

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Stayed Unchanged at **141,363** With Another **Zero** Death Day Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Head of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization Hamidreza Mohammadi Announced the Reopening of the Karbala Ground Road Without Obtaining a Travel Visa For Iranian Pilgrims

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Resolution Against Iran Nuclear Program Last Test by Enemies

TEHRAN (MNA) - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says that referring Iran's nuclear case to the Board of Governors was the last test by the enemies.

Stating that international organizations should not abuse their power, Mohammad Eslami in an said that Iran has 3 percent of the world's nuclear capacity, but more than 25 percent of inspections have been carried out in Iran.

Referring to the propaganda made against Iran's nuclear program by some countries, he added that the actions are in line with the policy of psychological and political pressure, as well as maximum pressure against the Iranian nation.

He also pointed to the anti-Iran draft resolution submitted by the US and E3 to the IAEA Board of Governors, saying that submitting the draft resolution against the Iranian nuclear case to the Board of Governors was the last test by the enemies. "We have responded to them in a completely legal manner, and if they want to abide by the treaty, whatever is agreed there can be implemented as neither one more word nor one less word."

Tehran Vows Proportionate Response to U.S. Unconstructive Approach

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has once again reiterated Iran's willingness to hold result-oriented talks with the P4+1 group of countries on the revival of the 2015 deal, promising a "proportionate" response to the U.S.'s "unconstructive" approach.

In a phone conversation with European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Saturday, Amirabdollahian slammed the "unconstructive and hasty" move by the United States to propose an anti-Iran resolution, which was passed during a recent meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s Board of Governors.

"Tehran has always welcomed rational and result-oriented negotiations, but in order to reach a good and lasting agreement, it is necessary for the other side to give up its double standards and contradictory behavior," the top Iranian diplomat said.

"After the resolution was passed in the IAEA's Board of Governors, we showed that we will not back down from the nation's rights, and if the United States wants to continue its unconstructive behavior, it will face our proportionate response," he emphasized.

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Iran, Kazakhstan Ink 9 Cooperation Documents



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Nine cooperation documents and memorandum of understanding were signed between Iran and Kazakhstan in the presence of the presidents of the two countries Ebrahim Raisi and Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

"Memorandum of Understanding between the Centre for Political Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Foreign Policy Research Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan", "Cultural Exchange Program between the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Kazakhstan", "Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Analytical Studies and Exchange of Experience between the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade and the Ministry of Trade and Convergence of Kazakhstan", "Memorandum of Understanding on Increasing Bilateral Trade between the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade and the Ministry of Trade and Convergence of Kazakhstan", "Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of Iran and the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan in the Field of Agriculture", "Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of Iran and the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure of Kazakhstan in the Field of Trade and Transit of Agricultural Products", "Memorandum of Understanding between the IIRB and the State News Agency of Kazakhstan", "Memorandum of Understanding between the National Iranian Oil Company and KazMunayGas (KMG)", "Memorandum of Understanding between the Iranian Railways and the National Railway Company of Kazakhstan" were documents signed by the ministers, governors-general and relevant officials of the two countries in the presence of the Presidents of Iran and Kazakhstan.

At the beginning of the ceremony, the two presidents also signed a joint statement.

Speaking in a joint press conference with his Kazakh counterpart after the signing ceremony, President Raisi said for the past thirty years, Iran has had good relations with Kazakhstan, but these relations have not been enough.

Noting that there are many capacities in Iran and Kazakhstan that can provide the basis for improving relations between the two countries, he added that the signing of agreements is an important sign of the will of the two countries to develop relations.

Trade relations between the two countries have increased by more than 50% in recent months, the Iranian President said, adding that the level of these relationships can certainly increase even more, and the two countries can increase the volume of transactions at the current level to \$ 3 billion in the first step.

The two countries can extend their relations in the fields of industry, agriculture, energy, transit and oil and gas, he noted, adding that Iran and Kazakhstan should make more efforts for cultural development due to their cultural and civilizational backgrounds.

"In addition to bilateral relations, we are determined to expand regional relations between the two countries. The cooperation between the two countries in regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Union could increase in the region," Raisi said.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, for his part, said that extensive talks were held today and many issues were discussed.

Both sides are interested in using the transit capacity, and in this regard, the corridors that connect the east to the west and the north and the south are of special importance, he added.

Stating that the two sides also had talks in the field of agriculture, which will lead to the improvement of relations between Kazakhstan and Iran, he said that the documents and agreements that were signed will help the progress of the two countries' relations. Iran is a center of ancient civilization and an important partner in the Islamic world, the Kazakh President said.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Sunday arrived in the Iranian capital of Tehran and was welcomed by the Iranian Minister of Agriculture Jihad Seyyed Javad Sadati Nejad.

Iraq Gas Imports From Iran at 40 mcm Per Day

BAGHDAD (Dispatched) - Iraqi authorities have reported a major increase in the supply of natural gas from neighboring Iran two days after the Arab country settled nearly \$1.7 billion of arrears it owed Iran for previous gas imports, according to a report by Iraq's NINA news agency.

Iraqi Electricity Ministry Spokesman Ahmad Musa said on Saturday that imports of natural gas from Iran, which Iraq mostly depends on for electricity generation, had reached 40 million cubic meters (mcm) per day.

Musa said, however, that Iraq would continue to ask for more supplies of gas from Iran as he insisted that the country's power plants would face record demand for gas over the summer months. He said Iraq will need 50-55 mcm per day of natural gas from Iran to be able to weather the summer demand, adding that Iran's initial response to the request has been positive.

The announcement comes after Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said on Thursday that Iran will increase the supply of natural gas to Iraq after the Arab country paid back its energy arrears. Iran had decreased the supply of gas to Iraq on several occasions in recent years after Baghdad failed to pay for its imports under the pretext that such payments would trigger American penalties against the Iraqi banking system.

Iraq has secured special waivers from Washington to be able to import natural gas and electricity from Iran since 2018 when the US pulled out of an international deal on Iran's nuclear program and imposed sanctions on Tehran.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

American Rudeness In Style

If you do not stand against rude people and give due response, they will be emboldened and will continue their rudeness like what former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is now doing with his rude and arrogant remarks after committing crimes when he was in power.

Pompeo is one of the culprits in assassination of beloved martyr General Qasem Soleimani and he will not be able to escape punishment due his accomplice in assassination of Martyr Soleimani but he is still rude enough to defend U.S. Administration's terrorist act.

On Friday, Pompeo said the reason why his country assassinated top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Soleimani was to protect American resources.

Pompeo was speaking with Saudi news network, Al Arabiya, saying the U.S. murdered General Soleimani to safeguard its assets in Iraq, its people in Syria and, in fact, Americans all across the world.

He claimed the assassination was an opportunity to stop what he called an imminent attack on U.S. positions.

"General Soleimani was engaged in a plot to kill another 500 Americans. We had the opportunity to take down that plot, and we did," he said.

"It was a project that we had been engaged in continuously and then we had this opportunity to stop what was an imminent attack on U.S. resources, U.S. assets, U.S. people and ... the president made the decision to just do that."

Of course, he is right to speak boldly because the U.S. State Department has said it's paying more than \$2 million per month to provide 24-hour security to him and a former top aide to protect them from Iran's retaliation.

But he should know that he will not be able to escape punishment and sooner or later it will happen and the nuclear talks will also have nothing to do with the fate of his punishment.

American intelligence officials later affirmed that there was no such evidence as to the involvement of General Soleimani's plan for an attack on U.S. forces.

Pompeo like most of the American statesmen used to tell lies as he is on record to have admitted to an audience in 2019, "I was the CIA director. We lied, we cheated and we stole. We've a training course just for that." "It reminds you of the glory of the American experiment," he said at College Station, Texas.

Quds Force chief Brigadier General Esmail Qa'ani has said, "Martyr Soleimani had repeatedly humiliated Pompeo in the region and they thought they won by assassinating him."

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Unsubstantiated Claims Against Iran to Damage UN Credibility

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top human rights official has rejected claims made by United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres against his country, warning that repetition of such "unsubstantiated allegations" will discredit the world body.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Secretary General of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, made the remarks in a tweet on Saturday in reaction to the latest report by the UN chief on the situation of human rights in Iran, which accused the country of using excessive force against dissidents and protests.

"Covering only less than 1% of our views, a glimpse of @antonioGuterres report was enough to reject claims that the report contains info presented by the Iranian Govt," tweeted Gharibabadi, who also serves as vice-president of Iran's Judiciary for international affairs.

He added that copy-pasting such unsubstantiated allegations, which have been churned out by the former UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Javid Rehman, "tarnishes the UN credibility." The UN secretary general submitted an interim report on Iran's human rights situation on June 16 -- covering the period from June 11, 2021 to March 20, 2022. The interim report would be presented to the Human Rights Council at its 50th regular session, to be held from June 13 to July 8 this year.



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Transit, Tourism Ties With Neighbor Can Neutralize Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - An Iranian lawmaker said that strengthening transit and tourism ties with neighboring countries could neutralize sanctions against Iran.

