

Iranian Judiciary's Deputy for International Affairs Says Former U.S. Vice President Mike Pence's Visit to a Camp of Anti-Iran Terrorist Group Mojahedin-e-Khalq Proves Washington's Support for Terrorism

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **141,383** With **Four** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7527 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

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Tehran Pledges Continued Support to Afghanistan

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN- Iran's foreign minister said the country is prepared to provide more medical assistance to Afghanistan in the wake of the devastating earthquake that has killed over 1,150 people and caused incalculable collateral damage.

Hossein Amirabdollahian made the remarks during a phone call with the Taliban's government's acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, said a statement from foreign ministry.

A 5.9-magnitude earthquake struck about 44 kilometers (27 miles) from the eastern Afghan city of Khost, early on Wednesday, which local officials described as the deadliest earthquake to hit the country in two decades.

In 2002, a magnitude-6.1 earthquake killed around 1,000 people in northern Afghanistan, and before that in 1998 a magnitude-6.1 earthquake and subsequent tremors in northeast Afghanistan resulted in the death of at least 4,500 people.

Expressing condolences on behalf of the government and the people of Iran over the catastrophic tragedy, the top diplomat said Iran immediately dispatched two cargo planes carrying first aid supplies to its neighbor after the disaster.

"Like in the past, we stand by Afghanistan's honorable and patient people," he said, vowing continued support to the crisis-stricken South Asian country, bordering Iran.

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Concrete Pouring Operation Begins at Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran begins pouring concrete for the wall of the second unit of its Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant aimed at expanding the site in the south of the country.

That's according to the director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, Mohammad Eslami.

Speaking in Bushehr, Eslami said the concrete pouring operation starts from the -4.5 to the 0 level.

He added that in that vein, necessary plans have been put in place to expedite the construction of the second and third reactors of the Bushehr Power Plant.

Eslami noted that Iran is also building a water desalination unit at the power plant, saying a team of experts was accompanying him on his visit to Bushehr for conducting complementary studies on the project.

Iran has managed to expand its peaceful nuclear program in recent years despite harsh sanctions imposed by the US on various sectors of the country.

Iran Ready to Resume Vienna Talks Within Days



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says Tehran is ready to resume the stalled talks with the P4+1 group of countries in Vienna to revive the 2015 deal that the U.S. abandoned in defiance of international criticism.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks in a joint press conference with the European Union foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, in Tehran on Saturday as the bloc seeks to break an impasse between the parties to the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), over the agreement's revival and the removal of sanctions against Iran.

"We are ready to resume the Vienna talks within the next days," Iran's top diplomat said.

He expressed hope that the U.S. would "this time" pursue a "realistic and fair approach" and act responsibly.

Iranian officials do not directly negotiate with Americans as the United States unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions against Iran. During the talks in Vienna, which have been on hold since mid-March, US negotiators communicated with Iranians through European intermediaries.

The Iranian foreign minister said he held "detailed, precise and deep" talks with Borrell on the JCPOA revival negotiations, adding, "We are going to break the stalemate in the Vienna talks and end the tension that has existed in recent days."

Borrell, for his part, said talks on reviving the JCPOA will resume soon in the coming days.

"We are expected to resume talks in the coming days and break the impasse. It has been three months and we need to accelerate the work. I am very happy about the decision that has been made in Tehran and Washington," the top EU diplomat said.

EU Foreign Policy Chief also published a tweet after the press conference reporting the facilitation of the negotiations: "In meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, we agreed on resumption of negotiations between Iran and US in the coming days, facilitated by my team, to solve the last outstanding issues."

The 8th round of talks in the Capital of Austria between Iran and other parties in the framework of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) resumed on December 7, 2021.

Politicization Biggest Scourge of Human Rights

TEHRA (IRNA) - Iranian human rights officials slammed Western countries for their use of human rights as a political vehicle or goods to exert pressure on developing countries, saying that this was the greatest scourge of human rights.

Speaking in a TV program, Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi said that the United States and Western countries speak of human rights for other countries not themselves, as the standards and values of human rights is never exercised in these countries when it comes to ethnic minorities, Muslims and indigenous people.

Gharibabadi criticized the detainment of Iranian national Hamid Nouri by the Swedish government, saying that he was arrested without charge and was formally accused after six months of detainment, while being kept in solitary confinement with no medical access.

There three Swedish citizens imprisoned in Iran but Iran doesn't treat prisoners like this, because Iran's legal system is based on Islamic law which refutes such behavior, the official noted.

He mentioned another Iranian national, named Asadollah Asadi, who was kept in a bunker for a considerable part of the 110 days of detainment in Germany, adding that Germany violates human rights while it always accuses Iran.

