes a new government proposal to lower fuel prices that is still pending approval in Congress.

High inflation and an uneven economic recovery are weighing on the popularity of Bolsonaro, who trails former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in the presidential race. As the October election approaches, Bolsonaro's government has increasingly embraced a patchwork policy of tax breaks.

However, more than half the new incentives are set to expire at the end of the year, leading analysts to warn of looming inflationary pressures in early 2023.

"We're going to have this dilemma next year: either we'll have higher inflation than forecast or we'll have a worse fiscal outlook than forecast in order to keep the tax exemptions," said former Treasury Secretary Jeferson Bittencourt, now an economist at ASA Investments.

The measures push about 0.9 percentage point of inflation from this year to 2023, he estimated, which would pressure the central bank to keep interest rates higher for longer. Policymakers have hiked interest rates to 12.75% from a 2% record-low in March 2021 and are set to raise them again this week.

The Economy Ministry did not reply to a request for comment. "You solve a problem in 2022, but set up a bigger one in 2023," said XP Investimentos economist Tatiana Nogueira.

The tax breaks this year range from lower import tariffs and industrial taxes (IPI), and even a special tax regime for soccer clubs. Brazil's IPI tax is levied



on industries that make and import manufactured products, like refrigerators, cars, air conditioners and televisions.

More than half of the lost revenue this year is set to come from tax cuts and state subsidies to tamp down soaring fuel prices, expected to cost around 64.8 billion reais, pending further revisions in Congress.

In March, Special Treasury and Budget Secretary Esteves Colnago criticized tax breaks on gasoline for benefitting mostly middle- and upper-class families rather than the neediest Brazilians.

XP's Nogueira also warned that part of the savings from such tax breaks are absorbed by the fuel supply chain, with only 60% to 80% of the benefit reaching consumers.

Even that cost relief could soon be offset with a price increase from state-run oil firm Petrobras, which has a policy of setting domestic fuel prices in accordance with global market.

Petrobras last raised gasoline prices in March. Fuel importer association Abicom estimates they now lag global benchmarks by about 17%.

## Saudi-Led Coalition...

FROM PAGE 1

According to a report by Yemen's al-Masirah television network, Saudi-led coalition forces have violated the UN-brokered ceasefire at least 83 times during the past 24 hours.

Saudi-led aircraft conducted spying missions in the skies of the provinces of Ma'rib, Ta'izz, Hajjah, al-Jawf, Sa'ada, and Dhale as well as border areas in violation of the truce, the report added.

Saudi-led troops also heavily fired artillery shells and rockets into the positions of Yemeni army forces and fighters from the Popular Committees in the provinces of Ma'rib, Ta'izz, Hajjah, Jizan, Dhale, and Asir.

The truce initially went into effect at the beginning of the holy fasting month of Ramadan (falling on April 2, 2022), reviving hopes that it could lead to lasting peace and would improve the lives of people in the crisis-hit Arab nation.

In compliance with the agreement, the coalition agreed to end its attacks on the Yemeni soil, which began in March 2015 to change Yemen's power structure in favor of the country's former Saudi-allied officials.

The coalition also agreed to end a simultaneous siege that it has been enforcing against Yemen.

## Iran Economy Grows...

FROM PAGE 1

It said the Iranian services sector had expanded by 4.5% over the same period while agriculture had contracted by 3.7%.

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI), which uses the same GDP calculation method as the SCI, had put Iran's GDP growth rate at 4.1% for the three quarters to late December 2021.

Both the CBI and the SCI started to report positive economic growth figures for Iran in the last quarter of 2020, nearly two years after the country went into recession because of American sanctions targeting its oil sector.

Iranian oil sales have rebounded in recent months with authorities reporting increased exports to China and elsewhere since October last year.

## Iran, Russia...

FROM PAGE 1

It said that Russia's logistical support for Iran's fleet of commercial ships will help plans to increase traffic along the INSTC.

Iranian officials announced earlier this week that they had launched a first pilot transit of cargo between Russia and India through the corridor.

