

Health Ministry Announced on Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **141,373** With **Three** More Iranians Killed by The Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Nicaraguan Vice President Rosario María Murillo Zambrana Has Declared That Nicaragua Received The First Batch of COVIran Barekat Vaccine, Consisting of 200k Doses of The Iran-Made Vaccines

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THURSDAY JUNE 23, 2022 - TIR 2, 1401

2 DOMESTIC

President Calls for Boosting Scientific Strength



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran Paid for Oil Exports 90 Days After Delivery



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Germany Risks Recession as Russian Gas Crisis Deepens



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Djokovic Top Men's Seed For Wimbledon



> SEE PAGE 8

Unilateral Coercive Measures Used as Political Leverage

EHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador to the United Nations says certain states use unilateral coercive measures against other countries as political leverage.

Such measures are a major obstacle to provision of international humanitarian assistance, Majid Takht Ravanchi said on Tuesday at a meeting of the UN General Assembly.

The international community is confronted with emerging challenges in trying to address humanitarian emergency condition, Takht Ravanchi added.

The envoy condemned "imposition of the unilateral coercive measures by certain states, which use them as political leverage in their bilateral relations."

He denounced the measures "as one of the main obstacles hindering international assistance as well as one of the main sources in creating humanitarian crises."

He went on to say that Iran, which is exposed to a variety of natural disasters such as earthquakes, droughts, dust and sandstorms, has severely been damaged by illegal unilateral sanctions by the United States, Takht Ravanchi underlined.

See Page 7

SATBA Tenders for 4,000 MW Of Solar Power Plants

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) of Iran says it has invited bids for the construction of 4,000 megawatts (MW) of solar power plants as part of a drive to increase its use of renewable energy and boost the country's power grid.

The call for tender launched on June 15 is in line with the ministry of energy's plan to establish 10,000 megawatts of renewable power capacity in the country.

According to SATBA, 85 companies selected from a pool of 106 applicants were invited to participate in the tender. It followed cooperation agreements signed between governorates and SATBA to decide the sites for setting up renewable power plants in accordance with the needs of each region and province.

As a result, 152 construction sites in 30 provinces were identified and introduced to investors "in the form of 95 baskets" for the construction of power plants at a minimum capacity of 10 MW and a maximum of 250 MW, general manager of SATBA legal affairs office and contracts Ahmadreza Tavakkoli said.

See Page 7

Tehran Rejects Guterres Report On Human Rights in Iran



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Iran has dismissed as politically motivated a recent report by UN Secretary General António Guterres on human rights in Iran, saying the Islamic Republic remains committed to promoting human rights, irrespective of the fact that the report was based on false claims made by terrorists.

Asked by IRNA to comment on Guterres' report, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that Iran has sent its detailed comments and arguments on each and every paragraph of the UN chief's report to his office but Iran's response has been regrettably neglected.

The report "is based on false claims and documents based on unreliable sources, and therefore, the main text of the report is mainly based on the contents of the claims and accusations of hostile groups and terrorist cults," he said.

Speaking before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on Tuesday, UN deputy human rights chief Nada Al-Nashif presented Guterres' latest report, which strongly criticized Iran over executions in the country and other issues.

"The secretary general is deeply concerned by the increase of executions, including for drug-related offenses," Al-Nashif said.

Guterres also claimed that Iran has used coercive measures against dissidents.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman explained that the Islamic Republic continues to be fully committed to promoting human rights due to its religious beliefs and legal obligations and is ready to cooperate with UN human rights bodies.

He said the report fails to mention the responsibility of those behind anti-Iran sanctions and refuses to acknowledge the negative and destructive effects of inhumane US sanctions against the country.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights also criticized the UN chief's statement, saying it was a "non-reflection of the country's human rights developments and achievements."

It said granting the mandate of compiling a country-specific report to the secretary-general on human rights, while there is an international expert mechanism in this regard, is basically "unreasonable and illogical as well as both unnecessary and unprofessional."

Meanwhile, Khatibzadeh also described a recent UN General Assembly resolution about the situation of human rights in Iran as "politically motivated" and "unfair."

"As has been repeatedly stressed, such resolutions are politically motivated, biased, and unfair," adding that the resolution was unconstructive and lacked support from the majority of member states.

Strong Earthquake Kills at Least 280 in Afghanistan

KABUL (Dispatches) - An earthquake of magnitude 6.1 killed at least 280 people in Afghanistan early on Wednesday, officials said, adding that hundreds of people were injured and the toll was likely to rise as information trickled in from remote mountain villages.

The quake struck about 44 km (27 miles) from the city of Khost, near the Pakistani border, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) said. "Strong and long jolts," a resident of the Afghan capital, Kabul, posted on the website of the European Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC).

"It was strong," said a resident of the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar.

Photographs on Afghan media showed houses reduced to rubble and bodies covered in blankets on the ground.

The EMSC put the magnitude at 6.1 though the USGS said it was 5.9.

Most of the confirmed deaths were in the eastern Afghan province of Paktika, where 255 people had been killed and more than 200 injured, said interior ministry official Salahuddin Ayubi.

In Khost province, 25 people had been killed and 90 taken to hospital, he said.

"The death toll is likely to rise as some of the villages are in remote areas in the mountains and it will take some time to collect details," he said. Authorities had launched a rescue operation and helicopters were being used to reach the injured and take in medical supplies and food, he added.

Shaking was felt by about 119 million people in Pakistan, Afghanistan and India, the EMSC said on Twitter.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties in Pakistan.

The disaster comes as Afghanistan has been enduring a severe economic crisis since the Taliban took over August, as U.S.-led international forces were withdrawing after two decades of war. In response to the Taliban takeover, many governments have imposed sanctions on Afghanistan's banking sector and cut billions of dollars worth of development aid. Humanitarian aid has continued and international agencies such as the United Nations operate in the country.

An Afghan foreign ministry spokesman said they would welcome help from any international organisation.

Large parts of south Asia are seismically active because a tectonic plate known as the Indian plate is pushing north into the Eurasian plate. In 2015, an earthquake struck the remote Afghan northeast, killing several hundred people in Afghanistan and nearby northern Pakistan.

ViewPoint Real But Bitter Confession

In recent years many Western experts and analysts and even officials have repeatedly admitted that Iran is becoming a major regional and even world power especially in the military sector and it seems because of this power that the West does not dare to think of any military action against the Islamic Republic of Iran and it has resorted to imposing sanctions or psywar.

On Sunday once again one American publication acknowledged that the Islamic Republic of Iran has progressed in the military section and it has now most devastating weapons. The 19FortyFive said in an article that Iran possesses submarines equipped with torpedoes that can strike a U.S. aircraft carrier and severely damage its structure. This is the first time that a Western publication or source points to Iran's power in something except drones or missiles.

The 19FortyFive said in an article that "although U.S. defenses are superior in every way, the potential for Iran's successful destruction of a U.S. naval aircraft carrier is not impossible."

"The Iranian Navy's fleet of Kilo-class submarines is equipped with torpedoes that could severely impact the structure of a carrier," it said.

The article also noted that Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has greatly expanded and advanced its weapons arsenals in recent years. Although this confession is real one but it is very bitter for the West to swallow it.

Moreover, the Islamic Republic "has been able to develop longer-range ballistic missiles that will ultimately be capable of hitting U.S. assets."

According to the article, the Islamic Republic "practiced destroying U.S. military assets, including a naval aircraft carrier, in its semi-regular wargame exercises."

In recent years and months, the Western officials have repeatedly pointed to Iran's detrimental military power which can destroy the invaders.

In several occasions over the past year, U.S. Central Command chief Gen. Kenneth McKenzie has made surprisingly frank public comments about allied vulnerability to Tehran's multidirectional UAV threat. In April 2021 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, he noted that the small and medium armed drones being proliferated by Iran and its proxies "present a new and complex threat to our forces and those of our partners and allies. For the first time since the Korean War, we are operating without complete air superiority. Until we are able to develop and field a networked capability to detect and defeat [UAVs], the advantage will remain with the attacker."

See Page 7

EU Says Nuclear Deal At Hand in Vienna

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - A spokesman for the European Union foreign policy chief has said the Iran 2015 nuclear deal revival talks are continuing and "we are very close to a deal."

Peter Stano added that a deal will ensure the full implementation of the nuclear agreement, otherwise known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA.

He said, "We have yet to reach the finish line."

Stano reiterated that there is still a chance to resume the implementation of the JCPOA and that EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell and his team are trying to make efforts in order for the Vienna talks to bear fruit.

Borrell's spokesman added that the top EU diplomat will do his utmost to make sure all sides will return to full compliance with the JCPOA.

Stano added that the EU is worried about the IAEA's recent anti-Iran resolution and that's why it is pushing for the full implementation of the nuclear deal.

See Page 7

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FM Congratulates Colombian President-Elect Petro

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian congratulation Gustavo Petro on his election as Colombia's president.

The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes and congratulates the Colombian people on their participation in the presidential election in a free and democratic atmosphere, Amirabdollahian wrote in a tweet on Wednesday.

He also congratulated Gustavo Petro, the president-elect of Colombia, on his victory and wished development and prosperity for the Colombian people and success for Petro.

A leftist politician, Petro was elected as president of Colombia in a presidential election held on Sunday.

President Calls for Boosting Scientific Strength

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Referring to the long-term closure of schools due to the outbreak of coronavirus in the past two years, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi stressed the need to review appropriate strategies to boost the scientific strength and promote education at various levels of education and said, "The Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution should play a more effective role in strengthening the country's educational bases".

In the meeting of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution that was held on Tuesday evening, Raisi described the better use of capacities and effective support of the country's elites in order to accelerate the scientific progress of the country and help provide the necessary context in this sector as the responsibilities of the council.

Referring to the long-term closure of schools due to the outbreak of coronavirus in the past two years, the President stressed the need to review appropriate strategies to boost the scientific strength and promote education at various levels of education and said, "The Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution should play a more effective role in strengthening the country's educational bases".