Gharibabadi also criticized Sweden for harboring anti-Iranian terrorist groups, saying that Iran has strong proofs that these groups are systematically backed by the Swedish government.

Iran's policy is to put pressure on the governments supporting terrorist groups and to warn international organizations and European countries on their responsibility about such groups, according to the official.

He expressed regret that some Western countries have double standards regarding such cases as Iran's complaint against terrorist groups, as they didn't address the evidences provided by families of victims of the MEK terrorism in a fair way.

On the legal case regarding the assassination of the former IRGS Qods Force Commander General Qasem Soleimani, Gharibabadi said that the case is pursued in three level: courts in Iran and Iraq, courts in seven other countries in connection with the issues, and international organizations.

Gharibabadi also addressed the issue of international terrorism, saying that the only reason that the fight against terrorism has achieved little success is that the Western countries continue to support terrorist groups like Al-Nusra, Al Qaeda, and the ISIS.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

What a Strange World

Sometimes one can get confused and may get crazy when he or she sees something which is denied in the daylight while it is crystal clear and biased.

Last week the UN Secretary General António Guterres released a report on human rights in Iran and he accused Tehran of violating human rights issues in the country while this major international body everyday sees violations of human rights by the West and Israeli regime but gives no heed to them.

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.

Reacting to this biased report, Iran's Foreign Minister Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh dismissed as politically motivated a recent report by 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.

Khatibzadeh said on Tuesday 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.

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.

Meanwhile 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." See Page 7

China's Import of Products From Iran Up 26%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The trade value exchanged between Iran and China in the past five months of the current year in 2022 (from Jan. 21 to May 22) exceeded \$6 billion, showing an eighteen percent growth, China's Customs Office announced.

The latest statistics released by China's Customs said that China's trade volume exchanged with Iran in the reported period hit \$6.472 billion, registering an 18 percent hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

The value of trade exchanged between the two countries of Iran and China from January to May 2021 stood at over \$5.481 billion.

China imported \$3.192 billion worth of products from Iran in the first five months of the current year in 2022 while it had imported \$2.535 billion worth of products from Iran from Jan. to May 2021.

In this period, China exported \$3.280 billion worth of products to Iran, showing an 11 percent growth while it exported \$2.946 billion worth of products to Iran from Jan. 22 to May 21, 2021.

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Iraqi PM Due in Tehran Today

TERHAN (MNA) - Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi will arrive in Tehran in an undeclared visit, an Iraqi news website reported.

Iraqi Middle East News website cited an informed source as saying that the Iraqi prime minister will pay a visit to Iran on Sunday.

No further details were available about al-Kadhimi's visit. It comes amid political deadlock in Iraq over government formation after the Sadrist movement, which had won the recent parliamentary elections, quit parliament over disagreement with other factions.

President Hails Medical Staff in Curbing Coronavirus

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Appreciating the efforts and sacrifices of doctors, nurses and other members of the medical staff, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi attributed the current situation in coronavirus, where the number of patients and deaths has dropped sharply, to their efforts.

Speaking in the meeting of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus on Saturday morning, Raisi referred to the decrease in the number of cases and deaths due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, and appreciated the efforts of medical staff over the past two years and their actions to protect lives.

The President said, "If today we see a different situation in terms of the outbreak of coronavirus in our country than in some other countries around the world, it is thanks to God and the fruit of selfless sacrifice and effort of doctors, nurses and health staff".

Raisi described the acceleration in the payment of salaries and demands of hospitals and medical staff as a practical manifestation of gratitude to the hard-working doctors and



nurses of the country and instructed the Minister of Health to follow this issue seriously.

In another part of his speech, referring to the declining trend in the infection and loss of life due to coronavirus, the President emphasized, "The fact that the disease has decreased and in some days, thanks to God, we did not have a single death case, should not lead to assuming that there is normal situation".

Accordingly, he called on the people to follow the health instructions in medical centers and busy public places, as well as vehicles, as in the past, in order to stabilize the current situation.

Raisi considered it necessary to continue informing and educating about COVID-19 and the necessary warnings to prevent it.

Afghanistan Receives Iran's 3rd Humanitarian Aid

TEHRAN (MNA) - Afghanistan has received the third consignment of humanitarian aid from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

According to Afghanistan's AVA news agency, the batch includes medicines, food, clothing, tents, and other basic supplies needed by the victims of the earthquake.

Iran has previously sent two airplanes of humanitarian aid to the people in quake-hit areas following the earthquake which hit Afghanistan's Paktika and Host province on Wednesday.