Experts say Russia and India will seek to increase their trade through the Iranian territory now that Moscow faces a regime of Western sanctions because of its involvement in the war in Ukraine.

## Iran's Blows to...

FROM PAGE 1

Colonel Khodaei was assassinated in an eastern neighborhood in Tehran last month, with three bullets to his head and two in his hand.

Gen. Jafari said contrary to Israel, the Islamic Republic cannot disclose many of the blows it deals to the occupying regime. "Therefore, the Islamic Republic mostly observes the lights-off and confidentiality principles in these incidents."

"The Islamic Republic and the resistance front have conducted far greater operations against the occupying regime both before and after Col. Khodaei's assassination, but we cannot disclose the details," Jafari said, adding "our people understand and comprehend this well".

The general said, "If the Zionist regime carries out an operation, it knows that it will receive a response several times."

The enemies, he said, are trying to attribute responsibility for other incidents inside the country to themselves as part of their psychological and media warfare, "but they know better than anyone those incidents are not their job".

## Iraq Pays Back...

FROM PAGE 1

The NIGC slashed its supply of natural gas to Iraq in late 2022 after it announced the Arab country had been in more than \$5 billion worth of arrears for its previous imports.

NIGC's current supply to Iraq is believed to be less than 10 million cubic meters (mcm) per day, down from records of nearly 50 mcm per day reported several years ago.

Iraqi officials said last month that they had reached a new understanding with Iran by which the gas supply could reach 30 mcm per day over summer months.

That came after a senior political and banking delegation from Iraq came to Tehran in early May to discuss the arrears issue.

Iraq has secured special waivers from US sanctions on Iran to be able to import natural gas and electricity from its eastern neighbor.

However, the sanctions, which also target Iran's banking relations with the rest of the world, have made it difficult for Baghdad to pay for its energy imports from Iran.

## Cilic Into Queen's Last Eight

LONDON (Dispatches) - Marin Cilic made it into the last eight of the Queen's grass-court tournament, with a 7-6 (8/6) 7-5 win over Alexander Bublik. This event acts as a warm-up for Wimbledon where Croatia's Cilic went all the way to the final in 2017 before losing to Roger Federer in straight sets. The 33-year-old Cilic has been in good form of late, advancing to the last four of this season's French Open before losing to Casper Ruud.

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## Mourinho to Return to Camp Nou for Roma-Barca Friendly

MADRID (Dispatches) - Jose Mourinho will return to Camp Nou in August after Barcelona confirmed today they will face Mourinho's Roma in a pre-season friendly. Mourinho was last at Camp Nou for a competitive fixture in 2013, towards the end of his spell as manager of Real Madrid that was dominated by the intense rivalry with the Catalans and Pep Guardiola. The fixture against Roma will be played on August 6, for the Joan Gamper Trophy, and will also be contested by the club's women's teams, with the women's game starting at 5.30pm, before the men's match at 9pm.

## Leclerc, Ferrari Braced for Another Bumpy Ride in Canada

MONTREAL (Dispatches) - Charles Leclerc is expecting another bumpy ride this weekend as he bids to put Ferrari's reliability problems behind him and re-boot his title challenge at the Canadian Grand Prix.

As Formula One returns to the challenging Circuit Gilles Villeneuve for the first time in three years, it will be the 24-year-old Monegasque under most pressure - and probably with much sympathy from a knowledgeable crowd - as he seeks to end a recent run of cruel luck.

Despite taking pole position at the last four races, Leclerc has not won since the third race of the season in Melbourne, six races ago.

Engine failures and strategy mistakes have seen his early lead in the championship become a 34-point deficit.

World champion Max Verstappen, who led Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez home in a commanding one-two in Baku last Sunday, has five wins and 150 points.

He leads Perez, who won in Monaco, on 129 and the luckless Leclerc, winner of the two other races this year, on 116.

Leclerc is set to take a new power unit this Sunday.

After eight successive points finishes, Mercedes new boy George Russell is fourth ahead of Ferrari's Carlos Sainz, who has also endured the Italian team's reliability difficulties.