During the meeting, members of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution stressed the need to prepare a detailed report on the state of the elite community and propose solutions to strengthen the country's scientific community in order to maintain the country's scientific and technological advantages in the region and the world in various sciences.

In today's meeting, the statistical report of the Comprehensive Scientific Map of the country and the report and explanations of the Minister of Health and Medical Education on the ratio of dentists to population and geographical distribution of dentists across the country were presented.

The members of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution also reviewed the strategies to increase the enrolment of dental students with emphasis on insurance coverage of services.

Systematic Racism Deeply Rooted in UK History

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi slammed the UK's scheme to electronically tag asylum seekers, saying that systematic racism had a deep root in the country's history.

"The UK's systematic racism and vie for dehumanization is deeply-rooted in its history, in which you see a total disregard for and horrendous violations of human rights!" wrote in a tweet on Wednesday.

The tweet follows reports that the UK government had a scheme to electronically tag asylum seekers on arrival in the country.

The Guardian reported on Sunday that the Home Office was accused of "victim blaming" after launching a scheme to electronically tag asylum seekers arriving in the UK.

Ministers faced calls to abandon the "farce of a policy" after suggestions that those who recently avoided being sent to Rwanda after a legal challenge could be among the first to be tagged under the program, according to the Guardian.

Iran, Uzbekistan FMs Stress Broadening Ties in All Fields

TEHRAN (MNA) – Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan Vladimir Norov in a telephone conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian stressed the need to expand and broaden relations in all fields.

During the phone talks, the two sides explored avenues for the development of ties in various fields and emphasized the need for bolstering parliamentary relations, economic cooperation, development of trade relations and also advancement of new plans of cooperation.

The current state and prospects for the development of Uzbek-Iranian relations in various fields were also discussed.

The timetable, agenda and organizational aspects of upcoming events were reviewed between the two foreign ministers, including as part of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The Islamic Republic of Iran recognized the independence of Uzbekistan on December 25, 1991, and on May 10, 1992, political relations were established between the two countries.

Shiraz Hosting Exhibition on Iranian Production, Knowledge-Based Enterprises

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The First Exhibition on Iranian Production and Knowledge-Based Enterprises opened on Tuesday at Fars International Permanent Fairground in Shiraz and it will end on June 24.

According to the reports, Fars International Exhibitions Company as a part of exhibition industry and leader of national economy and production holds this exhibition in line with the slogan of the year for presence of the top economic, industrial and production activists focused on the presence of the knowledge-based companies.

The CEO of Fars International Exhibitions Company Mr. Ali Farhadi pointed to cooperation between private and government sectors of Fars Province in holding the first exhibition on Iranian knowledge-based companies in Shiraz as the host, adding that knowledge-based producers with mixing knowledge and production and effective utilization of it can improve the quality and quantity of the products and they can take a big step for increasing productivity and moving on course to the growth and development and access to the knowledge-based products.

The operator of the exhibition Mr. Javad Moradpoor said that the exhibition is an opportunity for identifying the needs and unlike other exhibitions it display capabilities. He added that some 217 state-run and private companies along with educational institutes have participated in this event. He admitted that despite talks with foreign companies to participate in the event, they did not participate and only Iranian knowledge-based companies are in this exhibition.

He reiterated that 167 knowledge-based companies are in the exhibition as well as 47 top producers and it is expected some 6m people to visit the exhibition.

Meanwhile in the opening ceremony, the executive manager of Fars International Exhibitions Company Mr. Qasem Mansouri said that the exhibition is an opportunity for the knowledge-based products to be displayed for the public in order to find their ways into export markets.

The exhibition is underway on a land around 10,000 meters with several halls and it shows that Shiraz is the flag-bearer of showing knowledge-based-Iranian products and Fars Province the pioneer in supporting the knowledge-based.



Australian Investors Eager To Cooperate With Iran



TABRIZ (IRNA) - Australian Ambassador to Iran has said that numerous tradesmen and investors in Australia are interested in collaborating with Iranian businesses.

Lyndall Sachs made the remarks in a meeting with the chairman of the Tabriz Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture Younes Zhaeleh, adding that Australia and Iran enjoy proper areas of cooperation in exchanging agricultural, mineral, medical, and educational fields.

As to collaboration in the fields of startups and universities between the two countries, she emphasized that the young and educated workforce in Iran has created a very high capacity for the country to develop cooperation with other countries.

The ambassador further noted that government does not play a key role in the Australian economy and that the private sector has a great say in the country's economy, so given the fact that customs tariffs are low in Australia, grounds for mutual cooperation should be identified.

Australia has resumed normal flights after the COIVD-19 pandemic, she said, adding that Australian tradesmen are very active in the UAE and that numerous Australia-made goods are exported to Dubai and then re-exported to other parts of the world.

When the world is experiencing a hike in prices of many commodities, Iran is under sanctions, she said, noting that Australia is not happy with the imposition of sanctions on Iranians and that given the fact that foodstuff and medicines are not sanctioned, Australia and Iran can pursue trade ties, especially in these areas.

The Islamic Republic enjoys a very good geographical situation and is somehow a trade hub in the region, the ambassador said, adding that Chabahar Port can be used as the starting point to deliver cargo into Iran and then re-export to many other states.

For his part, Zhaeleh pointed to the fact that East Azarbaijan Province has appropriate industrial and agricultural capacities to be invested in by foreign investors.

The provincial official also noted that Tabriz, the capital city of East Azarbaijan Province, and Australia have had a long-run collaboration in terms of export of carpets from Tabriz and import of wool from Australia.

Referring to the insufficient level of mutual trade between Australia and Iran, he expressed hope that trade relations between Australia and East Azarbaijan Province will improve in the future.

Zhaeleh went on to say that the Islamic Republic of Iran is the best country in the region for investment because energy prices and taxes are cheap, foreign investors are exempted from tax payment, there is educated and professional manpower and the government supports investment by foreign investors.

Detained Mossad Agents Planned To Kill Iranian Nuclear Scientists

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian judiciary official says the three agents working for the Israeli Mossad spy agency, who were arrested in April, were planning to assassinate Iranian nuclear scientists.

"The arrest of these Mossad operatives followed a complicated intelligence operation that lasted eight months," Mehdi Shamsabadi, the prosecutor general of Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan, told reporters.

"Ample evidence has been gathered against them in such a way that they did not even make any objection when a warrant for their arrest was issued," he added.

The official noted that some members of the cell have been arrested in the country's southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan Province while other members and operatives have been detained outside the province by Iran's intelligence forces.

"The defendants have confessed that some of them had been in direct contact with Mossad agents," Shamsabadi emphasized. He said the case is currently under preliminary investigation and that an indictment would be filed and sent to court soon.

The official did not specify the nationalities of the agents.

In a statement on April 20, Iran's Intelligence Ministry announced the arrest of the three Mossad agents in Sistan and Baluchestan.

Iran Red Crescent, Spanish Red Cross Ink MoU

GENEVA (IP) - Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and Spanish Red Cross signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Geneva, Swiss.

The Head of Iran's Red Crescent Society, Pir-Hossein Kolivand, met with the Head of the Spanish Red Cross, Javier Senent Garcia on Tuesday.

Kolivand underlined the issues of mutual interest in broadening bilateral ties and using shared experiences to promote the capability of the two sides against accidents and crises.

Pointing to the cooperation between IRCS and the Spanish Red Cross, the Iranian official emphasized the need to establish a joint committee, noting that the representatives of both states would soon implement the MoU.

Javier Senent Garcia, for his part, called IRCS a solid and successful population with valuable experiences and pointed to the interest of the Spanish Red Cross to deepen ties with the IRCS.

Iran Official Says Selling Oil Becomes Better

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The vice president and the head of the Plan and Budget Organization of Iran announced here on Wednesday that selling oil today has become better than before.

The price of oil and its export have increased and selling oil has become better, Massoud Mir-Kazemi told reporters on the sidelines of the cabinet session in Tehran this morning.

Also, the amount of the country's oil "on the water" has been sold, the official underlined.

The new Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi took office in August, 2021.



Iran, Azerbaijan National Libraries to Boost Cooperation

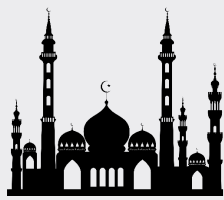
TEHRAN (MNA) – Head of the National Library and Archives of Iran Alireza Mokhtarpour and Anar Karimov, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan in a meeting discussed developing Iran-Azerbaijan cultural ties.

Referring to the long history of cooperation between the National Library and Archives of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mokhtarpour called for establishing working groups to implement the signed MoUs between the two organizations.

"The National Library and Archives of Iran will cooperate with the Republic of Azerbaijan. These two countries have always been friends and companions throughout history," he added. Karimov, for his part, described the Iranian national library as a valuable treasure and called for developing cooperation.

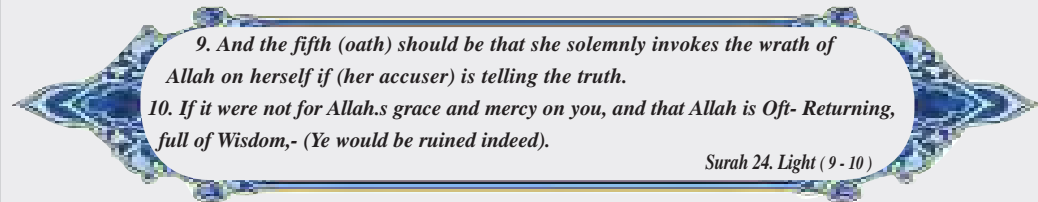
At the end of the meeting, the commemorative plaque of the National Library of Iran along with exquisite Iranian artwork was presented to the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Karimov also presented Mokhtarpour with several Azeri old books.

The Azeri culture minister also held meetings with Iranian officials during his visit to Iran, including his Iranian counterpart and the Iranian tourism minister Ezzatollah Zarghami.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:06
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:03
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:49



Iran Paid for Oil Exports 90 Days After Delivery

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Finance minister Ehsan Khandouzi says the country receives revenues of its oil exports no later than 90 days from shipment delivery dates despite American sanctions that restrict both purchases of Iranian oil and the related payments.