Iran has a good capacity in energy resources and transmission and the agreement signed with Turkmenistan on gas swap could mitigate the impacts of the sanctions slapped by the United States against Iran, Shahriar Heydari said.

As a member of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, Heydari said that such opportunities weren't leveraged in the past and expressed hope that President Ebrahim Raisi's administration could prioritize it and increase economic exchange with neighbors.

He named cultural commonalities as a strong component in Iran's relationship with neighboring countries and noted that the administration should leverage all components.

Zionist Regime Cause Of Instability, Terrorism in Region

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says the Israeli regime is the main cause of instability and insecurity in the entire West Asia region.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks in an early Sunday phone call with his Emirati counterpart, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, during which the two sides discussed bilateral, regional and international issues.

During the call, Iran's top diplomat said "the presence of al-Quds occupying regime is the cause of instability and insecurity as well as terrorism and sabotage in the entire region."

Amirabdollahian added that the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks security and progress for its neighbors and the region, while considering the presence of foreigners as an impediment to the establishment of regional security.

He added that Iran's foreign policy gives priority to its neighbors, stressing the need to further boost cooperation and expand relations between Iran and the United Arab Emirates.



The Emirati minister, for his part, said his country will not allow destructive measures to be taken from its territory against neighboring countries.

The two sides also stressed the necessity of increasing contacts and consultations between the two countries.

The two foreign ministers had another phone call in early April, during which Amirabdollahian, once again, said Israel is the root cause of insecurity in the region, warning regional countries that the presence of the Tel Aviv regime poses a threat to all. "Efforts should be made to prevent those who create crisis from gaining a foothold in the region," Amirabdollahian told his Emirati counterpart.

He also expressed Iran's good intention and push for security and progress of its neighboring states in the region, including the UAE, and emphasized, "The Zionists have been and are the root cause of insecurity in the region."

Baku Always After Growing Ties With Tehran



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Azeri ambassador to Tehran said here on Sunday that his country is always after developing cooperation with Iran.

Baku has good economic and political ties with Tehran, Ali Alizadeh said in his meeting with Iranian culture minister's assistant, Mahmoud Shalouei.

Referring to the upcoming visit of the Azeri culture minister to Iran, the ambassador hoped that cultural relations would widen during the visit.

Shalouei, too, said in the meeting that Iran-Azerbaijan cultural cooperation will develop under the shadow of cultural agreement.

He expressed hope that cultural cooperation between the two countries would strengthen. The Azeri minister of culture will visit Iran on Monday (June 20).

Iran Can Provide Sea Security With Cooperation of Regional States

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Commander of Iran's Army Navy Force said that Iran will ensure the security of maritime with the cooperation and collaboration of countries in the region.

Speaking on the sidelines of his visit to 12th edition of Intl. Marine Industries Exhibition, Iran said that the enemies have no place in the region and there is no justification for persisting in their presence in the region.

Iran will undoubtedly ensure the highest possible level of maritime security with the cooperation of regional countries, he added.

Presence at the highest level of the world's modern technologies is one of the requirements of Iran's Army Navy and for this purpose, the Navy is ready to take advantage of the high capacities of knowledge-based companies in various fields without any restriction, Rear Admiral Irani emphasized.

Iran's Army Navy always uses the high capability of the country in the construction of its equipment, he said, adding that today, the Army Navy Force of the country is at the highest level of readiness to confront enemies.

The world's major naval powers are ready to carry out joint naval drills with Iran, he noted.

Washington Always Resorts to Lies to Cover Up Its Defeats

TEHRAN (MNA) - President's special envoy for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi has responded to former U.S. Secretary of State's remarks, saying that Washington always resorts to lies to cover up its defeats.

"Let's update our minds first. Lying and hiding the facts is in America's nature. It is natural for an establishment that wastes millions of dollars a year to guard Pompeo, the reality goes missing in it," Hassan Kazemi Qom, President Raisi's special envoy for Afghanistan said in a post on his Twitter account on Saturday in reaction to anti-Tehran remarks by Mike Pompeo in an interview with

Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya.

Qomi added, "Washington would hide its entire records and practices from Afghanistan to South America with lies."

In an interview with Al-Arabiya, former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made claims about the Trump administration's foreign policy.

He was one of the masterminds behind the Doha agreement between the United States and the Taliban, which led to the toppling of the previous Afghan government and the rise of the Taliban to power again in Afghanistan.

Iran Has No Limitation to Boost Ties With Croatia

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in a meeting with the visiting Croatian delegation said Tehran has no limitation to develop relations with Zagreb.

Iranian and Croatian parliaments play an important role in supporting bilateral ties, Amirabdollahian noted in the meeting held in Tehran on Saturday.

Chairman of Croatia-Iran parliamentary friendship group Zlatko Hasanbegovic and members of the Croatian delegation were present in the meeting, as well.

The Iranian foreign minister expressed hope that the fifth round of joint economic commission would be held soon as the development of the level of trade exchange is important.

Also, Amirabdollahian elaborated on the situation of talks on the removal of anti-Iran sanctions.

For his part, Hasanbegovic said Zagreb and Tehran have considerable cultural commonalities which can lead to an agreement on cultural cooperation.

Then, he appreciated the measure taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran as the first Asian country to recognize Croatia's independence. In recent months, Iranian and Croatian officials have expressed willingness to enhance bilateral ties.



Medicinal Plants, Cotton Are of Comparative Advantage for Bangladesh

BOJNURD (IRNA) - Bangladesh's Ambassador to Tehran Gousal Azam Sarker said that medicinal plants and cotton that are produced in North Khorasan Province have a comparative advantage for exporting to Bangladesh.

The ambassador of Bangladesh to Iran, on Saturday visited four industrial and production units located in Bidak industrial town in Bojnourd, the capital of North Khorasan Province.

Speaking on the sidelines of visiting four industrial units in Bidak Industrial Zone in Bojnurd, the capital city of North Khorasan Province, The ambassador of Bangladesh said: "North Khorasan has a lot of industrial units, which will provide investment opportunities for Bangladeshi investors."

He added that medicinal plants and cotton that are produced in North Khorasan Province, have a comparative advantage for exporting to Bangladesh.

The Ambassador of Bangladesh said: "Other meetings and visits with provincial officials are underway in the next two days."



Afghanistan Lauds Iran's Hospitality

TEHRAN (IRNA) - On the occasion of World Refugee Day, Afghan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, lauded the Islamic Republic's hospitality and said that Iranians have hosted the Afghan refugees for four decades.

World Refugee Day is an international day organized every year on June 20 by the United Nations. Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai made the remarks in a conference entitled "Future of Relations Between Afghanistan and Neighboring Countries".

According to Afghan media, this conference was held in Kabul with the presence of Taliban officials and Ambassadors of Afghanistan's neighbors. Afghan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in the conference, appreciated Iran's hospitality for Afghan refugees for four decades and added that the two neighboring countries have fulfilled their Islamic responsibility by sheltering millions of Afghan refugees over the past four decades.

Stanikzai said that Afghanistan calls on the neighboring

countries to be patient and treat the asylum seekers with patience until the return conditions are favorable."

Afghan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in his remarks also called on neighboring countries to work together for a prosperous Afghanistan and added that by uniting with other neighboring countries, we will not allow foreigners to interfere in Afghanistan and the region, because the presence of foreigners in the region is destabilizing.

Iranian, Turkish FMs Discuss Regional Issues, Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and his Turkish counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu on Sunday held a phone call, discussing Iran-Ankara bilateral ties and several regional issues.

The Iranian top diplomat stated that Iran is determined to expand relations with Türkiye, expressing hope that consultations on this matter continue.

Turkish foreign minister, for his part, expressed hope that the continuation of relations between the officials of the two countries would improve bilateral relations and increase mutual cooperation.

Çavuşoğlu once again invited Amirabdollahian to visit his country.

During a phone call on last Tuesday, Amirabdollahian and Çavuşoğlu discussed the latest developments in bilateral relations.

Iranian Tourism Official Visits Italy, Poland, Germany, Tunisia

TEHRA (IRNA)- Secretary-General of the Center for Health Tourism Advancement in Muslim Countries Majid Zangouei visited Italy, Poland, Germany, and Tunisia to expand tourism ties between European and Muslim countries.

Zangouei said that coordination was made between health tourism-related agencies in these countries to expand international cooperation to exchange experience and define joint trade and investment activities in this area.

Facilitating participation for health and health tourism-related businesses in events held in European and Muslim countries, holding a meeting on interconnecting health tourism businesses in European and Muslim countries, facilitating participation of businesses in IPH 2022 in Iran, and holding the Third African Medical Tourism Congress in Tunisia and a similar event in Italy were among achievements of the trip, according to Zangouei.

Tehran Reserves of Drinking Water 20% Less Than Previous Year

TEHRAN (IFP) - Tehran's Water and Sewerage Organization says the Iranian capital's reserves of drinking water are now around 640 million cubic meters, which is 20 percent less than the previous year.

The organization's managing director Mohammadreza Bakhtiari says Tehran Province is now seeing the second straight year of drought, noting that rainfall figures have been some 32 percent lower than the previous year.