According to the latest news, at least 950 people were killed and more than 600 others were wounded in the 6.1 magnitude earthquake quake that struck the eastern provinces of Khost and Paktika.

The quake struck about 44 km (27 miles) from the city of Khost in southeastern Afghanistan and was at a depth of 51km (31 miles), according to the USGS.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in a phone talk with the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan's Taliban Amir Khan Muttaqi condoned with him and the Afghan nation and government on the recent earthquake.

Iran's Presence in BRICS+ Entails Economic Benefits

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice President of Iran for Parliamentary Affairs said that President Ebrahim Raisi's attendance in BRICS+ summit has great economic benefits for Iran, as emerging economies in the grouping constitute half of the world's population.

Mohammad Hosseini said in a tweet on Friday that President Raisi was invited by the Chinese President to attend the online summit. He noted that Iran is the only country in the West Asia to be invited to the summit and this presence would entail great economic benefits for Iran.

BRICS is an acronym coined to refer to a grouping of world's major emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Russia and China have recently become supportive of Iran's possible membership in the grouping as an observer.

Iran's Active Presence In Syrian Int'l Exhibition

DAMASCUS (IP) - The eighth round of the HI-Tech exhibition started its work in Damascus with the participation of 20 countries, and Iran is active in the event.

Since the war began in Syria, the country's infrastructures suffered huge damages amounting to a hundred million dollars.

Communications and telecommunications, as important software and hardware infrastructures, suffered a lot in the imposed war as well.

With the gradual return of peace to Syria and especially Damascus, the infrastructures, including communications and technology, are on the way to development and restoration. Holding Tech exhibitions can expedite the restoration of the war damages.

A specialized international exhibition of telecommunications, computers and electronics was inaugurated on Thursday afternoon in Syria's capital, Damascus, to introduce the most famous brands in computers, electronics, and telecommunications.

On the sideline of the inauguration ceremony of the exhibition, Syria's minister of technology said holding the show provides an opportunity to become familiar with the latest technologies of telecommunications, computers, and electronics in the West and other world countries.

Iran's ambassador to Syria, Mehdi Sobhani, also said 25 percent of the participating firms in the exhibition are Iranian, adding that Iran is ready to exchange its experience with Syria in different fields of communications and information technology.

Iran, Denmark Discuss Consular, Migration Issues



TEHRAN (IRNA) - An Iranian delegation met representatives of Denmark's foreign ministry on Friday to discuss issues regarding Iranians residing in that country.

Consular issues and the situation of Iranian immigrants, refugees, and students as well as solutions to solve the problems Iranian citizens face in Denmark, including visa, residence, and financial transactions, were discussed during the meeting.

The Iranian delegation will also meet with Waardenburg city municipality officials later today to discuss the situation of Iranian child, Dariush Heydari, who has been separated from his family by Danish authorities.

Iran's efforts to reunite Dariush with his family haven't been successful so far.

Leaving NPT Definitely Unwise, Causes More Pressure

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian lawmaker advises against a withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in response to hostile Western policies against Iran's nuclear program, saying such a move could intensify pressure on the country.

Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi, who sits on the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said a pullout from the NPT would fuel the allegations against Iran of pursuing non-peaceful nuclear activities.

"We are already under pressure by the West, but I think it would be even worse to come under media pressure and face [more] baseless allegations," he said.

The legislator said Iran has no fault in the lack of progress in talks with the P4+1 group of states on a revival of the 2015 nuclear deal and has fulfilled its duties.

"It is the Western side that is putting forward excessive demands and behaving irrationally; however, our reaction should not be illogical. Our exit from the NPT would definitely be unwise," he added.

Some Iranian media outlets have been speculating over the option of quitting the NPT, following the adoption of a resolution, drafted by the US and its European allies, against the Iranian nuclear program at a meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) earlier this month.

The resolution was passed amid a halt in the Vienna talks on restoring the 2015 nuclear deal, which Iran has attributed to a failure by the US to adopt political decisions with regards to sanctions removal and provision of guarantees that it won't leave the accord again.

Gov't Mission Is to Optimize Existing Capacities

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN -Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade said that the ministry is to move towards new mechanisms as the most important mission to optimize existing capacities and resources.

Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade Reza Fatemi Amin said: "The most important mission we have defined for ourselves in this ministry is to move towards new mechanisms to optimize existing capacities and resources."

Fatemi-Amin said: "Industry, mining, and trade sector accounts for 25% of the country's GDP, and this sector has faced a lot of variety."

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade said: "Good things have happened in the Islamic country's foreign trade. This spring, compared to the spring of last year, exports have grown by 40% and our trade balance has been positive by \$600 million."