In remarks made on Tuesday, Khandouzi suggested that Iran has been paid regularly for oil exports since the current administration came to office in Tehran in August.

He said the government has also managed to access some of the funds that were used to be blocked in foreign bank accounts and were related to Iranian oil exports dating back to before 2018, when the US imposed its sanctions on Tehran.

The remarks come amid statements by senior government officials and media reports showing that Iran has increased its oil exports while being able to receive the revenues despite the US sanctions.

A Monday report by Reuters news agency showed Iranian oil supply to China in May had accounted for nearly 7% of the East Asian country's total crude imports over that month which amounted to 10.8 million barrels per day.

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said on Tuesday that revenues derived from exports of crude, condensate, oil products, natural gas and petrochemical products had increased by 40% year on year in the three months to late June.

Owji on Thursday announced the receipt of \$1.7 billion from Iraq for natural gas supplies delivered to the Arab country over the past years.



Government authorities say they expect other customers of Iranian energy, including South Korea, to settle their debts and avoid blaming American sanctions for their inability to pay.

Iran has more than \$7 billion worth of funds in two South Korean banks for supplies of crude and condensate that took place before 2018.

Meanwhile Khandouzi defended the government's decision to eliminate the preferential forex rate of 42,000 toman per dollar and said this decision will help the national economy and will cut the hands of the smugglers and rant-seekers. He reiterated that people will benefit of this decision because the preferential forex rate just helped few people to get fatter at the expense of the people's poverty.

He added that the 13th government is determined to cut dependence of the public livelihood to the imports and oil and the economy should depend on the tax revenues.

Khandouzi went on to say that economic experiences of the country in the past decade should not be repeated in terms of dependence and fragility. He added that the former government was opposed to the tax on the capital earning but the current government supports it but it cannot implement it unless the government approves the law.

Iran Elected as Member of ICA Board of Directors

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) with winning majority of votes was elected as one of the 15 members of board of directors of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA).

According to the public relations of the ICC, during the General Assembly meeting of International Cooperative the head of Iran Chamber of Cooperatives Mr. Bahman Abdollahi won majority votes to be elected as one of the members of the board of directors of the ICA. 22 candidates competed for 15 seats of the board and Mr. Abdollahi was one of the elected members.

This is for the first time that Iran in the history of the ICA wins a seat in the high-ranking level.

Over cooperative leaders from 60 countries gathered on Monday June 21 in Seville, Spain, for the general assembly meeting of the ICA and electing the chairman of the ICA and board of directors.



China's First Int'l Cargo Train Leaves for Tehran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - China's first International Trans-Caspian cargo train left the Yii Chwan Train Station in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in northwest China for Iran's Anzali Port to be China's first Trans-Caspian cargo train to West Asia.

China's ICNS news reported that the train left China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region on Monday to pass first through that country's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, and then through Kazakhstan and the Caspian Sea to reach the Anzali Port in Iran.

The train is scheduled to arrive in Iran's northern Anzali Port in about twenty days.

The train is carrying 51 containers with a total weight of around 1,400 tons and a value of over 3 million and 60,000 dollars.

This new route's length decreases the length of the trip by twenty days, which is economizing 897 dollars per container.

Nanotechnology of Domestic Company Saves Iran \$5m

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Making use of Iranian nanotechnology has saved the country's oil industry some \$5 million, according to an oil official.

National Iranian South Oil Company has used the nanotechnology of a domestic company for the overhaul and maintenance of 22 oil wells, according to Ramin Roghanian, a senior official of the company said, adding that signing the contract for the sale of the technology would save the country some \$5 million.

National Iranian South Oil Company – as the biggest subsidiary of the National Iranian Oil Company – is responsible for the development of 45 oilfields of the country, the official said.

He said that the company is capable of producing over 2.9 million bpd of oil which accounts for a roughly 75% of the country's total oil output.

Noting that one of the main essentials of continuity of production is the overhaul of the wells which requires drilling peckers, he said that providing such peckers would inflict heavy costs on the company. The official said that the National Iranian South Oil Company put the feasibility study of producing drilling peckers on the agenda and therefore began cooperating with a company affiliated to Sharif University of Technology.

He reiterated that the National Iranian South Oil Company has signed a contract for the purchase of some 100 peckers from the domestic company which will keep \$5 million from going outside the country.

Bulgaria Keen to Cooperate With Kashan



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Bulgarian Ambassador to Tehran Nikolina Kuneva visited the historical city of Kashan and met with Dr. Hassan Bakhshandeh Amnieh, Mayor of Kashan Municipality.

During his two-day visit to Kashan and meeting with Mayor of Kashan, opportunities for cooperation in various fields, including culture, tourism, trade and exchange of experience, between the municipalities of the Bulgarian city of Kazanlak and Kashan were discussed. The two sides highlighted the similarities in some traditions of Bulgaria and Iran, as well as the existing potential for closer interaction between the two cities, being well-known symbols of rose cultivation.

Ambassador Kuneva also met with Mr. Ahmad Danai Nia, Representative of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran, and with Mr. Seyyed Ali Dianat, Vice-president of the Kashan Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture.

During her visit, Ms. Kuneva had the opportunity to visit prominent historical sights of Kashan, namely “Tepe Sialk,” “Fin Garden” and “Borujerdi House”, which represent the rich cultural heritage of this city and the surrounding areas.

Tehran, Baku Urged to Join Efforts To Preserve Historical Monuments

TEHRAN (IP) - The Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran considered the Khodaafarin Bridge as a sign of Iran-Azerbaijan friendship and stressed the need for a joint effort for global registration of Iftar.

The meaning of Iftar is a meal taken by Muslims at sundown to break the daily fast during Ramadan.

Ezzatollah Zarghami, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, met with the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan Anar Karimov Tuesday morning and discussed the commonalities between Iran and Azerbaijan.

Referring to the close and old relations between Iran and Azerbaijan in all cultural, social, and political dimensions, Zarghami added: “Our nations consider themselves close to each other and governments should do their best to remove obstacles and enhance proximity among nations.”

The top official noted the importance of the Khodaafarin Bridge in ties between the two countries, saying: “This bridge, which is located on the border between the two countries, is a symbol of the establishment of a bridge of friendship between Iran and Azerbaijan.”

The Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts pointed to the areas of joint cooperation and added: “Preservation and restoration of historical monuments and buildings is one of the most important missions of this ministry.”

“We are ready to cooperate in this field and restore the mosques that were destroyed during the war in Karabakh,” he added.

The Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and



Handicrafts preserved the cultural and civilizational honors between Iran and Azerbaijan and stated: “Culture must unite the countries. Common enemies seek to undermine the rich culture of nations, but we must strive to unite all of humanity through common culture.”

Iranian official named Nezami Ganjavi's as one of the most important

cultural commonalities between the two countries, adding: “This great and famous poet is one of the honors of humanity. We must pay attention to the content of his poems and use them to create unity.”

The Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan for his part said: “The political relations between the two countries are at a high level and this issue can support the promotion of other relations.”

He also stressed the cultural and civilizational commonalities of Iran and Azerbaijan and the strengthening of these cultural roots, as well as the development of cooperation in the fields of cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts.

Karimov also referred to the Khodaafarin Bridge as a Bridge of Friendship, adding: “This bridge is the most important connecting route of the Silk Road between East and West, and we are trying to register it in UNESCO. We have prepared a memorandum of understanding for the registration of this bridge and sent it to you, which I hope will be signed during the trip to Baku.”

The meeting was attended by Ali Darabi, Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Javid Ramadan, Deputy Minister of State Services for Preservation, Development and Reconstruction of Azerbaijan's Cultural Heritage, and Aq Joonesh, Head of the Department of International Affairs of Azerbaijan.

Gas Production at South Pars Phase 11 to Start in October

TEHRAN (MNA) - Oil Minister Javad Owji predicted Tuesday that as much as 670 million cubic feet of gas will be extracted by the domestic companies in phase 11 of the South Pars gas field from October.

The Iranian oil minister briefed them on the latest situation of gas production in South Pars and the work on the development of the Phase 11 of the giant gas field in the Persian Gulf which is shared with Qatar.

“Although the last and most uncertain phase of South Pars was phase 11, and the French Total company, despite having studied it, stopped work on it and gave up the project due to sanctions, during the President Raisi's government and at the start of the new Oil Ministry, the issue of extracting from the phase 11 was put on agenda and we have made the beginning of the implementation of phase 11 our priority, and with the measures and initiatives taken by our colleagues in the ministry, I promise you that we will start the production at phase 11 in October,” Owji said.

“It is expected that 670 million cubic feet of gas per day will be extracted from South Pars Phase 11 and for this purpose we have used the capacity and capabilities of domestic companies,” he added.

Iran to Set Up Industrial-Economic Fair in Karachi

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's Consul General in Karachi of Pakistan on Tuesday announced that Iran's specialized exhibition will be held in port city of Karachi in the coming months.

Introducing industrial and economic capacities and achievements of Iran and deepening cooperation with eastern neighbor, Pakistan, have been described as the main aim behind organizing the fair.

Hassan Nourian Iran's Consul General to Karachi of Pakistan pointed to his recent visit to an industrial town entitled “SITE” which is considered as one of the largest industrial units in Pakistan, home to 4,200 industrial and production units, and stated that taking advantage of trade, industrial and economic capacities of the two neighboring countries has been put atop agenda.

Iran is seriously determined to expand its cooperation with Pakistan in industrial, economic and trade fields, Nourian added.

Iran's specialized exhibition will be held in Karachi of Pakistan in Dec. 2022 with the aim of introducing industrial and economic capacities of the county to Pakistani importers and producers, he underlined.

U.S. Confirms Death of Second Citizen in Ukraine

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States confirmed that a second American was killed fighting for Ukraine, as it warned of risks amid worries over two other U.S. citizens captured battling Russia.