Bakhtiari says no rationing is currently planned but the daily consumption of water in Tehran has reached around 3.5 million cubic meters a day, which puts the system under huge pressure.

He says a rise in the cost of water bills has been effective in lowering consumption, but has not settled the problem.

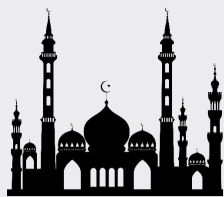
He also says the consumption figures are now two percent lower than the previous year, but the low reserves due to drought are taking their toll on the distribution system.

DM Calls for Manufacturing of Homegrown Passenger Aircraft

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Gharaei Ashtiani in a message to Iran Aviation Industries Organization CEO Brigadier General Afshin Khajefard pursued the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's strong demand for manufacturing a homegrown passenger aircraft.

Following the President's visit to Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industries Company (HESA) in Isfahan, and his order to design and manufacture a homegrown passenger aircraft, Brigadier General Ashtiani issued a letter to Brigadier General Khajefard ordering him to follow up on the President's orders.

Pointing to the close cooperation and synergy of all national capacities, knowledge-based companies, and headquarters, He added that as soon as possible and taking into account all the technical requirements and standards, the report on the progress of the manufacturing a homegrown passenger aircraft should be presented to the President and the Iranians.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:06
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:44
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:02
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:48

3. Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry and but a woman similarly guilty, or an Unbeliever: nor let any but such a man or an Unbeliever marry such a woman: to the Believers such a thing is forbidden.

4. And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses (to support their allegations):- flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their evidence ever after: for such men are wicked transgressors:-

Surah 24. Light (3-4)

Kazakhstan Ready to Increase Its Iran Wheat Exports to \$1b

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Kazakhstan Deputy Prime Minister Bakhyt Sultanov says Kazakhstan is ready to increase its wheat exports to Iran to \$1b and his country welcomes increasing bilateral trade to \$3b.

Speaking at the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Trade Forum in Tehran, Sultanov reiterated that Kazakhstan is an important trade partner for Kazakhstan, adding that the bilateral trade between the two countries hit record high in 2019 s their trade volume reached \$1b but the figure declined in 2020 due to some different reasons like the pandemic as their trade fell to \$238m.

He went on to say that the trade between Iran and Kazakhstan last year witnessed 85% rise last year, adding that the figure bounced back to \$440m from \$238m. He reiterated that 99% of Kazakhstan's exports to Iran were wheat and cereals as wheat exports stood at \$150m by itself.

Sultanov then stated that in the first four months of 2022, the trade exchange between the two states has grown by 43% and 70% of Kazakh companies export their products to Iran, adding that both countries can expand their trade and reaching the \$3b trade mark is not a far-fetched target.

He reiterated that Kazakhstan is ready to increase its cereal exports to Iran due to recent Ukraine war, reiterating that Kazakhstan can at least increase volume of its trade with Iran to \$1b at least in the agro field and cereal exports.

He then pointed to some useful agreements which were signed between the two states in recent months, saying that direct payments of the bills by Kazakhstan is a key step for broadening ties. He added that Kazakhstan can also extend the 14-day trade visas and it can help broadening the ties.

Sultanov also welcomed Iranians' investment in Oktavo Port of Kazakhstan and said that in the first four months, Kazakhstan has received 499,000 tons of goods via this port which shows 4% drop comparing to the same period last year. He blamed



the decline in the capacity of the port for this drop in delivery and expressed hope with attracting investment this port would develop.

He termed a logistic hob in the border areas a solution and exchange of information between business activists of the two countries will help the trade between Iran and Kazakhstan to expand.

Meanwhile in the forum, Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Gholam-Hossein Shafei, for his part, pointed to the important position of Kazakhstan as one of the Central Asian countries in Iran's foreign policy, adding that broadening of ties with Kazakhstan is important for Iran due to great resources and capabilities of the two countries in the fields like oil and gas, shipping in the Caspian Sea, petrochemical, metals, minerals, chemicals, construction materials, medicines and technical and engineering services.

Shafei also called for taking operational actions for increasing trade volume of the two states like easing visa issuance and added that Bandar Abbas-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan Corridor is an opportunity for provision of required goods of the littoral states of this corridor and it connects Kazakhstan to other CIS, Persian Gulf and Southeast countries and therefore with activation of the corridor will help broadening trade of the countries in this long route.

Shafei went on to say that easing , marine transportation will reduce the final costs of the goods and will accelerate the transportation and therefore it needs port infrastructures of Iran and Kazakhstan to be strengthened and the ground for rail transport is reinforced.

He also blamed problem in money transfer and issuance of visas for traders as the main hurdles in way of developing trade ties between Ira and Kazakhstan and called for resolving them. He then pointed to some fields for cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan like tourism, Nano and biotechnology, technical and engineering services and exports of industrial goods, reiterating that Iran can help Kazakhstan in construction of infrastructural projects.

Kerman Prov. Accounts for 35% of Iran's Agro-Food Exports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Specialized Homogeneous Association of Food Industries of Kerman Province says Kerman Province accounts for 35% of Iran's agro and food products exports and the province plays key role in the national non-oil exports.

Speaking in a presser on the sidelines of Iran Agrofood International Agriculture and Food Exhibition on Sunday, Mohammad Aminian said that the association was established four years ago and it is one of the 16 subsidiaries of Kerman Province House of Industry, Mine and Trade and it is active in different fields mostly on the food and agro products.

He went on to say that the association has participated in the exhibition with seven of its top member companies and they have put on display mostly the native products like local cookies and bread.

He then reiterated that Iran's agro and food products stand around \$8b annually and Kerman Province accounts for 30% of this figure. He went on to say that India and



China are the main export destinations but countries like the UAE, Turkey, Afghanistan and Persian Gulf states are the other export destinations for Kerman Province exports.

Aminian noted that dried fruits, date, pistachio and dried vegetables are of the major exports of this province either directly or indirect via other provinces in the company.

Meanwhile in the presser, the CEO of Russian Kavar Company Mr. Ahmad Vahabzadeh urged the

government to stop changing the regulations which affect the exports.

He said that stability of the regulations is very important for exporters because volatility I the regulations will affect the exports and exporters may lose their markets.

He reiterated if the government ease crippling regulations and ease the exports process, exporters can find their ways in the target countries for exporting their products but with overnight changes in the regulations, the business faces tough twists.

Attention to Environment an Industrial Piety

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Group says reforms regarding the utility rates were a necessity and called utility rate an unfair way for calculating the rates of energy.

Ali Askari said that while the petrochemical companies used to sell their products based on the Persian Gulf FOB rate and all losses were calculated in dollar, calculating the utility rate in national currency rial was unfair and incorrect and now with its reform, injustice has been eradicated from Mobin Persian Gulf Company.

During his three-day visit to Assaluyeh region, Ali Askari visited Mobin Persian Gulf Company. During the visit, Askari presented a report on the performance, achievements and plans of this company and said this company with \$2.1b investment is now the heart of Pars Energy region, adding that with sustainable provision of utility has the role close to 40% in the production of the petrochemical companies in the region and in their earning forex. He noted the company with full capacity is working and it has caused some problems like overhaul for offering better services.

Askari reiterated that former utility rates were the exact sign of injustice and cruelty and with its reform, now injustice is removed. He went on to say that Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Group attaches great importance on the role of human resources and environmental issues, reiterating that attention to the environment is an industrial piety and all industries should observe this obligation.



IME Posts Weekly Trade of 1.9m Tons

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 1,919,620 tons of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$647 on its physical market.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 1,417,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$324m.

On this floor the IME sold 726,497 tons of cement, 312,000 tons of iron ore, 298,882 tons of steel, 34,500 tons of sponge iron, 10,125 tons of aluminum, 10,500 tons of copper, 26,029 tons of zinc, 150 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 1,000 tons of cast iron ingots, 1,000 tons of coke and 9 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 495,944 tons of commodities worth almost \$316m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 93,287 tons of polymeric products, 163,429 tons of bitumen, 50,000 tons of lube cut, 18,400 tons of vacuum bottom, 44,968 tons of chemicals, 1,370 tons of sulfur, 5,191 tons of base oil and 100 tons of argon.

The IME also traded within the same week 6,147 tons of commodities on its side market.

Faridan Water Supply Projects Need 100b Tomans of Credit

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

ISFAHAN – Reforming water supply networks, drilling water wells and construction of new water reservoirs in the town of Faridan in Esfahan Province needs 100b tomans of credit.



The CEO of Esfahan Province Water and Wastewater Province (ABFA of Isfahan) in the meeting of the administrative council of the town of Farida which was held in the presence of energy minister said that the amount of water waste in the water supply networks of two towns and 28 villages of this town is over 30%.

Hossein Akbarian added that 30 kilometers of the water supply networks of this town needs renovation, adding that beside this, drinking water required by the citizens of four villages of this town is supplied by tankers and expressed hope that under the project of water supply jihad, these villages would be connected to the sustainable drinking water.