Regarding the development of knowledge-based sectors, Reza Fatemi Amin, said: "The goal of industry, mining and trade is to expand the activity for the knowledge-based sectors, of course, it is appropriate for economic enterprises."

Touching upon investment and trade with Oman, he said: "Oman has good mineral reserves. Several Iranian companies have held talks there on exploration and extraction, and we are looking to expand relations."

"Last year, we extracted 500 million tons of mines, but 4.5 million tons of this raw material were exported, which is a good achievement, so in the field of exploration, a resource identification project was started, which in the first step of South Khorasan discovered very good resources, so next month Details will be announced in more detail," concluded the minister.

He also said that Iran is seeking to boost ties with



Oman, Qatar, China and Russia to provide business services to Iranian companies.

Regarding car cooperation with Russia, Fatemi-Amin said that after the Ukraine war and Russian sanctions, Russia got into trouble and trade parties left the country.

"Negotiations have been held to boost the cooperation between Iran and Russia at the level of providing spare parts. But There has been no talk of producing a joint car with Russia yet," he added.

Fatemi-Amin continued: "In September of last year, we identified a series of regulations that prevented exports and tried to amend them. The second task was to reform the structure of the Trade Development Organization."

Fatemi-Amin said that in neighboring countries such as Oman, Qatar, China and Russia, we tried to choose a company that had good business conditions as the trading center of Iran. These trading centers have a duty to provide business services to Iranian companies.

"Another of our actions is joint ventures," he added. We have raised this with several countries. In Oman, an Iranian home appliance company is looking for an Omani side to form an Iranian-Omani company. In Oman, every company that is 41% Omani gets a 20-year loan. Thus, what we bring is technology, and what the other side brings is the creation of infrastructure and production lines," he noted.

Speaking at the press conference, the head of the Trade Promotion Organization said 50 billion dollars from non-oil exports in the Iranian new year (starting on March 21) have been envisaged.

Alireza Peyman-Pak said: "We are trying to facilitate trade laws and at the same time we are witnessing a 40% increase in trade and a positive trade balance."

Iran, Turkey Universities Ink MoU on Future Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) -Iran's Razi University and Turkey's Ataturk University have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Focusing on the joint scientific, research, cultural, and technological activities of the two universities, including the exchange of professors and students, holding international events, study opportunities, and the use of laboratory facilities of both sides are to be pursued based on the MoU, head of the International Department of Razi University said.

Shahab Moradkhani said that the MoU was signed for a five-year period adding that "this is regarded as the fifth MoU of Razi University with universities in Turkey." The University of Gazi Antep and the universities of Izmir, Igdır, and Karabük are the Turkish universities that have already signed an MoU on scientific, educational, and research fields with Razi University which is located in the western city of Kermanshah, he pointed out.

Investment in Textile Industry Rises Over 44%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The statistics of Iran's textile and clothing industry shows that investments made in this field grew by 44.8 percent in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), the spokesman of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry said.

Omid Qalibaf said the increase in investment in this industry is unprecedented since the overall rate of investment in the country is currently negative, IRNA reported.

"This jump in investment is due to the positive outlook for the future of this industry, and the export statistics of the textile and clothing industries, which showed a growth of 5.9 percent in the previous year," Qalibaf said.

According to the official, the exports of clothing and textile products in the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-May 21) increased by 10 percent

in terms of weight and the imports of such products also increased by 35 percent.

The textile industry in Iran has a long history and is one of the most important sectors for employment.

This industry has a high employment potential, and the amount of foreign currency investment to create a job in the textile industry is very low compared to some industries such as automotive.

But this sector has faced problems in recent years and it is very important to remove them.

In a recent interview conducted by IRIB, a board member of Association of Iran Textile Industries announced the closure of 7,000 production units in the country's textile industry.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:04
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:50

12. Why did not the believers - men and women - when ye heard of the affair, put the best construction on it in their own minds and say, "This (charge) is an obvious lie?"

13. Why did they not bring four witnesses to prove it? When they have not brought the witnesses, such men, in the sight of Allah, (stand forth) themselves as liars!

Surah 24. Light (12 - 13)

Moscow Seeks Boosting Russia-Azerbaijan-Iran-Pakistan Rail Route

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran-Russia Joint Trade Council Mr. Vladimir Abedinov in meeting with Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce Gholam-Hossein Shafei said Moscow is seeking the boost of Russia-Azerbaijan-Iran-Pakistan rail route for fascinating the trade trend.

In the meeting, Abedinov expressed interest for boosting trade relations between Iran and Russia and pointed to the sanctions against his country, adding that these developments have led to some changes in the logistic and transit routes in the region. He added that Russia's trade relations have affected by the sanctions and it needs review, noting that in this line, Russia looks for new routes for transportation in the region.