The State Department said that 52-year-old Stephen Zabielski died in Ukraine and that it was providing his family with consular assistance.

"We once again reiterate U.S. citizens should not travel to Ukraine due to the active armed conflict and the singling out of U.S. citizens in Ukraine by Russian government security officials," a State Department spokesperson said.



Mahatma Gandhi's Grandson Out of Indian Presidential Race

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The grandson of India's independence leader Mahatma Gandhi has dropped out of the race to become president after his name was proposed by an alliance of opposition parties.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi, 77, a diplomat turned politician said he had declined the request of the 17-party alliance to be their nominee for the largely ceremonial role.

"I am most grateful to them. But having considered the matter deeply I see that the Opposition's candidate should be one who will generate a national consensus and a national atmosphere beside Opposition unity," Gandhi said in a statement on Monday. National and state lawmakers are slated to vote on a new president on July 18.



Thousands Walk out in Britain's Biggest Rail Strike in 30 Years



LONDON (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of workers walked out on the first day of Britain's biggest rail strike in 30 years on Tuesday with passengers facing further chaos as both the unions and government vowed to stick to their guns in a row over pay.

Some of the more than 40,000 rail staff who are due to strike on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday gathered at picket lines from dawn, causing major disruption across the network and leaving major stations deserted. The London Underground metro was also mostly closed due to a separate strike.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, under pressure to do more to help Britons facing the toughest economic hit in decades, said the strike would harm businesses still recovering from COVID.

Unions have said the rail strikes could mark the start of a "summer of discontent" with teachers, medics, waste disposal workers and even barristers heading for industrial action as inflation pushes 10%.

"The British worker needs a pay rise," Mick Lynch, secretary-general of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers told Sky News. "They need job security and decent conditions."

During the morning rush-hour, roads were busier than normal with cars, bikes and pedestrians. Hospital staff said some colleagues slept at work overnight to maintain care.

Johnson told his cabinet the strikes were "wrong and unnecessary" and said his message to the country was that they needed to be ready to "stay the course" as improvements to the way railways are run was in the public's interest.

A survey by pollsters YouGov earlier this month found public opinion divided, with around half of those questioned opposed to the action and just over a third saying they supported it.

Leo Rudolph, a 36-year-old lawyer who walked to work, said he would become more disgruntled the longer the dispute holds. "This isn't going to be an isolated occurrence, right?" he told Reuters.

Passengers board a bus outside Victoria Station, in London

Inflation has soared across Europe on the back of a major rise in energy costs and Britain is not alone in facing strikes.

Action over the cost of living in Belgium caused disruption at Brussels Airport on Monday, while Germany's most powerful union is pushing for large wage increases and in France President Emmanuel Macron is facing unrest over pension reforms.

Britain's economy initially rebounded strongly from the COVID-19 pandemic but a combination of labor shortages, supply chain disruption, inflation and post-Brexit trade problems has prompted warnings of a recession.

The government says it is supporting millions of the poorest households but it warns that above-inflation pay rises would damage the fundamentals of the economy and prolong the problem.

Britain's railways were effectively nationalized in the pandemic, with train operating companies paid a fixed fee to run services, while the tracks and infrastructure are managed by state-owned Network Rail.

The RMT wants its members to receive a pay rise of at least 7%, but it has said Network Rail offered 2%, with another 1% linked to industry reforms that it opposes. The government has been criticised for not being involved in the talks. Ministers say unions must resolve it directly with employers.

The outbreak of industrial action has drawn comparison with the 1970s, when Britain faced widespread labour strikes including the 1978-79 "winter of discontent".

Russia Threatens Lithuania With Consequences Over Blocked Rail to Enclave

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia threatened to punish Lithuania with measures that would have a "serious negative impact" for blocking some shipments by rail to Moscow's Baltic Sea enclave of Kaliningrad, the latest dispute over sanctions imposed over war in Ukraine.

Within Ukraine, the battle for the eastern Donbas region has become a brutal war of attrition, with Russia concentrating its overwhelming firepower on a Ukrainian-held pocket of the region that Moscow claims on behalf of its separatist proxies.

The proxies said they were advancing towards the town of Lysychansk, now Ukraine's main bastion in the area of heaviest fighting after most of the neighboring city of Sievierodonetsk fell under Russian control.

Ukraine, its forces and weaponry dwarfed by Russia's, has begged the West to send more and better artillery. Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov announced on Tuesday the arrival of powerful German self-propelled howitzers.

Blaming Western sanctions, Russia has started pumping reduced volumes of gas to Europe via Ukraine. German Economy Minister Robert Habeck said the reduced flows amounted to an economic attack on Germany that



"Arrogant" Macron Urged to Compromise to Win Support

PARIS (Dispatches) - French opposition leaders told beleaguered President Emmanuel Macron that they would not make life easy for him as he sought a way to avoid political paralysis after this weekend's election setback in parliament.

Macron should fire his prime minister, some opponents said, after he earlier refused to accept her resignation, review his reform plans and drop his top-down approach to power.

While he enjoyed full control over parliament over the past five years, Macron now needs to find support from opponents, after disaffected voters angry over inflation and his perceived indifference delivered a hung parliament on Sunday.

It will not be easy. The election result may herald an era of political instability not seen for decades in France.

"I told the president that it was out of the question to enter into a coalition deal, that would be a betrayal of our voters," Christian Jacob, leader of the conservative Les Republicains, said after meeting Macron, whom he had earlier described as "arrogant."

Les Republicains provide the most obvious place for Macron to find support. The conservatives' economic platform is largely compatible with Macron's, including his plans to raise the retirement age by three years to 65.

However, the conservatives, whose past presidents include Nicolas Sarkozy and Jacques Chirac, have so far ruled out a formal German-style coalition pact.

Even so, Jacob said his party would be "responsible," seemingly opening the door to potentially messy bill-by-bill negotiations. But even then, he stressed, it was up to Macron to make the effort to take their proposals on board.

Jean-Luc Melenchon, a hard-left veteran who united the left in an alliance that won the second-biggest number of MPs, told reporters that Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne had to go.

"We're just wasting our time," he said bluntly, in a sign of how combative his camp plans to be. French President Macron arrives at the Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, in Romania

Ecuador Military Calls Indigenous Protests a "Grave Threat"

QUITO (Dispatches) - Thousands of Ecuadorans took to the streets for a ninth day of Indigenous-led fuel price protests, as the military vowed to defend the country's democracy against what it called a "grave threat."

Called by the powerful Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Conaie), the demonstrations have seen roads barricaded countrywide, cost the economy tens of millions of dollars and left dozens injured.

"Ecuador's democracy faces a grave threat from the concerted actions of... people who are preventing the free movement of the majority of Ecuadorans," Defense Minister Luis Lara told a press conference, flanked by the heads of the army, navy and air force.

The armed forces, he warned, "will not allow attempts to break the constitutional order or any action against democracy and the laws of the republic."

Conaie -- credited with helping topple three presidents between 1997 and 2005 -- called the demonstrations as Ecuadorans increasingly struggle to make ends meet.

Indigenous people comprise more than a million of Ecuador's 17.7 million inhabitants and wield much political clout, but are disproportionately affected by rising inflation, unemployment and poverty exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

Thousands of protesters entered Quito from the south and north on Monday, on foot and on the backs of trucks, to reinforce protesters in the capital, where they burnt tires and tree branches in the streets -- and were back out in the streets on Tuesday morning.

At least some in the crowd, many wielding sticks and others draped in the Ecuadorian flag, or carrying children in their arms, said the president's ouster was precisely what they sought.

"We are the people and we will stay here until the end," Victor Taday, a 50-year-old Indigenous resident of Quito originally from Chimborazo province, told AFP Monday night -- as similar marches took place in other parts of the country.

It was time for Lasso to "go away," he said.

Fuel prices have risen sharply since 2020, almost doubling for diesel from \$1 to \$1.90 per gallon and rising from \$1.75 to \$2.55 for gasoline.

Conaie is demanding a price cut to \$1.50 a gallon for diesel and \$2.10 for gasoline.

It also wants jobs, food price controls and a commitment to renegotiating the personal bank loans of about four million families.

The movement has since been joined by students, workers and other Ecuadorans also feeling the economic pinch.



Floods Swamp More of Bangladesh And India, Millions Marooned

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Floodwaters inundated more of Bangladesh and northeast India, officials said, as authorities struggled to reach more than 9.5 million people stranded with little food and drinking water after days of intense rain.

Particularly heavy monsoon rain has brought the worst floods in more than a century in some parts of low-lying Bangladesh and have killed at least 69 people over the past two weeks there and in northeast India's Assam state.

"People are without food. They are not even getting drinking water since floodwater submerged all tube-wells," Abu Bakar, 26, a resident of hard-hit Sunamganj district in northeastern Bangladesh, told Reuters by telephone.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina flew over some of the flood-hit areas on Tuesday, looking down on huge tracts covered by brown water, broken up by occasional outcrop of land, television footage showed.

The monsoon brings heavy rains to South Asia between June and October, often triggering floods, especially in low-lying areas like Bangladesh, where rivers swollen with waters pouring out of the Himalayas often burst their banks.

Extreme weather in South Asia has become more frequent in and environmentalists warn that climate change could lead to ever more serious disasters.

Atiqul Haque, director general of Bangladesh's Department of Disaster Management, said three more districts in northern and central parts of the country had been flooded.

"The local administration along with army, navy, police, fire and emergency services personnel and volunteers have been engaged in rescue and relief operations," Haque said.

The floods in the Sylhet region, which includes Sunamganj, are the most severe in more than a century and the U.N. children's fund said 90% of its health facilities have been inundated, and cases of waterborne diseases are increasing.

UNICEF said it was urgently seeking \$2.5 million to respond to the emergency in Bangladesh and it was working with the government to supply water purification tablets, emergency medical supplies and water containers.

"Four million people, including 1.6 million children, stranded by flash floods in northeastern Bangladesh are in urgent need of help," UNICEF said in a statement.