In some part of his speech, Akbarian pointed that the completion of wastewater project of the town of Daran needs 50b tomans of credit, adding that the process for getting state credit for wastewater project of the town.

MSC, Gov't Sign MoU On Cooperation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – During the President visit to Isfahan, a MoU on cooperation was signed between Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC), Iran Railways Company, Isfahan Research and Scientific Park and vice president for science and technology.

Vice-President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari signed the MoU with MSC and Isfahan Research and Scientific Park which is aimed at optimal utilization from capacities of the knowledge-based companies of this park.

Sattari also signed another MoU with the CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company Mohammad Yaser Tayebnia and accordingly, both sides will co-operate broadening scientific, research, applied, educational ties, and launching smart factory.



Chadormalu Co. Seeks Access to 5 Knowledge-Based Projects



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company signed a MoU on cooperation with Machine Sazi Arak Company last year, aimed at manufacturing and upgrading some equipment as well as upgrading mining and industrial technologies with reliance on the domestic capability and with establishment of Mining Industries Technology Development Company it actually started its practical activities to materialize the goal.

The CEO of Mining Industries Technology Development Company Eng. Davood Abadi in an interview pointed to the goals of this company in using modern technology and manufacturing industrial and mining machineries, saying that the company seeks a great development in the field of access to the modern technologies in manufacture of the home-made machineries aimed at increasing productivity, reducing energy consumption and above all cutting dependence on the overseas companies as well as strengthening relation between producers, artisans and scientific centers.

He added that the company with the full support of Chadormalu Company has put on its agenda indigenization of machineries and equipment with reliance on the domestic capabilities. He noted that based on the priorities set by Chadormalu Company in the year of production, five knowledge-based projects have been put on the agenda of his company like design and manufacture of modern mining equipment, manufacture of solar panels, drilling machineries for 3500m in depth, and freight wagons.

Then Davood Abadi delved into details of the five projects which are very important for the mining industry, adding that the project for design and manufacture of deep drilling machineries has started in the company.

Saudi Crown Prince To Visit Egypt, Jordan

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman begins a regional tour Monday in Egypt that will also take him to Turkey to bolster regional ties, a Saudi diplomat said.

After Cairo, Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia’s de facto leader, will travel to Jordan and then on to Turkey, the diplomat said.

During the tour, he will discuss “regional and international files and the future of international cooperation”, he said, adding that investment and energy deals are due to be signed.

President Tayyip Recep Erdogan announced on Friday that Prince Mohammed would be visiting Turkey on June 22.



One Dead in Shanghai Chemical Plant Explosion

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - Huge clouds of black smoke billowed over Shanghai from multiple fires at a chemical plant Saturday that left at least one dead, according to state media and eyewitness video obtained by AFP.

The fire at a Sinopec Shanghai Petrochemical Co. plant in outlying Jinshan district broke out around 4:00 am, but was brought under control later that morning, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Aerial drone footage shared by a resident with AFP shows thick clouds of smoke hanging over a vast industrial zone as three fires blaze in separate locations, turning the sky black.



Zelenskiy Vows Ukraine Will Prevail, UK PM Promises Lasting Support



KYIV (Dispatches) - With a blessing for its European Union ambitions and a pledge of unwavering support from Britain, Ukraine vowed to prevail against Moscow as its troops battled the Russian assault near a pivotal eastern city and communities were pounded by more heavy shelling.

EU leaders are expected at a summit next week to grant Ukraine candidate status following Friday’s recommendation from the bloc’s executive, putting Kyiv on course to realize an aspiration seen as out of reach before the invasion, even if actual membership could take years.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who made a surprise visit to Kyiv on Friday and offered training for Ukrainian forces, on Saturday stressed the need to keep supporting the country and avoid “Ukraine fatigue” after nearly four months of war.

On the battlefields, the industrial city of Sievierodonetsk, a prime target in Moscow’s offensive to seize full control of the eastern Luhansk region, was under heavy artillery and rocket fire as the Russian forces attacked areas outside the city, the Ukrainian military said on Saturday.

The attack on towns just south of Sievierodonetsk was repulsed by Ukrainian forces, Luhansk Governor Serhiy Gaidai said on messaging app Telegram.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, whose defiance has inspired Ukrainians and won him global respect, said on Saturday he had visited soldiers on the southern front line in the Mykolaiv region, offering a fresh message of hope on his return.

“Our brave men and women. Each one of them is working flat out,” he said on his official Telegram account. “We will definitely hold out! We will definitely win!”

A video posted on his account showed Zelenskiy in his trademark khaki t-shirt handing out medals and posing for selfies with the servicemen. Zelenskiy did not say when the trip took place.

Ukrainian authorities reported overnight shelling of multiple locations in the eastern regions of Luhansk and Kharkiv and further west in Poltava and Dnipropetrovsk. Early on Saturday, Russian rockets rained on a suburb of Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, hitting a municipal building and starting a fire in a block of flats, but causing no casualties, a regional governor said.

Reuters could not independently confirm the battlefield accounts.

Moscow denies targeting civilians in what it terms a “special military operation” to disarm Ukraine and protect Russian speakers there from dangerous nationalists. Kyiv and its allies dismiss this as a baseless pretext for war.

“The Russians are grinding forward inch by inch and it is vital for us to show what we know to be true which is that Ukraine can win and will win,” Johnson told reporters on his return to Britain from Kyiv. read more “When Ukraine fatigue is setting in, it is very important to show that we are with them for the long haul and we are giving them the strategic resilience that they need,” he said.

One of President Vladimir Putin’s goals when he ordered thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 was to halt the eastward expansion of the NATO military alliance and keep its southern neighbor outside of the West’s sphere of influence.

But the war, which has killed thousands of people, turned cities into rubble and sent millions fleeing, has had the opposite effect.

It convinced Finland and Sweden to seek to join NATO and helped pave the way for Ukraine’s EU membership bid.

Protests Intensify Over India Military Recruitment Plan

BHUBANESHWAR (Dispatches) - Protesters in India’s eastern state of Bihar damaged public property and ransacked offices in a railway station, expressing outrage at a new military recruitment plan and demanding the government reverse course.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government has introduced a scheme called Agnipath or “path of fire” designed to bring more people into the military on four-year contracts to lower the average age of India’s 1.38 million-strong armed forces.

A top military general, Lieutenant General Anil Puri, told NDTV news channel that the aim of the plan was to make the military more modern and effective. Analysts said the new scheme would also help cut burgeoning pension costs, but opponents believe it would limit opportunities for permanent jobs in the defense forces, with implications for salaries, pensions and other benefits.

Thousands of young men attacked train coaches, burned tyres and clashed with officials at a railway station in Bihar, one of India’s poorest states. Authorities cancelled 369 trains nationwide, many of them running through areas witnessing unrest.



Tunisians Protest Against Constitution Referendum

TUNIS (Dispatches) - Thousands of protesters took to the streets of Tunis in opposition to a referendum on a new constitution called by President Kais Saied that would cement his hold on power.

The protest led by Abir Moussi, leader of the Free Constitutional Party, reflected growing opposition to Saied since he seized executive power last year, dissolving parliament and ruling by decree in a move opponents called a coup.

Thousands marched from Bab Souika Square in the capital towards Kasbah, waving Tunisian flags.

“Tunisians are starving, public finances are collapsing, but Saied does not care.. He only focuses on a personal project to impose his constitution.. we will not accept that,” Abir Moussi told the crowd.

Saied is seeking to overhaul the constitution to give the presidency more powers, against the backdrop of a tanking economy and fears of a public finance crisis. He intends to put the new constitution to a referendum on July 25.

Another protest called by other opposition parties, including the Ennahda Islamist party, is expected to protest against the referendum and Saied’s latest decrees, such as the dismissal of dozens of judges and military trials for some politicians.

The president’s supporters say he is standing up to elite forces whose bungling and corruption have condemned Tunisia to a decade of political paralysis and economic stagnation.

However Tunisia’s main political parties have said they will boycott the referendum, and the powerful UGTT labour union, which called a public sector strike on Thursday, has refused to take part in talks on the new constitution.

Sadok Belaid, the head of Tunisia’s constitution committee said on Saturday he would hand over the new draft constitution to the president on Monday. Saied has appointed a new electoral commission, casting doubt over the credibility of any vote.

Sri Lanka Schools, Gov’t Offices to Shut

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lankan authorities announced a two-week shutdown of government offices and schools, as public transport ground almost entirely to a halt due to a lack of dollars to pay for imported fuel.

The Public Administration ministry ordered all departments, public institutions and local councils to maintain skeleton services from Monday in response to the acute shortage of petrol and diesel.

“Due to scarce public transport as well as the inability to arrange private vehicles, it is decided to drastically curtail the number of employees reporting to work,” the ministry’s order said.

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since gaining independence in 1948, and has been unable to finance the import of necessities such as food, medicines and fuel since late last year.

The country is also facing record high inflation and lengthy power blackouts, all of which have contributed to months of protests -- sometimes violent -- calling on President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down.

Earlier this week, authorities declared Friday a holiday, also in a bid to conserve fuel.