Another successful weekend for Red Bull could put them in a dominant position in both championships, but team chief Christian Horner warned against complacency and forecast that Ferrari will bounce back into contention.

"They have a very fast car," he said. "Certainly on a Saturday. On Sundays, we have been their equal this year, at most races. And they will sort their problems out - I've no doubt about that."

"There is a long way to go and we've seen big swings in points over the last four or five races. It shows how quickly things can turn."

Like Leclerc, Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton will also be seeking a revival at a circuit where he has won a record seven times, having claimed his maiden race victory at the Canadian Grand Prix in 2007.

## Melbourne to Host Australian F1 GP Until 2035

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Melbourne will host the Australian Grand Prix until 2035 in a new deal that will also see Formula Two and Formula Three added to the schedule for the first time next year, Formula One and local organizers announced on Thursday.

The current contract for the race at Albert Park was due to expire in 2025 and Sydney had expressed an interest in taking it on.

Melbourne joined the calendar in 1996, taking the place of Adelaide, and Formula One will have been there nearly 40 years by the time the latest deal ends.

More than 419,000 fans attended this year's race in April, the largest crowd ever for a weekend sporting event in Australia.

The race, which was not held in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has been a season-opener but was third on this year's calendar.

It is not expected to return to the prime slot taken by Bahrain, although Australian Grand Prix Corporation boss Andrew Westacott told Reuters in April that he wanted the race to be held early in the season.

Formula One CEO Stefano Domenicali said the race had always been a favourite for the fans, drivers and teams. "Melbourne is an incredible and vibrant international city that is a perfect match for our sport," he added.

## Kyrgios Loses Cool Before Defeating Tsitsipas

HALLE WESTFALEN (Dispatches) - Nick Kyrgios was involved in a heated altercation with the umpire over a time violation before composing himself to down world number six Stefanos Tsitsipas 5-7 6-2 6-4 and advance to the quarter-finals of the ATP 500 Halle Open.

The volatile Australian was given a warning for taking too long to return Tsitsipas's serve while leading 2-0 in the second set and then proceeded to summon the supervisor to express his displeasure.

"He said I was playing too slow - statistically I'm one of the fastest," Kyrgios told reporters after reaching his second straight quarter-final following his last-four appearance in Stuttgart last week.



Sainz in the title race on 62 points and without a win this season, but has pledged to battle on. "Sunday was tough and I had some problems sleeping, but have woken up feeling positive," he said in a social media post.

"Back is a little sore and bruised, but nothing serious, thankfully." He added that he had had acupuncture and physio to ease the problem, exacerbated by the violent 'porpoising' and bouncing of his car.

"We have to keep fighting," he added. "I'll be there this weekend - I wouldn't miss it for the world."

Hamilton's complaints about 'porpoising' were supported by many drivers following last Sunday's contest, including Leclerc, Verstappen, Sainz, Pierre Gasly of AlphaTauri, Russell and Alfa Romeo's Valtteri Bottas.

All want to see action taken to reform the radical aerodynamic rules on health and safety grounds. Horner risked much wrath and controversy by suggesting that Mercedes had sought to make a big issue of the problems as "part of the game" as quoted by The Race.

Russell responded by rejecting Horner's claims.

"You've either got porpoising and the car is hitting the ground or you have to run the car millimetres above the ground and you're smashing the bumps."

"So, whichever way you've got it, it's not great for anyone. Something will happen. There's no doubt about it."

## HOSCO Crowned Champs at CSIT Soccer Beach Championships



IRAN NEWS SPORTS DESK

TEHRAN - Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) were crowned as champions in the CSIT Beach Soccer Championship which was held in Italy.

According to reports, HOSCO team defeated powerful hosts Italy 6-0 emphatically in the final which was played at Ceriva of Italy.

HOSCO was the only representative of Iran in this competitions. Mr. Mojtaba Zakeri's men in the semifinal outclassed Team Africa 12-1.