Japan Judo Hits Crisis Point as Bullied, Burnt-Out Children Quit

FUKUROI (Dispatches) - Japan is the home of judo but a brutal win-at-all-costs mentality, corporal punishment and pressure to lose weight are driving large numbers of children to quit, raising fears for the sport's future in its traditional powerhouse.

Underlining the scale of the problem, the All Japan Judo Federation cancelled a prestigious nationwide tournament for children as young as 10, warning they were being pushed too hard.

A pressure group dedicated to those injured or killed while practising the martial art says that 121 judo-related deaths were reported in Japanese schools between 1983 and 2016.

Japan regularly dominates the Olympics judo medal table but federation president Yasuhiro Yamashita told AFP that the values of the sport are being lost as parents and coaches chase short-term glory.

"Judo is a sport that emphasises humanity," said Yamashita, who is also the president of the Japanese Olympic Committee and won gold at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

"If you see no worth in anything but winning, and the result is all that matters, that gets distorted." The number of people taking part in judo in Japan has plummeted by almost half since 2004 to about 120,000, according to the federation's figures.

Children account for the steepest decline in numbers.

Reports have emerged of primary school children being forced to lose weight — sometimes up to six kilogrammes — so they can compete in a lighter division.

Young children are taught the same dangerous moves as Olympic athletes and intense training regimes can leave them injured or burnt out.

Parents and coaches have been known to berate referees during matches and corporal punishment still exists, despite reforms in a sport that has been plagued by abuse and bullying scandals over the years.

The All Japan Judo Federation decided to take action in March by cancelling a national tournament for elite children aged between 10 and 12, planning to replace it with events such as lectures and practice sessions.

The backlash was fierce with angry parents and coaches accusing the federation of dashing children's dreams and jeopardising Japan's status as the bastion of judo.

Junior high school student Rion Fukuo, 13, a regional champion last year, told AFP at her judo club in the central Shizuoka region that she "feels sorry" for this year's primary school children who have no tournament to aim for.

Kosuke Moroi, whose 12-year-old daughter attends the same club, said he was "disappointed" when he first heard the news but concluded it was "a good decision" after learning more about the reasons.

Yamashita said scrapping the competition had put a spotlight on "a problem that involves Japanese society".

"It's been two-and-a-half months since we decided to cancel the competition and people are still debating it on TV and in newspapers," he said, adding that most opinions "have been in favour".

Judo and other martial arts were used for military training in Japan before World War II and servicemen would visit schools to give lessons.

Martial arts were banned during the post-war US occupation but they later were recognised as sports, with judo making its Olympic debut at the 1964 Tokyo Games.

Noriko Mizoguchi, a Japanese judoka who won silver at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, said a belief that corporal punishment makes children stronger was still common in Japan.

"One thing that has stuck to coaching in Japanese sports is that it doesn't use words, it uses violence," she said.

"There's a co-dependence, like with domestic violence, as if being hit is like being shown affection."

Coaches who use corporal punishment can be stripped of their licences but parents are harder to control. Hisako Kurata, a representative of the Japan Judo Accident Victims Association, said most parents

"don't think about the danger and just want their child to win".

"Parents think that if their child wins a title, they'll be happy, they think they're doing it for their child," said Kurata, whose 15-year-old son died in 2011 as a result of a head injury sustained at his high-school judo club.

"The parents end up having the same win-at-all-costs mentality as the judo club and they contribute to it," Mizoguchi, who has coached in France, said judo was "not fun" for Japanese children and that the "macho culture" surrounding the sport has had its day.

"You have to treat each kid with care and have a long-term vision for the future, otherwise Japanese judo has reached its limit," she said.

"Old-school coaches are scared that if we do away with the kids' competitions, Japanese judo will lose its strength.

"I think it will actually become stronger."



Air Freight Demand Begins to Wane

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The strong air cargo demand that has helped passenger-deprived airlines stay afloat over the past two years is showing signs of softening amid decades-high inflation that is pushing up costs.

The Baltic Air Freight Index, which shows weekly transactional rates for general cargo, fell 8.7% last week, while the airlines group IATA predicted on Monday that freight revenue generated by carriers this year would fall by 6.4%.

"There will be a downturn in business, and when there is a downturn in business, people don't buy stuff that we normally carry as cargo," Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar Al Baker told reporters on Monday at an airline industry meet in Doha. With capacity able to meet current demand, a drop in bookings will create downward pressure on yields when the recession starts, he said. The freight market - both air and ocean - has recorded sky-rocketing rates since the pandemic, in part due to deep capacity cuts that have left limited space for shippers.

But with Russia's invasion of Ukraine compounding the economic damage from the pandemic, a vaulting U.S. dollar and decades-high inflation tightening financial conditions, the global economy is now heading towards slowdown.

The World Bank this month slashed its global growth forecast by 1.2 percentage points to 2.9% for 2022 and warned many countries were likely to face recessions.

Credit Agricole CIB's Global Head of Asset Finance Group Jose Abramovici told Reuters that air freight rates were nonetheless so high today that the sector would remain profitable for several more years.

Emirates cargo boss Nabil Sultan said in an interview that rates would stay high for at least another six to eight months in part due to surging fuel prices, but also because demand would still continue to outmatch air freight capacity.

However, he warned that margins were tightening because of fuel and other rising costs, which were almost making certain routes unviable to operate.



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Spain Readies New Tax on Electric Utilities' Profits

MADRID (Dispatches) - The Spanish government is readying a new tax on electricity utilities' profits, which have been boosted by energy prices, Budget Minister Maria Jesus Montero said on Tuesday.

"Since profits of electric utilities have been exorbitant, from the government's point of view, we want to be able to ask them for a higher contribution," she said in an interview with public broadcaster TVE.

She declined to give details on the new tax or a time frame, adding that officials at the ministry are working on the technicalities. Electricity prices have risen significantly over the past year-and-a half in Spain as a result of the solid demand caused by the post-pandemic economy rebound and, later, the consequences of the war in Ukraine on the international gas price.



Germany Risks Recession as Russian Gas Crisis Deepens

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany faces certain recession if already faltering Russian gas supplies completely stop, an industry body warned on Tuesday, as Italy said it would consider offering financial backing to help companies refill gas storage to avoid a deeper crisis in winter.

European Union states from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Adriatic in the south have outlined measures to cope with a supply crisis after Russia's invasion of Ukraine put energy at the heart of an economic battle between Moscow and the West.

The EU relied on Russia for as much as 40% of its gas needs before the war - rising to 55% for Germany - leaving a huge gap to fill in an already tight global gas market. Some countries have temporarily reversed plans to shut coal power plants in response.

Global gas prices have sky-rocketed, driving surging inflation higher still and creating a bigger headache for policy makers trying to haul Europe back from an economic precipice.

Germany's BDI industry association slashed its economic growth forecast for 2022 on Tuesday to 1.5%, revising it down from 3.5% expected before the war. It said a halt in Russian gas deliveries would make recession inevitable.

Russian gas is still being pumped via Ukraine but at a reduced rate and the Nord Stream 1 pipeline under the Baltic, a vital supply route to Germany, is working at just 40% capacity, which Moscow says is because Western sanctions are hindering repairs. Europe says this is a pretext to reduce flows.

The slowdown has hampered Europe's efforts to refill storage facilities, now about 55% full, to meet an EU-wide target of 80% by October and 90% by November, a level that would help see the bloc through winter if supplies were disrupted further.

Italian Ecological Transition Minister Roberto Cingolani said Italy needed to accelerate its refilling efforts and Rome needed to consider how to help companies fund purchases of gas for storage.

An Italian government source said a state guarantee was a potential option to help lower the cost of financing.

"Gas currently is so expensive that operators cannot put money into it," Cingolani said.

The benchmark gas price for Europe was trading around 126 euros (\$133) per megawatt hour (MWh) on Tuesday, below this year's peak of 335 euros but still up more than 300% on its level a year ago.

Italy, alongside others such as Germany, Denmark, Austria and the Netherlands, has activated the first early warning stage of its three-stage plan to cope with a gas supply crisis.

As part of Germany's contingency plans, the Bundesnetzagentur gas regulator unveiled details of a new auction system to start in coming weeks, aimed at encouraging manufacturers to consume less gas.

The head of the Bundesnetzagentur questioned whether current gas deliveries would get the country through the winter, although he had earlier said it was not time to declare an all-out emergency, or the third stage of the crisis plan.

"As it stands today, we have a problem," Bundesnetzagentur President Klaus Mueller said on the sidelines of an industry event in the German city of Essen.

Malaysia's Economy Doing Well

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - The Malaysian economy is doing reasonably well in the face of global challenges, according to World Bank Group lead economist for Malaysia, Dr Apurva Sanghi.

Analysing Malaysia's economy from three lenses, namely macro, meso and micro, he said the World Bank is forecasting Malaysia's economy to grow 5.5 per cent this year, higher than the global growth of 2.9 per cent and regional growth of 4.4 per cent.

"Malaysia is doing reasonably well, even with the impact of the pandemic compounded by the war in Ukraine, Chinese lockdowns, rising interest rates and fears of stagflation — low growth, high inflation — as we are surrounded by uncertainty," he said on Bernama TV's The Nation program.

He also noted that consumer spending is gradually recovering, as is job creation, which is gradually improving. Moving on to the meso lens, he said that according to a World Bank survey, businesses in Malaysia are gradually increasing sales to pre-Covid-19 levels, thanks to the government's assistance during the pandemic.

"The optimism stems from the pent-up demand, opening up of the economy, and higher commodity prices," he explained. He went on to say that high commodity prices benefit Malaysia because the country exports commodities such as palm oil, liquefied natural gas, and petroleum, which account for 80 per cent of all commodities.

"Second, if you look at the geopolitical landscape, there's a bit of trade divergence going on. (With) great tensions between the United States (US) and China, and due to security-related issues, the US is sort of diverging in trade, and some of it is coming to East Asia, as well as Malaysia.

"This is especially beneficial to Malaysia's semiconductor industry," he added.