Despite that move, long queues were seen outside

pumping stations today, with many motorists saying they had waited for days to top up their tanks.

The education ministry said all schools have been asked to remain closed for two weeks from Monday and to ensure online teaching if students and teachers had access to electricity.

The shutdown order came a day after the United Nations launched its emergency response to the island’s unprecedented economic crisis by feeding thousands of pregnant women who were facing food shortages.

Four out of five people in Sri Lanka have started skipping meals as they cannot afford to eat, the UN has said, warning of a looming “dire humanitarian crisis” with millions in need of aid.

The World Food Programme (WFP) said it began distributing food vouchers to about 2,000 pregnant women in Colombo’s “underserved” areas as part of “life-saving assistance” on Thursday.

The WFP is trying to raise 60 million dollars for a food relief effort between June and December.

Sri Lanka defaulted on its 51 billion dollar foreign debt in April, and is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout.



UK Slams European Court Ruling on Rwanda

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain’s interior minister Priti Patel suggested in an interview published on Saturday that a European court’s intervention to stop a deportation flight to Rwanda was politically motivated.

“You’ve got to look at the motivation,” she told the Daily Telegraph, after the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) stepped in on Tuesday, just as the flight was due to leave for Kigali.

“How and why did they make that decision? Was it politically motivated? I’m of the view that it is, absolutely.

“The opaque way this court has operated is absolutely scandalous. That needs to be questioned.”

Patel said the government had not been told the identity of the ECHR judges and had not received the full ruling of the order not to remove the migrants until a review of the policy was complete.

“They’ve not used this ruling previously, which does make you question the motivation and the lack of transparency,” she added.

The UK government, which promised to tighten borders after Brexit, is under pressure to deal with record numbers of migrants crossing the Channel in small boats from northern France.

More than 11,000 people have been intercepted and brought ashore so far this year — almost double the number at the same time 12 months ago.

It is hoping to reduce pressures including accommodation costs estimated at £5 million (RM22 million) a day by sending some asylum seekers on a one-way ticket for resettlement in Rwanda.

Some 130 asylum seekers were originally scheduled to be on Tuesday’s flight but the numbers were whittled down to zero after a series of legal challenges on human rights grounds.

The government in London is considering rewriting the UK Human Rights Act, which is based on the European Convention of Human Rights, to make it easier for it to deport migrants.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has criticised lawyers for taking on asylum cases and Patel’s claim of a political dimension to the EHCR decision fits into a government narrative about threats to UK sovereignty by European bodies.



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Fully Furn

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Gheitarieh (\$2100) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F

((\$3000))
Kamranieh
240sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg
L.balcony
F.F

Sa`adat abad Apt (\$2000)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

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Bitcoin Drops Below \$20k to Lowest Since December 2020

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Bitcoin dropped below \$20,000 on Saturday to its lowest level in 18 months, extending its slide as investors pull back from riskier assets amid rising interest rates.

The biggest cryptocurrency was down 7.1 per cent to \$18,993, having earlier touched \$18,732, its lowest since December 2020.

It is down about 59 per cent this year, while rival cryptocurrency Ethereum-backed ether is down 73 per cent.



Turkey Urges More Trade, Lifting FDI Restrictions Among D-8 Members

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The level of integration for the trade, investments, and supply chains among Developing-8 (D-8) countries is far below the desired level, the Turkish trade minister said, adding that the explicit or implicit restrictions on foreign direct investments (FDI) should be lifted for close cooperation to be achieved under the organization.

Speaking at an event organized for D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation's 25th anniversary in Istanbul, Mehmet Muş stressed that the member countries have a great economic potential with a population of over 1 billion and economic size amounting to over \$4 trillion.

"However, we have not yet been able to utilize this potential during the past 25 years fully," he said and added that as of last year, the share of D-8 countries in Turkey's foreign trade volume is only around 5%.

While the foreign direct investment (FDI) flow to Turkey totaled \$242 billion (TL 4.1 trillion) since 2002, the total investment from D-8 countries to the country was only \$1.1 billion during the same period, he highlighted.

Activating mechanisms that will use the member countries' potential most effectively is very important in accelerating the development efforts at the national and regional levels, he said.

The increased cooperation in the field of investment within the D-8 will provide unique opportunities to revive new trade and investment links among member countries and will make invaluable contributions to their growth to increase the employment and welfare levels, Muş also noted.

"At this point, I would like to underline the importance of the full implementation of the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement, which we continue to see as the biggest building block of cooperation in the field of trade and investment."

Rifat Hisarciklioğlu, the head of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), said D-8 countries have rich natural sources, young and dynamic populations, and an economy worth \$3.8 trillion.

He said that 25 years ago, with the vision of Turkey's deceased former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, the D-8 organization was established on six foundations: peace instead of war, dialogue instead of conflict, justice instead of double standards, equality instead of superiority, sharing instead of exploitation, human rights, freedom and democracy instead of oppression and domination.

With a total trade volume of \$1.6 trillion, D-8 countries' share in the world trade is currently 4.5%, Hisarciklioğlu noted.

Touching on the global issues, he recalled that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions in supply chains, an increase in prices, and problems in energy and food supply.

"Now, the negative effects of the war are spreading all over the world, especially raw material, energy and food supply security should be among our priorities in the coming period," he underlined.

He also said the D-8's internal trade is only 6.5% of the members' total trade, while the internal trade has increased seven-fold since the organization's establishment – not at a sufficient level.

D-8's internal trade should reach 30% of the members' total trade, so the \$500 billion mark and preferential trade agreement are very important for this target, he said.

U.S. Economy Has 40% Chance of Being in Recession Next Year

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - BofA Securities economists see roughly a 40% chance of a U.S. recession next year, with inflation remaining persistently high.

They expect U.S. Gross Domestic Product growth to slow to almost zero by the second half of next year "as the lagged impact of tighter financial conditions cools the economy," while they see just a "modest" rebound in growth in 2024, according to a research report Friday.

"Our worst fears around the Fed have been confirmed: they fell way behind the curve and are now playing a dangerous game of catch up," Ethan Harris, global economist at BofAS wrote, adding that the firm expects the Fed to hike interest rates to "above 4%."

They see the risk of a recession for this year as low.

The Fed on Wednesday approved its largest interest rate increase in more than a quarter of a century to stem a surge in inflation. The move raised the target federal funds rate by three-quarters of a percentage point to a range of between 1.5% and 1.75%.

Also, BofA Global economists lowered their global growth projections, citing inflation, the war in Ukraine and COVID-related lockdowns in China.

They now expect global economic growth of 3.2%. They said they had forecast 4.3% global growth going into 2022. They see further risks to 2022 growth if strict lockdowns continue in China, and to 2023 growth if the U.S. economy slips into recession.

The spike in energy prices amid the Russia-Ukraine war "has already sent inflation soaring across the world, which in turn has forced central banks into a more hawkish stance," the economists wrote.

On Monday, Bank of America Corp's Chief Financial Officer Alastair Borthwick said that there is no sign of recession in the bank's loan portfolio, which remains on a healthy trajectory.

EU, India Relaunch Talks for Free Trade Agreement

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Union and India relaunched negotiations to forge a free trade agreement, with the aim of completing talks by the end of 2023.

"This partnership will become a defining moment for world trade in the 21st century," Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal told a news conference.

The two sides previously launched talks in 2007, but they were frozen in 2013 due to

lack of progress. EU and Indian leaders agreed in May 2021 to resume negotiations.

EU Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said the free trade agreement would cover "essentially all trade", in line with World Trade Organization standards, including sectors such as automobiles and spirits.

"For the European Union, the partnership with India is one of the most important relationships for the upcoming decade", Dombrovskis said.

The next round of negotiations is scheduled to take place in New Delhi from June 27 to July 1.

The two sides will also hold separate discussions to create agreements to protect investment and region-specific agri-food product names such as champagne or feta cheese, known as geographical indications.

For the European Union, a free trade agreement with India would fit its strategy of increasing its engagement with the Indo-Pacific region, where the bloc is targeting bilateral deals to take advantage of expected higher economic growth.

A deal with India could act as a counterbalance to China's growing influence in the region. The EU is also aware that former EU member Britain is also pushing for a trade accord with India.

During the talks the EU will likely push for lower tariffs to gain greater access to Indian markets for its cars, alcoholic drinks and agri-food products such as cheese.

India is seen benefiting more in services and would like easier visa access to the EU for Indian professionals.

For the EU, any deal would also have to include sustainable development objectives, such as on the environment and labour.

The bloc is India's third largest trading partner, while for the EU India ranks 10th.

China Firms in Advanced Talks With Qatar for Gas Field Stakes

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - China's national oil majors are in advanced talks with Qatar to invest in the North Field East expansion of the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) project and buy the fuel under long-term contracts, three people with knowledge of the matter said.

It would be the first such partnership between the two nations, among the world's top LNG consumers and producers, as the Middle Eastern energy exporter shifts to expand its Asian client base at. Global energy corporations used to be the main investors in Qatar's gas industry.