Zakeri as head coach, Morteza Tayari as manager, Mohammad Kargaran as the sport management official guided HOSCO beach soccer team and Omran Arjangi, Afshin Ashian, Milad Qanbari, Hojjat Arbabi, Asghar Azagh, Mehran Paydar, Reza Safarian, Ali Zakeri and Ali Rostami had formed the HOSCO squad in this competition which was held in Italy on June 8-11.

International Workers and Amateurs in Sports Confederation (CSIT) hold this event where worker athletes compete in different sport fields.

## Dani Alves Confirms Barcelona Departure



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Barcelona bright back Dani Alves will leave the La Liga club when his contract expires at the end of this month, bringing the curtain down on his second stint with the Catalan giants a little more than six months after his arrival as a free agent.

The 39-year-old Brazilian won six La Liga titles and three Champions League crowns in his first spell with Barca from 2008-16.

"After more than eight years dedicated to these colours, the time has come to say goodbye," Alves wrote on Instagram.

"Many more years passed until football and

life, which as always, are very grateful to those who respect them, decided to give me the opportunity to come back here to say goodbye." Alves, who has won well over 100 international caps for Brazil, played 16 games in all competitions last season as Barcelona finished second in LaLiga, 13 points behind champions Real Madrid.

He was brought in by Barca coach Xavi Hernandez, his former team mate, in a bid to rescue a team languishing ninth in the La Liga standings.

Alves, who played for Juventus, Paris St Germain and Sao Paulo after leaving Barcelona the first time, agreed to keep his salary to a minimum, helping the club avoid breaching Financial Fair Play rules.

"I would like to thank all the staff for the opportunity they gave me to return to this club and to be able to wear that wonderful shirt again," Alves said.

"I hope they don't miss my craziness and daily happiness. I hope those who remain will change the history of this beautiful club. I wish it from the bottom of my heart."

## Taiwan Thanks World Cup Organizers



TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan's Foreign Ministry expressed thanks on Thursday after organizers of the World Cup in Qatar removed a reference to China for Taiwanese visitors applying for an identification card that doubles as an entry visa.

All World Cup ticketholders must apply for the Hayya card used to identify fans, which also serves as their Qatar visa, but Taiwan's government expressed concern after discovering the online application system made no mention of the island.

It was subsequently listed as, "Taiwan, Province of China", terminology that equally angers Taiwan's government and many of its people.

However, late on Wednesday the system began listing the island simply as "Taiwan", complete with the Taiwanese flag.

It marks a rare victory for Taiwan, whose government and many of its people bristle at China's sovereignty claims.

Taiwan Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Joanne Ou told reporters this was a "positive development", and expressed appreciation for the fast reaction by the organizers.

"We express our thanks and affirmation for this goodwill," Ou added.

The World Cup organizers have yet to comment on the change.

When asked about the complaints made to the Qatar World Cup organizers by Taiwan officials, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday he wished to reiterate that "Taiwan is part of China".

## La Liga Confirms Complaints to UEFA Against City and PSG



MADRID (Dispatches) - La Liga confirmed it has filed complaints to UEFA about Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City "continuously breaching the current regulations of financial fair play".

La Liga said the complaint to UEFA against City was made in April while the complaint against PSG was filed "this week".

The Spanish league insisted it will continue to ramp up legal action against the two state-backed clubs.

La Liga has hired legal firms in France and Switzerland "with the aim of undertaking administrative and judicial actions before the relevant French bodies and the European Union as soon as possible", read a statement from the league.

And in Switzerland, La Liga is "studying different representation options" to investigate the "possible conflicts of interest" of Nasser Al-Khelaifi, who is PSG chairman, in charge of Qatar-owned BeIn Sports, leads the European Club Association and sits on Uefa's executive committee.

Manchester City won the race to buy Erling Haaland from Borussia Dortmund after paying the striker's £51 million release clause but the deal, including salary and agents fees, could reportedly exceed £250 million.

And PSG will pay Kylian Mbappe a yearly salary of between €40 and €50 million, after the Frenchman chose to reject Real Madrid and sign a new three-year contract with the Qatari-owned club.