Commenting on the monetary tightening trend globally, Apurva said monetary tightening or interest rate hikes in the U.S. can and does have adverse impacts on output in the East Asian region, including Malaysia.

Egypt, Saudi Arabia Sign 14 Deals Worth \$7.7b

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Egypt and Saudi Arabia have signed 14 agreements valued at \$7.7 billion during a visit to Cairo by Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Egypt's General Authority for Investment and Free Zones said in a statement on Tuesday.

Saudi Arabia has provided billions of

dollars in financial support since Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power, and the new round of investments comes as Cairo struggles with the economic knock-on effects of the Ukraine war.

Even before the Ukraine war hiked commodity prices, hit tourism revenues and prompted investors to exit emerging markets, there were concerns over Egypt's current account and budget deficit, bankers say.

Deals signed on Tuesday included a \$1.5 billion agreement between Saudi Arabia's Acwapower and the Egyptian Electricity Holding Company to build a wind power plant, an Egyptian cabinet statement said.

More renewable energy agreements were signed, as well as deals in involving petroleum products, food and fintech.

Other deals involved the development of the multi-purpose terminal at Egypt's Damietta port, the authority's statement said, and the establishment of a \$150 million "pharmaceutical city" by Egypt's Pharco Pharmaceuticals in Saudi Arabia, the company's chairman told Alsharq TV.

In March, Saudi Arabia deposited \$5 billion in the Egypt's central bank and the Egyptian government has said that cooperation with the Saudi sovereign wealth fund will result in \$10 billion in investments.

The Saudi-based ITFC has provided Egypt with \$3 billion in new financing for commodity imports, its CEO told Reuters last week.

The prince arrived in Egypt on Monday night, marking the beginning of his first tour outside the Gulf region in over three years and will also visit Jordan and Turkey.

Sources have said MbS and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi would discuss issues including the impact of the Ukraine war and alignment of the Saudi and Egyptian positions ahead of U.S. President Joe Biden's trip to the region in mid-July.

Oil Turbulence Could Last Five Years

DOHA (Dispatches) - Consumers must be prepared to endure up to five years of turbulent oil markets, the head of ExxonMobil said Tuesday, citing under-investment and the coronavirus pandemic.

Energy markets have been roiled by the Ukraine war as Russia has reduced some exports and faced sanctions while Europe has announced plans to wean itself off dependency on Russian fossil fuels in coming years.

Speaking ahead of ExxonMobil's unveiling as the fourth international partner for Qatar's natural gas expansion, chairman and chief executive Darren Woods said major uncertainty lies ahead.

"You are probably looking at three to five years of continued fairly tight markets," Woods told the Qatar Economic Forum. "How that manifests itself in price will obviously be a big function of demand, which is difficult to predict."

On top of under-investment in finding new oil sources in 2014-2015, Woods said the pandemic "really sucked a lot of revenues out of the industry".

Woods said companies and governments needed to think long-term. "We are going to see a lot of volatility and discontinuity in the market place if we don't get to more thoughtful policies," he predicted.

Representatives from the Middle East energy industry also renewed calls for better planning in consumer countries.

Sheikh Nawaf Saud al-Sabah, chief executive of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, said the company was supplying all customers, but that multinational oil firms were not matching the investment of national oil enterprises.

As part of the Gulf state's response, Kuwait was starting its first offshore oil exploration and building the world's biggest oil refinery.

"We have never touched the offshore in Kuwait. The first offshore drill rig arrived in Kuwait a week ago and will start soon," he said.

The new refinery would come online by the end of 2022, Sabah added.

"It will be the largest refinery in the world at 615,000 barrels of oil a day capacity," he said adding that it would help meet increased demand from Europe and elsewhere.

Sabah said there was a "dangerous trend", with world consumers wanting energy but not being prepared for the change from polluting hydrocarbons to green energy.

"That is a paradox here that is causing quite a tremendous disruption in the investment cycle. We are making the long-term investments, but not international oil companies."

Sabah said the world currently produces and consumes about 100 million barrels of oil a day but that the equivalent of Kuwait's production -- about 3.5 million barrels a day -- was being lost through declining fields.

Airlines Pledge to Stabilize Rocky Recovery



DOHA (Dispatches) - Global airlines wrapped up an annual summit on Tuesday by pledging to overcome operational problems that have marred the industry's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) comprising almost 300 airlines sought to put into perspective the future recent airport and holiday chaos and also tempered plans to boost capacity as the battered sector tries to solve staff shortages since air travel collapsed during the pandemic.

"Let's relax a little; yes, we have challenges, but it is not everywhere," IATA Director General Willie Walsh said, adding that the industry would be able to see its way through recent problems.

He was speaking to reporters as airlines concluded a three-day Doha meeting marked by a sharper than expected recovery of air travel that caught airports and many planners by surprise.

The airline industry expects to narrow losses this year but has raised its forecasts owing to the brisk recovery while voicing concern about rising inflation and conflict in Ukraine.

Some airlines may have to adjust capacity plans to cope with staff shortages, but not all carriers and airports are facing the chaos recently seen in Europe, Walsh told a news conference.

Walsh predicted that the industry will see its way through current capacity and staffing challenges.

However, he said that airlines are not able to absorb the sharp increases to fuel costs, calling on companies to put their money where their mouth is and produce sustainable aviation fuels.

Walsh also pledged that the aviation industry would stick to a commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 despite debate over the speed of development of alternative fuels.

Japan PM Backs BoJ Ultra-Easy Policy

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said the central bank should maintain its ultra-loose monetary policy, brushing aside opposition calls that the policy be tweaked to target Japan's rising cost of living.



Kishida said the recent sharp falls in the yen were worrying but monetary policy and exchange rates must be dealt with separately, while fiscal policy should take the principle role in addressing the impact of rising prices.

"Under the current circumstances, the status quo on monetary policy must be maintained, although specific policy tools are up to the BoJ to decide," Kishida said in a debate among the leaders of Japan's political parties, ahead of a July 10 upper house election.

"The Ministry of Finance, the Financial Services Agency and the Bank of Japan have confirmed the need for responding to currency moves appropriately if necessary. We must closely watch developments."

The government faces mounting public concern over the rising cost of living, which has been blamed on the weak yen as well as a global surge in commodity prices due to the conflict in Ukraine.

"Some opposition parties are trying to fan public anger over price hikes and the weak yen, but Kishida likely wanted to separate himself from his opponents by backing the monetary policy status quo," said Koya Miyamae, senior economist at SMBC Nikko Securities.

Some opposition politicians have begun referring to "Kishida inflation" while news headlines and TV programmes put the spotlight on rising prices, which will likely become a contentious issue in the upcoming election. Kishida's ruling coalition is expected to win comfortably, however, given Kishida's solid levels of public support and disarray among the opposition.

Yuichiro Tamaki, who leads the small Democratic Party for the People (DPP), urged the BoJ to keep ultra-low rates, arguing that tightening policy was "unthinkable" because it would drive up mortgage rates and borrowing costs. But some opposition parties have called for monetary tightening to counter the weak yen.

The government, for its part, has rolled out a ¥2.7 trillion (RM87 billion) extra budget aimed at easing the burden of price increases for households.

Markets are rife with speculation the BoJ might tweak its yield curve control policy and allow bond yields to rise, to prevent the yen from falling further and inflating the cost of fuel and food imports.

But the central bank voted at a regular policy meeting last week to keep its ultra-low rates in place to support the fragile economy. This has left policymakers with few options for combating the yen's decline other than verbal warnings.

Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki said on Tuesday he was concerned about the yen's recent sharp weakening and would respond to currency market moves if necessary, repeating a previous warning as the yen hovered near a 24-year low beyond 135 yen versus the dollar.

Iran Export to Germany Rises 16% in 4 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of Iran's export to Germany rose 16 percent in the first four months of 2022, as compared to the first four months of 2021, according to the data released by the European Union's statistics office Eurostat.

The Eurostat's data show that Iran has exported commodities worth €109 million to Germany in the four-month period of this year, while the figure was €94 million in the same period of time in the past year. Germany's export to Iran also increased nine percent to €531 million from €489 million.



Pakistan Economic Crisis Will Worsen If Early Polls Not Held

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Cash-starved Pakistan's economic and political crises will deepen further if the early elections are not held, ousted prime minister Imran Khan has warned, as his supporters staged protests against soaring inflation across major cities.

Khan issued a call for protests last week after the government hiked the petroleum prices for the third time after coming to power in April.

Addressing the protestors through a video link, Khan said the country's economic and political situation will deteriorate further if early elections were not held.

I will give you a call [for long march] If free and transparent elections are not held, further chaos will spread, the ousted premier said.

He lashed out at the government for withdrawing subsidies on petroleum products, saying the previous Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government led by him had resisted the IMF's demand to increase the prices.

"This government is in the IMF programme for two months while we remained in it for two and a half years," Khan said, adding that his government had reduced petrol prices against the IMF's conditions to increase the fuel prices.

He also accused the incumbent government of being incapable of handling the economy and warned that prices would soar even higher in the days to come if the nation kept sitting idly.

Cash-strapped Pakistan has faced growing economic challenges, with high inflation, sliding forex reserves, a widening current account deficit and a depreciating currency.

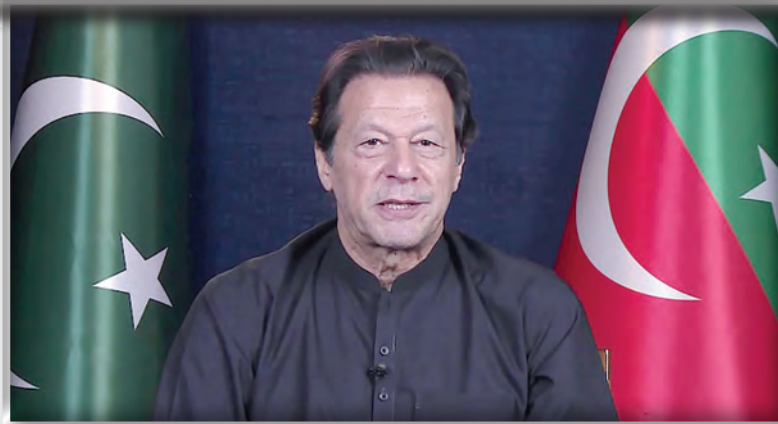
The Pakistani rupee remained highly volatile as it plunged to a record low of over Rs 211 against the US dollar in the inter-bank market on Monday.