The Qatari supply deal will help China create a buffer against spot price volatility and diversify its imports; relations with two major suppliers, the United States and Australia, are at a low point, and another, Russia, is in the midst of a war and faces widespread sanctions. Beijing views gas as a strategic bridge fuel to replace coal on its path to carbon neutrality by 2060.

Qatar was China's largest LNG supplier after Australia in the first five months of 2022, data on Refinitiv Eikon showed.

State-controlled CNPC and Sinopec are expected to invest a 5% stake each in two separate export trains, part of the nearly \$30 billion North Field expansion project, the three sources with knowledge of the discussions told Reuters.

"The participation, even of a small stake, would give Chinese direct access to the highly globalized project and learn its management and operational expertise," said one of the sources, a senior Beijing-based industry official.

The North Field Expansion includes six LNG trains that will ramp up Qatar's liquefaction capacity from 77 million tons per annum (mtpa) to 126 mtpa by 2027, consolidating its status as the world's largest producer.

Qatar treats each export train as one joint venture and CNPC and Sinopec will invest in one train each, the sources said.

Sinopec declined to comment. A CNPC representative said he had no information to share.

QatarEnergy did not respond to Reuters' request for comment.

In addition, CNPC and Sinopec are negotiating with state-run QatarEnergy to buy up to 4 mtpa of LNG each for up to 27 years, said two of the sources, in what would be the single-largest purchase deals of the super-chilled fuel between the two nations.

China in 2021 imported nearly 9 million tons of LNG from Qatar, or 11 per cent of the country's total LNG imports.

Discussions are focused on the pricing of long-term supply deals that will be linked to the global oil market, another of the three sources said.

Venezuelan Oil Exports to Europe Set to Resume After Two Years



CARACAS (Dispatches) - A 650,000-barrel-cargo of Venezuela's oil chartered by Italy's Eni is about to set sail carrying the first export of crude from the U.S.-sanctioned country to Europe in two years, Refinitiv Eikon data showed.

The U.S. State Department sent letters to Eni and Spain's Repsol in May authorizing them to resume taking Venezuelan crude as a way to settle billions of dollars of unpaid debt and dividends owed by the OPEC-member nation.

A second tanker chartered by Eni, the very large crude carrier (VLCC) Pantanassa, is currently navigating towards Venezuela and expected to load 2 million barrels of the same grade, diluted crude oil (DCO), and take it to Europe, according to the Eikon data and a shipping document seen by Reuters.

That cargo is expected to be delivered by Venezuela's state-owned PDVSA later this month with an option for Eni to sell a portion of the crude to Spain's Repsol for its Cartagena and Bilbao refineries, according to the document and sources.

The Malta-flagged Pantanassa is scheduled to load via ship-to-ship transfer near Venezuela's Amuay port, the document added.

Eni, Repsol and PDVSA did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

Venezuela's May oil exports plummeted to the lowest level in 19 months over contract changes enforced by PDVSA to switch most spot sales to prepayment, reducing the risk of unpaid cargoes. The change did not affect customers under swap deals of debt payment agreements.

European, Asian and U.S. companies operating joint ventures with PDVSA in Venezuela, including Eni, Repsol, Chevron, ONGC Ltd, and Maurel & Prom, have accumulated billions of dollars in pending debt since the government of then U.S. President Donald Trump suspended oil swaps used for exchanging Venezuelan oil for fuel and debt payments.

China's May Gasoline Exports Plunge, LNG Imports Slide

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's May gasoline exports fell 45.5% from a year earlier and diesel exports plunged 92.7% despite stalling domestic demand, as companies ran short of export quotas, Chinese customs data showed on Saturday.

China exported 840,000 tons of gasoline last month, data from the General Administration of Customs showed, down from 1.55 million tons in May 2021 and 980,000 tons in April.

Diesel exports sank to 120,000 tons from 1.68 million tons a year earlier and 530,000 tons the previous month.

Widespread lockdowns that began in March in the financial and commercial hub Shanghai to contain the COVID-19 virus hammered local consumption of gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel. Demand only started a modest recovery in late May with some easing of mobility restrictions.

Total refined fuel exports last month, which also include marine fuel oil, were nearly 40% below a year earlier at 3.27 million tons, the second-lowest monthly rate since July 2020, earlier data showed.

Exports for the January-May period tumbled 39% on the year as Beijing slashed export quotas to curb excessive domestic refinery production.

The swelling stocks as a result of stagnant fuel consumption prompted the government to issue an additional batch of permits in early June.

Saturday's data showed exports of jet fuel, including refueling at Chinese airports for international flights, rose to 810,000 tons in May from 570,000 tons a year earlier, though down from 960,000 tons in April.

China's imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) dropped 28% on the year to 4.93 million tons, with year-to-date imports down 19.6% as consumers shied away from spot purchases in the face of hefty import costs.

Pipeline gas imports, primarily from Turkmenistan and Russia, jumped 26% on year to a record 4.15 million tons, exceeding 4 million tons for only the second time after reaching that level in December.

Imports during the first five months were up 11.3% year-on-year to 18.42 million tons, data showed.



Iran-Kazakhstan Trade Exchange Ups by 30%

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesman for Iran's Customs Administration has announced that the trade exchange between Iran and Kazakhstan has increased by 29 percent during the past Iranian calendar year (ending March 20, 2022) compared with the preceding year.

Rouhollah Latifi made the remarks elaborating on the two-decade trade exchange between the two countries, Iran Customs Administration reported on Sunday.

Iran and Kazakhstan have exchanged over 15 million tons of commodities worth six billion dollars during the past 20 years, Latifi said.



Russia Widens Cuts in Natural Gas Supply to European Countries

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia reduced natural gas to Europe again Friday, including cutting flows by half to Italy and Slovakia and completely to France, as countries have worked to ease their dependence on Russian supplies amid the war in Ukraine.

It marks the third day of significant reductions to the fuel that powers industry and generates electricity in Europe, which also have hit Germany and Austria. It has further spiked already-high energy prices that are driving record inflation in the European Union.

Russia has blamed a technical problem for the cuts to the key Nord Stream 1 pipeline serving Germany and France, saying equipment being refurbished in Canada was stuck there because of Western sanctions.

Leaders in Germany and Italy called the reductions a political move, and it has escalated the energy tensions in Europe, following Russia's previous cutoff of natural gas to Poland, Bulgaria, Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Friday that the reductions are "blackmail (against) both individual countries and Europe as a whole."

Russia told Slovakia's state-controlled gas company SPP that it would reduce deliveries to the country by 50%, SPP director Richard Prokypcak told a conference in Bratislava. The reason for the reduction has not been made clear.

Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom told Italian gas company Eni on the same day that it would supply only 50% of the amount of gas requested for Friday, reducing the flow to one of Europe's biggest importers of Russian gas for the third day.

Gazprom reduced by 15% Italy's requested delivery on Wednesday. The ANSA news agency reported the Russian company dropped it by 35% on Thursday. Italy gets 40% of its gas from Russia but has been working to find alternative sources in countries like Algeria.

And France is no longer receiving any natural gas from Russia. The French gas network operator GRTgaz said Russian supplies via Germany came to a halt Wednesday, after dropping by 60% over the first five months of the year.

The operator said Friday that despite the halt in Russian supplies, no disruptions to gas supplies are expected this summer, in part thanks to more shipments via Spain. France normally gets about 17% of its natural gas from Russia, but overall gas is a relatively small part of France's energy mix, at about 16%.

The cut in supplies to France was "a consequence of the already-known reduction" of gas supplies via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, German Economy Ministry spokesperson Stephan Gabriel Haufe said. He didn't have further details of specific reasons for the cut.

Russia has said Canadian sanctions prevented German partner Siemens Energy from delivering equipment that had been sent there to be overhauled. The German government said maintenance shouldn't have been an issue until the fall and the Russian decision was meant sow uncertainty and push up prices.

"Both we and Germany and others maintain it's a lie, there's a political use of gas" by Russia, Italian Premier Mario Draghi said in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.

In Slovakia, Prokypcak downplayed the impact of the cuts despite "facing a real risk



(the supplies from Russia) will halt completely," the CTK news agency quoted him as saying.

In the previous days, the cuts reached 10% on Wednesday and 34% on Thursday. To diversify supplies, Slovakia has recently struck a deal with Norway to receive gas from the North Sea through Germany and also liquefied gas from other countries.

Economy Minister Richard Sulik said the new deals would reduce his country's dependence on Russian gas by 65%. Before the deals, Slovakia received 85% of its gas from Russia.

Slovakia has about one-third of the country's one-year consumption in its gas storages and was planning to have enough gas for the winter season stored by July 10.

Austrian oil and gas company OMV said Thursday that Gazprom had informed it of a reduction in supplies but didn't specify by how much.

The European Union is trying to reduce gas imports from Russia by two-thirds by the end of the year and has used imported liquid gas from the United States to start making up that gap. But an explosion and fire at a key U.S. export facility in Freeport, Texas, took one-fifth of the country's gas export capacity offline and underlined concerns about the fragility of Europe's gas supplies.