He pointed to some important rail routes in Iran and stipulated that completion of Rasht-Astara route is very important for Russia's trade goal and this makes the Pakistan route towards Russia to be available.

He said that by the way this route in Pakistan has bene old and needs to be reconstructed and Russia is ready to take advantage of it after its reconstruction, reiterating that this route needs to be completed by Iran as soon as possible.

He also pointed to the route for linking Russia to Iran's northern ports via ships and dispatch of consignments to Iran's southern ports and transfer of them via ships to Pakistan, emphasizing that this route is very complicated and therefore Russia is looking for a replacement for railway via Azerbaijan to Iran, Pakistan and India.

Abedinov stated that chambers of commerce of these four countries can form a



workgroup and after feasible studies, they table their proposals for completing, renovation and reinforcement of the rail routes and submit them to their governments.

Then Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Shafei, for his part, termed special the current condition in the region and called for making appropriate decision fitting the current condition.

He said Iran's government has prioritized the issue of transit in accordance with the existing condition in the region although there are some infrastructural problems in the field of port between Iran and Russia. He added that one of Iran's problems in marine transportation is lack of the ro-ro ships and as he knows talks are underway for the purchase of some ro-ro ships and this can improve the condition of marine trade between Iran and Russia via the Caspian Sea.

He also questioned the rail speed and said that the current rail speed in Iran is between 15 to 20 kilometers per hour which is not a good record and at the same time Iran is facing with the shortage of wagon that Russia can help it to be resolved.

Shafei admitted that rail problems in Pakistan despite Iran's persistence are not easily resolved, adding that for example dispatch of a consignment via Iran's railway to Lahore of Pakistan takes 35 days.

He welcomed Abedinov's proposal for the launch of workgroup and said Iran Chamber of Commerce can form the group in the next two months.

Iran to Roll Out Pilot Version of Crypto-Rial Digital Currency Soon

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran says it is preparing to roll out a pilot version of its first Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), named Crypto-Rial, in around two months, in a development that could transform the country's financial canvas.

Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Ali Salehabadi told media that officials were studying and taking the necessary measures for a pilot launch of the Crypto-Rial as of the Persian calendar month of Shahrivar, which starts on August 23.

The CBI chief explained that the Crypto-Rial will be different from the current global cryptocurrencies in nature and is solely designed to "replace the banknotes that the people currently possess." In the first phase, the pilot process will be launched in one region before it is extended to other areas of the country, he said.

The CBI first announced the launch of the CBDC in April, after informing the banks and credit institutions about the regulations that will accompany

the Crypto-Rial, which describe how the digital currency is minted and distributed.

The Central Bank also said back then that the Crypto-Rial would play a role in establishing the presence of crypto in the country.

CBDCs are growing rapidly worldwide, with 82 countries reported to be currently involved the evolution of digital currencies so far, while more are expected to join in the future.

Iran, Tajikistan to Boost Trade Cooperation

TEHRAN (IP) - A trade delegation of the Tajik government headed by the First Deputy Minister of Industry and New Technologies arrived in Tehran to discuss ways of bilateral cooperation and expand trade relations.

Due to the good political interactions and relations between the two countries' officials, in the past two months, the trade volume between the two countries grew very well and increased by about \$ 30 million.

The visit is in line with the 14th Joint Commission on Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation meeting between Iran and Tajikistan. Moreover, Iran and Tajikistan have decided to further develop bilateral cooperation in the pharmaceutical, food, petrochemical, and chemical sectors.

In addition to meeting with the Head of Iran Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), Alireza Peyman-Pak, the delegation will also meet with officials of the Ministry of Energy, Oil, Transport, and Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

IRISL Posts Record High Revenues

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) has registered its highest ever record for revenues in its history of activities.

In a ceremony marking the Day of Seafarer and World Marine Day which was held in Gilan Province, the CEO of IRISL Eng. Mohammad Reza Modarres Khiabani hailed the performance of the IRISL and said that the lines have registered its highest ever revenues in the history of its activities.

He hailed Gilan Province for training expert seafarers, adding that some 1000 staff of the lines are busy in this province, noting that this province has proved it has good potential for training good seafarers. He then pointed to the pandemic crisis and pressure on the world shipping lines industry in the recent two years and consequently on the IRISL, adding that IRISL have been struggling with restrictions due to the pandemic as well as sanctions.



Modarres Khiabani said that two years ago, four vessels of the IRISL fleet belonged to the foreigners and some 600 foreigners used to work with the lines and the lines had problem for entering the big ports in the world but with tireless efforts of the staff of the IRISL the problem was resolved.