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have depleted to a critical level and the country has less than six weeks of import cover remaining. The reserves are currently below USD 9 billion.

The country is fulfilling the prerequisite conditions to revive the IMF loan programme to avoid default on international payments.

According to The Express Tribune newspaper, the anti-inflation protests were held in different cities, including at Islamabad's F-9 Park, Karachi's Shahrah-e-Qauideen, Lahore's Liberty Chowk, Faisalabad's Ghanta Ghar chowk, Rawalpindi's Commercial Market, Multan's Shah Abdullah chowk and Peshawar's Hasht Nagari Gate.

Addressing a protest rally in Rawalpindi, former federal minister and PTI leader Murad Saeed said, "The world powers, afraid of Imran Khan, who voiced the pains of Kashmiris, conspired against his regime while a bunch of thieves, robbers and corrupt people have formed an imported government".



Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice-President Maryam Nawaz lashed out at Khan for holding protests against the incumbent government, blaming the previous regime's flawed policies for runaway inflation.

"The Pakistani nation needs a self-sufficient leader," she said, adding that Khan's inflation protest was against his own flawed policies.

In a tweet, she said, Fitna [mischief] Khan had given a protest call against inflation for which he himself was responsible.

She said the country was facing very serious challenges mostly created by Khan who used to say that he did not come to power for fixing rates of potato and onions.

Khan, 69, was ousted from power in April after losing a no-confidence vote in his leadership, which he alleged was part of a US-led conspiracy targeting him because of his independent foreign policy decisions on Russia, China and Afghanistan.

Ever since his ouster, the cricketer-turned-politician has been protesting and calling for fresh elections because, in his words, the incumbent coalition government led by Prime Minister Sharif was imported and is not a true representative of the Pakistani people.

Khan has led his thousands of PTI supporters to several cities of Pakistan in anti-government protests. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief, who came to power in 2018, reportedly with the backing of the military, is the only Pakistani prime minister to be ousted in a no-confidence vote in Parliament.

Pakistan's Energy Minister Visits Iran's MAPNA Group



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Pakistan's energy minister, accompanied by that country's ambassador to Tehran and Iran's consultant energy minister, visited Iran's macro-scale MAPNA Industrial Group and was briefed about its capabilities.

The top MAPNA managers offered brief reports about the modern technologies in various parts of MAPNA for Pakistan Energy Minister Khorran Dastgir Khan, which are in the oil, petrochemical, and transportation fields.

The MAPNA managing director announced readiness for assisting the Pakistani electricity industries with constructing new power plants and maintaining their existing ones.

The Pakistani energy minister, too, who was highly impressed by the visit, said that this visit will definitely affect the bilateral ties greatly and open new doors towards cooperation in the near future.

MAPNA Group is an industrial enterprise, consisting of MAPNA Group Company, as a parent company, and more than 40 specialized subsidiaries and affiliates, which are engaged in a wide spectrum of businesses, including, engineering, construction, and development of thermal power plants, renewables, combined heat, and power (CHP) facilities, combined power generation and water desalination plants, as well as engineering, execution, and development of offshore and onshore oil and gas projects.

A380 Makes Comeback Despite High Oil Prices

DOHA (Dispatches) - Two years ago, dozens of Airbus A380s set course for storage in sites from rural France to the Gulf as the outbreak of COVID-19 accelerated the demise of the world's largest jets.

Now, the iconic European double-decker is gaining a new lease on life as airlines scramble to cope with rising demand and shortages of newer models, though for how long is unclear.

The return of the four-engine behemoth at carriers such as Singapore Airlines and Qantas Airways - and soon at Japan's ANA Holdings and South Korea's Asiana Airlines - comes despite high fuel prices that make operating new-generation two-engine widebodies far cheaper.

"Passengers, they love the plane and we have a lot of business class seats on it so it is a very good aircraft to fly on high-demand routes," Korean Air Lines Chief Executive Walter Cho said on the sidelines of an airline industry gathering in Doha.

Korean Air plans to have three of its 10 A380s back in service by the end of the year, up from one today.

Strong demand and delays in deliveries of new Boeing 777X airliners have also forced a rethink at Lufthansa.

It will decide soon whether to bring back the A380, but has only 14 pilots with current approval to fly them and will train A350 pilots to double up, Chief Executive Carsten Spohr said.

The A380 was once billed by Airbus as a 21st-century cruiserliner with prospects for 1,000 planes in service. But only 242 were built after many carriers opted for smaller twin-jets. Analysts say the fleet will never return to pre-pandemic levels.

Yet 106 are back in service, according to data firm Cirium, up from a low of just four when the crisis hit in April 2020.



There is little second-hand demand for A380s, so airlines often face a choice of flying or scrapping them.

"Keeping aircraft that have been written down ... may be the least worst option," said Ascend by Cirium Global Head of Consultancy Rob Morris.

Even so, Air France permanently retired its A380s during the pandemic, Thai Airways and Malaysia Airlines have put them

up for sale despite weak demand from buyers and even current operators have sent some to be scrapped.

The downturn prompted many airlines to write down the value of their biggest jets.

Having taken that hit, they can fly the jet without expensive depreciation charges - though the price of fuel devoured by the plane's four engines remains a huge headache.

Qantas took a \$1.43 billion (\$995 million) charge in 2020, mainly on the then-grounded A380, but is now bringing back 10 out of 12.

The A380 has also won a reprieve in part because airlines do not yet have enough demand to resume multiple flights on routes like Dubai-London, Singapore-Mumbai and Sydney-Los Angeles.

One airline boss left unsurprised by the partial comeback is Tim Clark, president of Emirates. It is by far the biggest customer after ordering a total of 123 jets for its Dubai hub.

Clark fought in vain to persuade Airbus to re-invest in the A380 before the planemaker decided in 2019 to end output.

"Everybody's been struggling with capacity. I've watched it all; people saying that the trend is over," he told reporters.

"If you want to do that you will regret it," he recalled himself saying about the industry-wide shift to smaller jets. "And now what happens is you are having to reactivate A380s".

Iran Determined to Realize Rights in Tech., Safeguards Fields

TEHRAN (MNA) - Spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said that Islamic Republic of Iran is seriously determined to materialize inalienable rights of the country in the 'technical and safeguards' fields.

Parliament Energy Commission Spokesman Malek Shariati said that AEOI Spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi attended a Parliament meeting on Tuesday and said that Iran is determined to realize the inalienable rights of the country in the technical and safeguards (as per the Safeguards Agreement) fields.

AEOI spokesman attended the Parliament on Tuesday evening to review the recent decisions adopted by the AEOI against the IAEA excessive demands, the lawmaker added.

Parliament's Energy Commission members, after hearing the report of AEOI Spokesman, unanimously condemned the recent anti-Iran draft resolution issued

at IAEA's Board of Governors and stated that IAEA issued anti-Iran resolution as influenced by the political pressure of world powers, Shariati continued.

Although Iran's cooperation in the field of safeguards has been voluntary, members of the Parliament's Energy Commission emphasized complete reduction of Iran's cooperation with IAEA.

Then, lawmakers supported policy of the country adopted in the field of collecting IAEA's surveillance cameras, he continued. Elsewhere in his remarks, Shariati pointed to the law passed in the Parliament entitled "Strategic Action Plan to Counter US Sanctions and Protect Rights of Iranian People" in December 202 and said that the law redirected the path of negotiations in Vienna in favor of the country.

EU Says...

FROM PAGE 1

He noted that only after all commitments are fulfilled, Iran's nuclear activities are 100% monitored and other parties to the JCPOA follow through on their side of the agreement, will the deal be fully reinstated.

In response to a question as to what from Iran's side prevents a deal, Stano said, "This is a diplomatic process and we do not comment on the content of negotiations." Iran says the current impasse in the Vienna talks is blamed on the US because Washington refuses to respect Iran's red lines in the negotiations.

Real But...

FROM PAGE 1

The United States has been watching Iran's drone program since at least 2002 and needs to maintain this vigilance. The regime will keep developing, expanding, and proliferating its armed UAV technologies—not just to its Middle Eastern allies, but also to countries further



abroad who have indicated a willingness to buy them.

So such bitter confessions show that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been right to boost its military power as a deterrent against the hostile states mainly the West and above all the U.S. We have seen such confessions and remarks from many Western officials and they have accepted Iran as a strong military power and they will definitely not resort to military action against Tehran because of its dire consequences. Their only but useless weapon against Tehran is sanctions and in recent years Iranians have tried to make them ineffective although it was hard but they have actually done it and now the West is working hard to stop Tehran through dialogues.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has progressed during its almost four decades of its existence in many dimensions and fields but the West just focuses on its military or nuclear progress for political purposes to exert more pressure on the Islamic establishment but they have forgotten this fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran has put aside many turbulences in the past and it can put more turbulences behind because of its strong belief in the principles of the Islamic Revolution.

So the confession of 19FortyFive is nothing new and we will see the West's such bitter confessions in the future in different forms and through the mouths of different persons and all of those confessions will be another proofs about the grandeur of the Islamic Revolution and its global progress achievements, and such progresses will continue under the wise leadership of Supreme Leader Seyed Ali Khamenei and tireless experts and talents of the country as well as the strong defensive and offensive power of armed forces and we are waiting for more but bitter confessions of the West over Iran's achievements.

Unilateral Coercive...

FROM PAGE 1

The U.S. began unleashing a whole host of sanctions against Iran following the victory of the latter's Islamic Revolution in 1979.

It temporarily suspended some of the bans following the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a nuclear accord between the Islamic Republic and world countries.

Upon conclusion, the JCPOA was ratified by the UN Security Council as its Resolution 2231.