Short-term natural gas prices remained elevated Friday, at 126 euros (\$132) per megawatt for month-ahead gas futures. That is up some 50% from Monday.

Gas prices had fallen with the end of the winter heating season, offering some relief to European utilities scrambling to refill underground storage to have enough to get through next winter.

Omicron Less Likely To Cause Long Covid



LONDON (Dispatches) - The Omicron variant of coronavirus is less likely to cause long Covid than previous variants, according to the first peer-reviewed study of its kind from the United Kingdom.

Researchers at King's College London, using data from the ZOE Covid Symptom study app, found the odds of developing long Covid after infection were 20 per cent to 50 per cent lower during the Omicron wave in the UK compared to Delta. The figure varied depending on the patient's age and the timing of their last vaccination.

Long Covid, which includes prolonged symptoms ranging from fatigue to 'brain fog', can be debilitating and continue for weeks or months. It is increasingly being recognised as a public health problem, and researchers have been racing to find out if Omicron presents as big a risk of long Covid as previously dominant variants.

The study from King's is believed to be the first academic research to show Omicron does not present as great a risk of long Covid, but that does not mean long Covid patient numbers are dropping, the team said.

While the risk of long Covid was lower during Omicron, more people were infected, so the absolute number now suffering is higher.

"It's good news, but please don't decommission any of your long Covid services," lead researcher Dr Claire Steves told Reuters, appealing to health-service providers.

The UK's Office for National Statistics said in May that 438,000 people in the country have long Covid after Omicron infection, representing 24 per cent of all long Covid patients.

It also said the risk of lingering symptoms after Omicron was lower than with Delta, but only for double-vaccinated people. It found no statistical difference for those who were triple vaccinated.

Germans Turn to Food Banks as Inflation Hits

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German pensioner Gabriele Washah waits in line to fill her trolley with bags of carrots for 50 cents, yoghurts just past their sell-by date and bunches of wilting flowers.

With the cost of living soaring across Europe, the 65-year-old retired shop assistant is one of many Germans turning to food banks to make ends meet.

"Sometimes I go home from the shop almost crying because I can't afford it any more," she told AFP outside the row of stalls in Bernau, near Berlin.

Nestled in an alleyway behind a big chain supermarket, the food bank sells at greatly reduced prices groceries donated by supermarkets, as well as cheap prepared meals.

Here, customers can pick up a full trolley of food for around 30 euros (around \$32).

For Washah, that means bread, butter and her favourite sandwich filling, sausage -- "which used to cost 99 cents (\$1.02) but now sometimes costs more than two euros".

Driven by the war in Ukraine, inflation in Germany soared to 7.9 percent in May -- its highest level since reunification in 1990, with food prices among those worst affected.

Demand for food banks across the country has increased "significantly" since the start of the year and doubled in some areas, according to a spokeswoman for the Tafel food bank network.

There are around 1,000 such schemes in Germany, run by volunteers and available to customers on a means-tested basis.

Groceries, while donated, are still sold rather than given away free to the customers as the Tafel has to cover running costs, including rents and electricity. The organisation too has had to put up prices because their running costs have risen.

"It's not just one product," said 69-year-old pensioner Peter Behme. "All the prices are going up."

In a bid to ease the pressure on squeezed finances, the government has lowered taxes on fuel, drastically slashed the cost of public transport and promised all taxpayers a one-off payment of 300 euros. But Behme remains unimpressed. "I don't know where the government help is going," he said.



Even the food banks themselves are feeling the effects of the massive inflation.

"We have had to raise some prices by 20 or 50 cents because we need money to replenish our stocks," said Malina Jankow, manager of the Bernau food bank.

Along with pensioners and unemployed people, the queues are now also filling up with Ukrainian refugees.

Anna Dec, a 35-year-old hospital worker, has come to Bernau with two Ukrainian women who are staying in her home and currently each receiving 449 euros a month in benefits.

"They have to pay for water, energy, food, hygiene products... That's almost nothing," she said.

Overwhelmed by the influx of customers, some food banks in Germany have had to turn away new arrivals or ration the food they distribute. "We have been asking the government for a long time for a law to force supermarkets to give away their unsold food," said Norbert Weich, 72, chairman of the food bank.

Some 16 percent of Germans, or more than 13 million people, were living below the poverty line in 2020, according to a study by the charity Deutscher Paritaetische Gesamtverband, published in December 2021.

Industry Sources Dismiss U.S. Bans on Iran's Petrochemical Plants as Theatrical

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Petrochemical industry sources in Iran have dismissed recent American sanctions imposed on three major petrochemical companies in the country as a "theatrical move" and insist the bans will have no tangible impact on Iran's growing sales of petchem products to foreign customers.

"This is not a new development, it is simply a theater show with political objectives," said Ahmad Mahdavi, who leads the top syndicate of petrochemical plants in Iran, on Saturday.

Mahdavi said the three companies sanctioned by the US Treasury Department earlier this week, namely Fanavaran Petrochemical Company, Kharg Petrochemical Company and Marun Petrochemical Company, had all previously been subject to similar American bans.

"They wanted to show they have done something new in the field of sanctions ... but this show has been repeated several times and has had no result for them," Ahmadi, a former member of the Iranian parliament, was quoted as saying by the IRIB News. Another industry source said the new US sanctions will do nothing to stop the exports of petrochemical products from Iran.

"Iran's petrochemical industry in its entirety is sanctioned and plants have to use unconventional methods to sell and export their products," said Mohammad Eslami, who serves as the CEO of the Mehr Petrochemicals, a company based in southern Iran.

American Rudeness...

FROM PAGE 1

Reacting to Pompeo's nonsenses, Zeinab Soleimani, the charismatic commander's daughter, lauded his father's battle against Takfiri terrorist groups in the West Asia region, pointing to U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's admission



of Gen. Soleimani's counter-terrorism achievements.

"Pompeo whines about Iran on Saudi TV. Home of 9/11 plotters. Jake Sullivan said Al-Qaeda 'is on our side in Syria,' but Soleimani crushed the terrorists," Zeinab wrote.

"Iraq's Adil Abdul Mahdi said he & dad were to meet that morning to explore regional de-escalation," she added, referring to Iraq's former prime minister. "Live in fear liar."

But Iran's retaliation over the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani is not linked to other issues like the JCPOA, and those involved in the crime will undoubtedly be punished.

Pompeo has been hiding under a very heavy escort of bodyguards, wherever he goes and he actually lives in fear like the other culprits of this crime.

Pompeo's life is one of the reasons that the U.S. has asked Iran to forget about its promised retaliation on General Soleimani's assassination but Americans should know this fact that there will be no deal on Martyr Soleimani and his assassins should be punished.

Iran has released a list of 66 culprits, some of them have already paid the price according to some media outlets in the region, and the rest are standing on the list, and there's no doubt about that.

Pompeo and other 66 culprits should wait for punishment and Americans cannot tie the fate of the nuclear program and the JCPOA to the fate of these 66 culprits because Iranians are resolved to bring those culprits to the justice in order that other Americans or aggressors do not dare to repeat such crimes.

So the countdown has begun for punishment of culprits and the more they act rudely, the more they will be unable to escape punishment because as the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution has repeated the era of the hit-and-run has ended and now it is time for Pompeo and his colleagues to suffer the hit and they are better to stop boasting and talking against Martyr Soleimani and brave Iranian fighters who are ready to sacrifice their lives for any inch of their country and bringing down the aggressors.

Tehran Vows Proportionate...

FROM PAGE 1

The Iranian foreign minister added that the Islamic Republic still believes that "diplomacy is the best and most appropriate" solution to the outstanding issues on the revival of the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Iran has never distanced itself from the negotiating table. For this reason, we have always presented important initiatives in the talks in order to reach a favorable agreement, but negotiations must be fruitful," Amirabdollahian pointed out.

Amirabdollahian emphasized that the Islamic Republic would "NEVER hesitate to neutralize sanctions."

The senior EU official, for his part, said he would continue to play a positive role in helping all parties to the JCPOA reach a final agreement and stressed the importance of pursuing diplomacy and avoiding unconstructive measures in this regard.

He asserted that Iran is firmly determined to reach a good and lasting deal that aims to salvage the JCPOA, and said the sides are not far from reaching an agreement in Vienna.

Now is the time to immediately resume the Vienna talks and make efforts to prevent escalation of tensions, Borrell said.

He expressed his readiness to make every effort necessary to help Iran and the five remaining parties to the JCPOA reach a final agreement.

Mickelson Misses U.S. Open Cut

BROOKLINE (Dispatches) - Phil Mickelson's highly anticipated start at this week's U.S. Open following a controversy-filled few months came to an early end as the six-times runner-up was near the bottom of the field after his second round.

Mickelson, competing a week after making his debut on the Saudi-backed LIV circuit, carded a three-over-par 73 at The Country Club outside Boston which brought him to 11 over on the week and well outside the projected outline.

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McIlroy Staying in Contention at U.S. Open

BROOKLINE (Dispatches) - Four-times major winner Rory McIlroy said a positive attitude kept him in contention after a rough start at the U.S. Open, as he carded a one-under par 69 to head into the weekend one shot off the lead in Brookline.