He said currently 800 young Iranians have replaced the foreign seafarers and some 3,700 Iranian sailors are under cover of the IRISL and four vessels that in the past belong to the foreigners are now under the Iranian flag.

He reiterated that last year the company posted its most ever revenues in its history of activities and its revenues were more than any national trade enterprises.

Modarres Khiabani reiterated that the lines earned \$1.5b which is considered a historic record for the company. He reiterated that the lines can steer ahead the national economy and it is in a good and acceptable position.

40% Growth in Load, Unload of Goods in Chabahar Port in Q1

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Caretaker of Marine and Ports Organization of Sistan and Baluchistan Province announces 40 percent growth in load and unload of goods in Chabahar Port in the first quarter of the Iranian calendar year comparing to the same period last year.

Mr. Naser Ravanbakhsh said that in line with using all capacities of Chabahar Port and provision of basic goods required by the country, the unload and unload of basic goods in the first quarter of the year has increased by 44% comparing to the same period last year due to plans of the organization.

He noted that the load and unload of the basic goods in the same period comparing to the same period last year has increased by 22%. He stated that wheat and rice had

great share of imports in the port in the first quarter and it has almost been doubled.

Ravanbakhsh also pointed to the continuous growth in the load and unload operation of non-oil goods in recent years and the load and unload of non-oil goods in the spring of this year has grown by 74% comparing to last year.

Weekly Trade Volume on IME Up by 20%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,306,805 tons of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$640m on its physical market.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,121,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$356m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,457,000 tons of cement, 352,687 tons of steel, 291,000 tons of iron ore, 18,500 tons of sponge iron, 930 tons of zinc, 7,600 tons of aluminum, 6,501 tons of copper, 150 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 30 tons of precious metals concentrate and 4 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 166,849 tons of commodities worth almost \$153m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 87,750 tons of polymeric products, 4,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 1,000 tons of lube cut, 36,863 tons of chemicals, 600 tons of sulfur, 3,247 tons of base oil, 110 tons of feed gas, 33,207 tons of bitumen and 575 tons of insulation.

Based on this report, on the IME's agricultural trading floor, customers purchased 2 tons of saffron.

The IME also traded within the same week 18,712 tons of commodities on its side market.

Chadormalu Co. Produces Over 18.4m Tons of Steel Products

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Financial and Human Capitals of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company on the eve of the Mine and Industry Week said that the company produced over 18.4m tons of steel products last year.



In an interview, Eng. Farhad Azarinfar pointed to the role of the company in the national steel industry and said Chadormalu Company in recent years has had a favorable performance in this strategic industry due to having a full steel chain from mine to the production of ingot.

He added that the steelmaking unit of the company last year produced 1.054m tons of steel production which was more than its nominal capacity. He added that besides it, the company produced 1.464m tons of sponge iron, 3.809m tons of pellet and 12.186m tons of iron ore concentrate last year.

Touching upon the consequences of the energy supply challenges, he stipulated that although Chadormalu Company is beside the national gas pipeline and it provides its required electricity through its private power plants, severance in gas supply in the winter led to drop in the production and the company lost 150,000 tons of steel production.

Azarinfar noted that the plan for reforming and lifting subsidies of the energy price which was imposed on the industries last year cause a rise in the costs and Chadormalu was not an exception. He reiterated that the production cost in the company rose by 10% last year comparing to the preceding year due to the rise in the price of the energy carriers.

He reiterated that the rise in the final cost of the product has affected the capability for competition in the international market regarding other rivals.

Azarinfar went on to say that Chadormalu Company due to its effective role in the steel industry has always sought ways for optimizing the energy consumption in the steel industry and it has carried out some programs for reducing water consumption in its production units and currently the water consumption in the production units of the company is less than one cubic meter of water per 1000 tons of steel.



Offshore Bank To Be Launched With \$50m Capital



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRA – Secretary of High Council of Iran Free Trade and Special Economic Zones says the capital base for the launch of the first offshore bank of the country on Kish Island is \$50m but since big shareholders have entered the consortium, they have requested to increase the early capital to \$200m.

Speaking to ILNA, Saeed Mohammad said that Iran's Central Bank has announced its agreement with the launch of the first offshore bank of the country on the Kish Island, and the council is to announce the names of the required shareholders.

He added that with correspondence with the Central Bank, the Council has formed a consortium of shareholders for the offshore bank of Kish but due to some reasons as well as sanctions, the members of the consortium will not be revealed.