The U.S., however, quit the agreement under former president Donald Trump in 2018 and restored the economic measures that the accord had lifted.

Separately, the Iranian envoy also called on the world body "to investigate deviation of humanitarian aid and non-humanitarian activities carried out under the guise of providing humanitarian assistance."

SATBA Tenders for...

FROM PAGE 1

"This is a good opportunity for investors to build solar power plants," he said.

In the tender, electricity purchase contracts are for 20 years and the return on investment for the construction of renewable power plants is six years, which can be reduced to four years, he added.

The renewable energy sector is booming in Iran. Despite being an energy superpower, the economy's high reliance on oil has negatively affected Iran's economic security and environmental sustainability. Coupled with facing the threat of climate change, Iranian policymakers have been compelled to prioritize environmental policy and utilize foreign investment and oil revenue to boost the country's renewable energy sector.

Iran currently is producing less than one percent of its energy from renewable sources, where there are 900 MW of power plants. The renewable energy sector comprises of mainly wind (310 MW) and solar (390 MW), with the rest related to hydropower and biomass.

Iran's geography and climate are highly suitable for the various forms of renewable energy technology. According to studies, it is possible to supply 140,000 megawatts of electricity from renewables, including 100,000 megawatts from solar power plants and 40,000 megawatts from wind power plants. But, the country has yet to reach the first milestone of 1000 MW of installed renewables.

German FA Backs Ceferin for Re-Election

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The German Football Association (DFB) announced today they are backing Aleksander Ceferin in his bid to be re-elected president of European football's governing body UEFA.

The senior board of the DFB voted unanimously to support the candidacy of Ceferin, who hopes to be re-elected at the UEFA Congress next April in Lisbon.

The 54-year-old Slovenian has led UEFA since 2016.

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Koepka Joining Saudi-Backed LIV Golf

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Four-time major champion Brooks Koepka is set to become the latest star to join the Saudi-backed LIV Golf series, media reports said on Tuesday.

The 32-year-old American world number 19 is expected to make his debut on the lucrative circuit at its maiden US event in Oregon next week.

Koepka's management team did not immediately respond when contacted by AFP on Tuesday.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

THURSDAY JUNE 23, 2022

Djokovic Top Men's Seed For Wimbledon

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic will head into next week's tournament as the men's top seed with Russian world number one Daniil Medvedev banned from taking part while Germany's second-ranked Alexander Zverev is out injured.

Organisers of the grasscourt Grand Slam have banned players from Russia and Belarus from playing at this year's Wimbledon following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, which Russia calls a "special operation".

Zverev had surgery on torn ligaments in his right ankle this month after he was forced to retire from his French Open semi-final against Rafael Nadal.

Djokovic, who was unable to defend his 2021 Australian Open title and the 2,000 ranking points he earned due to his non-vaccinated status against Covid-19, recently lost his world number one spot to Medvedev.

The Serbian, who has won the last three editions of the grasscourt major, will slip further down the rankings after Wimbledon as he will lose another 2,000 points with the ATP and WTA stripping the tournament of points.

The absence of Medvedev and Zverev means Nadal, who is halfway through a possible calendar year Slam after winning the Australian and French Open titles, to be seeded second.

It also results in Djokovic and Nadal finding themselves in different halves of the draw and they cannot face each other until the men's final on July 10. The duo met in this year's Roland Garros quarter-final where the Spaniard triumphed.

Britain has two players in the top 10 seeds at their home major with Cameron Norrie ninth while US Open champion Emma Raducanu is 10th in the absence of Belarussian Aryna Sabalenka.

Poland's world number one Iga Swiatek will be the women's top seed with Estonian Annett Kontaveit the number two.



Wimbledon organizers had previously used a computer-based system favouring results on grasscourts in the previous two years to determine the seedings but from the 2021 edition seedings mirror the world rankings.

Meanwhile No. 6 seed Alex de Minaur began defense of his Rothesay International title with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Cristian Garin in a first-round match in Eastbourne, England.

The 23-year-old Australian broke Garin four times en route to dispatching the Chilean in 83 minutes.

Other seeded players were not as fortunate, however. Maxime Cressy cruised to a 6-3, 6-1 win over fifth-seeded Reilly Opelka, and Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik rallied to a 5-7, 7-6 (4), 6-0 victory over seventh-seeded Frances Tiafoe.

No. 5 seed Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain posted a 6-4, 7-6 (4) victory of Taro Daniel of Japan in a first-round match in Spain.

Also in other matches, Ilya Ivashka of Belarus cruised to a 6-4, 6-1 win over Emil Ruusuvuori of Finland to set up a second-round meeting against second-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece.

Frenchman Benjamin Bonzi advanced to set up a match versus third-seeded Denis Shapovalov of Canada after Chilean qualifier Alejandro Tabilo retired while trailing 6-3, 4-2.

Muguruza Gets Much-Needed Win In Eastbourne

EASTBOURNE (Dispatches) - Garbine Muguruza kickstarted a difficult season as the former Wimbledon champion beat Poland's Magdalena Frech 6-1, 7-6 (9/7) to reach the last 16 of the Eastbourne International.

The number five seed earned just her third win on the WTA Tour since February.

"The conditions were hard today. I feel like I fought hard against the wind, and I haven't played many matches on grass either," said Muguruza.

"I could see today that if I didn't fight as hard as I can, I wasn't going to win." Muguruza next faces the winner of the second round match between 12th seed Camila Giorgi and Canadian lucky loser Rebecca Marino, who got the better of Britain's Heather Watson 7-6 (7/1), 6-4.

Magda Linette produced an upset to beat 17th seed Alison Riske in a marathon encounter lasting over three hours.

World number 66 Linette came from a set down to outlast Riske 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4).

All eyes today will turn to Serena Williams' return to court as she pairs up with world number three Ons Jabeur in the doubles.

Williams, a 23-time Grand Slam singles champion, has not played since suffering an injury during her first-round match at Wimbledon 12 months ago, plummeting to 1,204th in the world rankings.

However, the 40-year-old has been handed a wildcard to return to singles action at Wimbledon next week and is getting some match practice this week at Eastbourne.

"Many players were jealous because I'm playing with her. Honestly, Serena is Serena. She is a legend and always will be," said Jabeur.

Williams and Jabeur begin their partnership against Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo and Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic.



Eintracht are said to be ready to meet the buy-out clause, said to be €4 million (RM19 million), in Goetze's contract at Eindhoven, who finished runners-up to Ajax in the Dutch league last season.

Goetze Set to Sign for Eintracht Frankfurt

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Mario Goetze, who scored the winning goal in the 2014 World Cup final for Germany, is reportedly set to return to the Bundesliga by signing for Europa League winners Eintracht Frankfurt.

After two years playing in the Dutch league for PSV Eindhoven, the 30-year-old is set to undergo a medical today in Frankfurt, according to German media reports.

Goetze sat out the start of pre-season training with Eindhoven yesterday as the club said the attacking midfielder was busy "finalising a transfer".

It was Goetze's stunning volley as a replacement against Argentina in the 2014 World Cup final which sealed victory for Germany in Brazil.

Goetze burst onto the scene in the 2010/11 season as a fresh-faced teenager whose goals helped Dortmund win the first of back-to-back Bundesliga titles.

However, he quit the German league in 2020 for the Netherlands after an unsuccessful return to Dortmund having failed to nail down a first-team spot at Bayern Munich, who he joined in 2013.

Goetze's arrival would boost the attack of Frankfurt, who beat Rangers in the Europa League final last month and finished 11th in Germany's top flight.

Murray Hopeful Of Being Fit For Wimbledon

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Andy Murray faces a race against time to be fit for Wimbledon next week, but believes he is in a better position than he was ahead of the championships last year.

The three-time Grand Slam champion was forced to pull out of last week's tournament at Queen's due to an abdominal injury suffered in losing the final of the Stuttgart ATP event to Matteo Berrettini.

"The positives are I've been able to practise but there are certain shots I've not been able to practise, so that has obviously disrupted my preparations. The injury is healing but still not perfect," said the two-time Wimbledon winner.

"I've been practicing for the past three or four days and have been practising well. But unfortunately in matches you can't just not hit certain shots. In the next couple of days hopefully I'll get the chance to test that and hopefully it will be fine."

Murray made it through to the third round at Wimbledon last year despite an injury-disrupted preparation.

His form on the grass at Surbiton, where he reached the semi-finals, and Stuttgart has edged the 35-year-old back up to 51 in the world.

And he is confident of performing well at the All England Club, as long as he is not hampered by injury.

"Going into Wimbledon last year I'd gone in with hardly any proper practice at all, hadn't really played much in the build-up to it and the fact I got through a few matches was a great effort considering what I was able to do in the build-up," added Murray.



European Tour Returns to Singapore in 2023

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - The DP World Tour will return to Singapore in 2023 for the first time in nine years, as the golf organization beefs up its Asian footprint, it said.

Players will tee off for the Singapore Classic at the Laguna National Golf Resort Club on February 9 next year.

The tour last stopped in the city-state in 2014 at the same course.

Previous winners of the tour's Singapore events include Scottish legend Colin Montgomerie, China's Zhang Lianwei and Liang Wenchong, and local star Mardan Mamat.

"Asia continues to be an important region for the DP World Tour and we look forward to announcing further exciting events there in due course," European Tour group chief executive Keith Pelley said in a statement.

Peter Kwee, Laguna National's chairman, said: "We have a long history of hosting DP World Tour championship golf... We're excited to once more welcome many of the world's best players to our Club." With prize money of US\$2 million, the tournament will be one of the region's top sporting events, organizers said.

The DP World Tour was first held in Singapore for two editions of the Johnnie Walker classic, won by Nick Faldo in 1993 at the Singapore Island Golf Club and Ian Woosnam in 1996 at the Tanah Merah Country Club.

Another Major champion, Vijay Singh, won the Singapore Masters in 2001 at the Singapore Island Golf Club before the tournament moved to the Laguna National course for the next six years, where winners included Montgomerie in 2004 and local boy Mamat two years later.