The Northern Irishman wasted two shots in the rough on the par-four three, whacking his driver into the thick brush off the green only to send the ball forward mere inches. He drained a long putt to stem the pain, settling for a double-bogey.

Medvedev Marches Past Otte to Halle Final

HALLE (Dispatches) - Daniil Medvedev's impressive grass-court form continued at the Terra Wortmann Open in Halle, where the top seed powered past home favorite Oscar Otte to reach his second consecutive ATP Tour final.

The World No. 1 fended off a set point in the opening set before rallying to a 7-6(3), 6-3 semi-final victory in his first ATP Head2Head meeting with World No. 51 Otte. It is a second tour-level final for Medvedev in as many weeks on the grass, after he appeared in the championship match at the Libema Open in 's-Hertogenbosch just six days ago.

Last year in Halle, Medvedev fell in the first round to another German, Jan-Lennard Struff, on tournament debut. Since that defeat, the World No. 1 is 14-2 on grass, a tally which includes a title run at the 2021 Mallorca Championships.

"I didn't play well in Halle last year, so I'm happy that this year I managed to raise my level," said Medvedev after his semi-final victory. "As I've always said, I love playing on grass, so I'm happy to show to myself that I'm capable of being in the final of one of the greatest tournaments, especially on grass, and of course I'm looking forward to tomorrow."

Medvedev had saved all 17 break points he faced across his opening three matches in Halle this week, and he was under pressure early again after a fast start from Otte on OWL Arena. The World No. 1 once again found accuracy and power in his delivery to fend off two break points in the second and fourth games of the match, but his streak was finally ended after 22 consecutive break points saved when Otte's aggressive play earned a break for 5-3.

The excited home crowd sensed another upset from World No. 51 Otte, who had already beaten Top 30 players Miomir Kecmanovic, Nikoloz Basilashvili and Karen Khachanov en route to the semi-finals on tournament debut in Halle. The nerves began to show for the German as he served for the set, however. A double-fault on set point at 40/30 proved costly as



Medvedev held firm to reclaim the break before completing the turnaround with five points in a row from 2/3 in the tie-break.

Taking the lead appeared to free up the Medvedev game, and the 26-year-old was dominant in the second set as he began to find rhythm with his groundstrokes. The World No. 1 wrapped up a one-hour, 37-minute victory behind a break in the sixth game that was backed up by more relentlessly powerful serving.

"I was not playing good enough in the beginning of the match," said Medvedev when asked about how his level had improved over the course of the match. "I was missing too many shots. The serve was actually not that bad, but I was missing way too many shots."

"I managed to change it by the end of the first set, especially in the tie-break. That's when I started to miss less, play more aggressive and get depth on my ball. Second set I just continued throughout, and it was enough to break him one time and get the second set."

Despite his run in Halle coming to an end, Otte will be pleased with his performance this week in his homeland. The 28-year-old has now reached three tour-level semi-finals in 2022, and his latest run lifts him to No. 37 in the Pepperstone ATP Live Rankings.

Berrettini Powers Into Queen's Final

LONDON (Dispatches) - Italy's Matteo Berrettini reached his fourth consecutive grasscourt final as he overpowered unseeded Dutchman Botić van de Zandschulp at the Queen's Club Championship.

The sizzling heat had disappeared at the historic London venue, but defending champion Berrettini maintained his hot streak on the grass to win 6-4 6-3.

The second seed was briefly held up in the second set by a short rain delay, but he returned to break serve and cruised to victory, ending the contest with a neat drop volley.

World number 10 Berrettini, who reached the Wimbledon final last year, has now won 19 of his last 20 matches on grass.

His only loss in that spell was against Novak Djokovic in the Wimbledon final a year ago.

Berrettini was once again rock solid on his serve, dropping only four points on his first delivery.

Berrettini broke serve in a marathon sixth game and moved 5-2 ahead only to drop his own when serving for the set. He responded in style, though, breaking again to pocket the opener.

Van de Zandschulp never looked like turning it around as Berrettini remained clinical in the second set.

The 26-year-old Berrettini will face either twice Queen's champion Marin Cilic or Filip Krajinovic in the final.

Bagnaia Takes Pole Position for the German MotoGP

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Francesco Bagnaia continued his domination of the Sachsenring track by taking pole position at the German MotoGP.

Italy's Bagnaia will start the race at the top of the grid with reigning world champion and current overall leader Fabio Quartararo of France in second.

This is the third pole position of the season for Ducati rider Bagnaia, who is fifth overall in the championship standings and 66 points behind Quartararo.

Bagnaia kept his cool as temperatures exceeded 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) in the shade, soaring to 50 degrees on the track.

"We did a great job today in these conditions, it's very hot and tomorrow it will be even hotter," said Bagnaia.

Frenchman Johann Zarco secured the third spot at the front of the grid for the 10th MotoGP race of the season.

Less than a tenth of a second separated the three fastest riders.

"I'm very happy to be on the front row, our pace is pretty good, the only question is which tyre to use, but we are in a good position," said Quartararo.

Spain's Aleix Espargaro, currently second overall, Italian Fabio Di Giannantonio and Australia's Jack Miller make up the grid's second row.

Bagnaia has been in irresistible form all weekend and clocked a fastest time of one minute, 19.931 seconds in qualifying on Saturday.

The Italian set a new track record on Friday, then took turns with Spain's Aleix Espargaro lowering it further on Saturday morning.

"I was surprised to start a weekend like this, but the good feeling grew from session to session and now I feel very comfortable," Bagnaia said.

Before his arrival in Saxony, the Sachsenring track record had been held by Marc Marquez of Honda, who has won the German MotoGP every year it has held since 2013.



media, saying: "Here's me running on a underwater treadmill because my Achilles is being stubborn still (sic) I must be aging or something."

Osaka Pulls out of Wimbledon Due to Injury

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former world number one Naomi Osaka has pulled out of Wimbledon due to a left Achilles injury, the four-times Grand Slam champion said on Saturday.

Japan's Osaka suffered the injury in Madrid, forcing her to miss the WTA 1000 tournament in Rome in the leadup to the French Open where she lost in the first round.

Last week she posted a video on social media, saying: "Here's me running on a underwater treadmill because my Achilles is being stubborn still (sic) I must be aging or something."

She added on Saturday: "My Achilles still isn't right so I'll see you next time."

Osaka had said after her defeat at Roland Garros that she was not 100% sure if she would play on grass this season.

The men's ATP and women's WTA took away ranking points from the grasscourt Grand Slam after organisers the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) decided to ban participation by Russian and Belarusian players following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Osaka had reasoned that playing in the major without the possibility of earning points would not help her ranking and the decision of the authorities had reduced her motivation to play.

Osaka, who is ranked 43rd, also pulled out of Wimbledon last year after taking time off for "personal reasons" -- a month after quitting the French Open due to mental health issues.

Fury Could Return for 500m Pounds

LONDON (Dispatches) - WBC heavyweight champion Tyson Fury said he was "over" boxing, but could be tempted to return to the ring for 500 million pounds (\$611.20 million).

Fury knocked out fellow Briton Dillian Whyte in April to retain his title before telling fans he would be sticking to his promise to his wife to retire.

"I won everything, so a warrior can do what a warrior wants to do," Fury told the Daily Telegraph on Saturday. "But the actual man is done with fighting."

"Boxing -- and professional fighting -- I am so over it ... I've done everything that was asked of me, defeated every opponent I've ever faced and to be able to have a life after that -- isn't that amazing and a beautiful thing?"

When asked how much money would need to be involved to tempt him into making a return, Fury said "500 million pounds".

"So if somebody wants to pay that, I'm sure there's people out there with a lot more than that, then I'll return. But until that day, kaput, I'm out. And if someone wants to waste half a billion, I suppose my morality will be tested."

In April, Fury's wife, Paris, said the 33-year-old might return for an undisputed world title fight against the winner of Anthony Joshua's rematch with Oleksandr Usyk.



Bouchard Pulls out of Wimbledon

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard has withdrawn from the 2022 Championships with no ranking points on offer as the Canadian former world number five plots her return to the tennis circuit following surgery last year.

The men's ATP and women's WTA stripped the grasscourt Grand Slam of ranking points after its organisers decided to ban participation by Russian and Belarusian players in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Bouchard, 28, had surgery on her right shoulder last June after an injury at the Guadalajara Open a few months earlier, dropping out of the rankings due to her lengthy absence from the tour.

"Due to my shoulder surgery, I get a limited number of protected ranking (PR) entries," she said in a social media post on Friday.

"As much as I love Wimbledon and skipping it makes me sad, using a PR entry at a tournament with no ranking points doesn't make sense. I must choose wisely and use my PR entries at tournaments that will help me get back to where I want to be."

Bouchard took the women's circuit by storm in 2014 when she made the semi-finals of the Australian Open and the French Open before reaching the title round of Wimbledon.

She rose to a career-high ranking of fifth that year but her career has since been blighted by injuries and she has not been able to reach the same level again.