Mohammad added that in two week, the Council will officially submit its proposal to the Central Bank, adding that the early capital for the launch of the first offshore bank of the country is \$50m but since big shareholders have joined the consortium, they have asked to increase the early capital to \$200m.

He added that the Council has identified good and efficient ways for transfer of the forex and SWIFT capabilities and banking operational for this offshore bank, adding that with the launch of this offshore bank in Kish free zone, the banking transactions will be possible.

According to reports, first the Central Bank had asked for \$150m for the early capital base for the launch of the bank but after talks the figure reduced to \$50m.

Thailand Completely Removes Mask Mandate

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - The mask mandate for Thailand was lifted last night after the news had been published in the Royal Gazette.

It is no longer a requirement for people to wear masks when outdoors.

Those with respiratory diseases, and those who wish to continue wearing a mask for personal reasons, may continue to do so. The Ministry of Health also advises that people still wear masks, especially in crowded, poorly ventilated areas, where social distancing is not feasible.



Suu Kyi Moved to Solitary Confinement in Jail

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Myanmar military authorities have transferred deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi to a prison in the capital from an undisclosed location where she had been held since she and her government were ousted in a coup last year, a military spokesman said.

The Nobel laureate, who turned 77 on Sunday, had been moved to the jail in Naypyitaw on Wednesday after court rulings against her, military spokesman Zaw Min Tun said. "She was transferred to prison under the law and is being kept in solitary confinement," he said in a statement. Suu Kyi has been charged with about 20 criminal offences carrying a combined maximum jail term of nearly 190 years since she was toppled by the military in February 2021, including multiple counts of corruption. She denies all charges.



Ukrainians Withdrawing From Embattled Sievierodonetsk



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine signalled its troops were withdrawing from the city of Sievierodonetsk, the scene of weeks of intense bombardments and street fighting, in a move that would be a significant setback in its struggle to defeat Russian forces.

Provincial governor Serhiy Gaidai said troops in the city had already received the order to move to new positions, but he did not indicate whether they had already done so or where exactly they were going.

"Remaining in positions smashed to pieces over many months just for the sake of staying there does not make sense," Gaidai said on Ukrainian television.

The troops will "have to be withdrawn", he said.

Gaidai was speaking on the day that marked four months since Russian President Vladimir Putin sent tens of thousands of troops over the border, unleashing a conflict that has now killed thousands of combatants and civilians, uprooted several million people, and has seen Ukrainian cities blasted to bits by Russian artillery and air strikes.

The war has also fuelled a global energy and food crisis.

Some of the heaviest fighting of the war has taken place in Sievierodonetsk, where street-by-street combat has raged for a month with Russia painstakingly taking more ground. The battle is key for Russia to establish control over the last remaining Ukrainian-held sliver of Luhansk province, which along with Donetsk makes up the Donbas region, Ukraine's industrial heartland.

Sievierodonetsk's fall would leave only Lysychansk - its sister city on the western bank of the Siverskyi Donets River - remaining in Ukrainian hands.

"Our forces had to withdraw and conduct a tactical retreat because there was essentially nothing left there to defend. There was no city left there and, secondly, we could not allow them to be encircled," said Oleksander Musiyenko, a Kyiv-based military analyst.

Russia's tactics since its troops failed to capture the capital Kyiv early in the war involve ferocious bombardments of cities and towns followed by assaults by ground troops.

Analysts say the Russian forces are taking heavy casualties and face problems in leadership, supplies and morale. Nonetheless, they are grinding down Ukrainian resistance and making incremental gains in the east and south.

Ukraine's general staff said on Friday the Russians were firing from tanks, mortars, artillery and jets, as well as mounting air strikes near Lysychansk and Sievierodonetsk and nearby towns. Reuters could not immediately verify the reports.

Ukrainian troops had repelled a Russian attack on the southern outskirts of Lysychansk, Governor Gaidai wrote on the Telegram app. But Russia had taken control of the village of Mykolaivka, located near a highway to Lysychansk, he said.

Ukraine's foreign minister played down the significance of the possible loss of more territory in the Donbas.

"Putin wanted to occupy the Donbas by May 9. We are on June 24 and still fighting. Retreating from a few battles does not mean losing the war at all," Dmytro Kuleba said in an interview with the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera.

Johnson Under Pressure After UK Election Defeats

LONDON (Dispatches) - Boris Johnson's Conservatives lost two parliamentary seats on Friday, a crushing blow to the governing party that prompted the resignation of its chairman and intensified doubts about the future of Britain's prime minister.

In Rwanda for a meeting of Commonwealth nations, Johnson was defiant, pledging to listen to voters' concerns and do more to tackle a cost-of-living crisis after what he described as "tough" results in the two so-called by-elections.

The losses - one in the Conservatives' traditional southern heartlands and in a northern English industrial seat won from Labour in the last election - suggest the broad appeal Johnson presented to win the 2019 election may be fracturing.

Fears that Johnson could have become an electoral liability may prompt lawmakers to move against him again after months of scandal over COVID-19 lockdown parties at a time when millions are struggling with rising food and fuel prices.

Johnson has so far resisted pressure to resign after he was fined for breaking lockdown rules at his Downing Street office.

This month, he survived a vote of confidence by Conservative lawmakers, though 41% of his parliamentary colleagues voted to oust him, and he is under investigation by a committee over whether he intentionally misled parliament.

"I think as a government I've got to listen to what people are saying," Johnson told broadcasters in Kigali after the results. "We've got to recognize there is more we've got to do."

Following the losses in Tiverton and Honiton in southwest England, and Wakefield in the north, Conservative Party Chairman Oliver Dowden resigned in a carefully worded letter that hinted he might believe Johnson should take responsibility.

"We cannot carry on with business as usual," he said. "Somebody must take responsibility and I have concluded that, in these circumstances, it would not be right for me to remain in office," added Dowden, a long-time ally of Johnson.

Some Conservatives blamed him for running poor campaigns in both the voting areas by ignoring local concerns.

Johnson responded by saying he understood Dowden's disappointment but "this government was elected with an historic mandate just over two years ago" and he would continue to work to that end.



North Korea Lead Urges Stronger War Deterrent Amid Int'l Concern

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered a strengthening of the country's defense capabilities as he wrapped up a key meeting with top military officials, state media said, raising concerns about its possible addition of tactical nuclear weapons.

The meeting has been closely watched due to growing speculation that Pyongyang could conduct its first nuclear test in five years, which U.S. and South Korean officials have said could take place at "any time" now.

Kim presided over the three-day Enlarged Meeting of the 8th Central Military Commission where top officials "approved an important issue of providing a military guarantee for further strengthening the country's war deterrent," official KCNA media said.

During the meeting, North Korea made a rare mention of revising its war plans, and said it had decided to bolster the operational duties of its frontline units with "an important military action plan."

KCNA did not elaborate on the plan, which apparently targets South Korea, analysts said. "North Korea could have added the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons in its new operation plans given the use of the term war deterrent which it uses to refer to nuclear capabilities," Hong Min, a senior fellow at the Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul, said.

KCNA on Thursday released a photo of the North's top officials in a meeting with a map of what appeared to be the east coast of the Korean Peninsula, where South Korea's nuclear power plants are located.

Asked about North Korea's meeting, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol said Seoul was preparing a "firm response" on the North's activities.

The KCNA report did not directly mention North Korea's nuclear or ballistic missile programme, but it said Ri Pyong Chol, who has been leading the North's missile development, was elected as vice-chairman of the Party Central Military Commission.

"Given Ri's symbolic position in the North's nuclear advancement process, the election demonstrates its will to accelerate the development of strategic and tactical weapons," the Korea Institute's Hong said.

An official at Seoul's unification ministry handling inter-Korean affairs said Pyongyang appeared to have intentionally disclosed the photo, and is likely to step up threats against the South down the road.

Israelis Killed Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations has said that information it had gathered showed that the bullets that killed Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh on May 11 were fired by Israeli forces.

"All information we have gathered ... is consistent with the finding that the shots that killed Abu Akleh and injured her colleague Ali Sammoudi came from Israeli security forces and not from indiscriminate firing by armed Palestinians," UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told reporters in Geneva on Friday.

Shamdasani added that the information the OHCHR had gathered had revealed no "activity by armed Palestinians in the immediate vicinity of the journalists".

Abu Akleh was killed by Israeli forces while she was covering an army raid on Jenin, in the northern occupied West Bank.

Her killing led to outrage from Palestinians and around the world, with thousands attending her funeral in occupied East Jerusalem. Israeli police attacked the pallbearers at the funeral, almost causing Abu Akleh's coffin to fall to the ground.

Multiple witnesses said that Israeli forces killed the veteran reporter. Investigations conducted by several media organisations have also come to the same conclusion.

Shamdasani said that the OHCHR's investigation had shown that Abu Akleh and her fellow journalists had made a concerted effort to be visible as members of the press to Israeli soldiers positioned further down the street.

"The journalists said they chose a side street for their approach to avoid the location of armed Palestinians inside the camp and that they proceeded slowly in order to make their presence visible to the Israeli forces deployed down the street," Shamdasani said. "Our findings indicate that no warnings were issued and no shooting was taking place at that time and at that location."

"Several single, seemingly well-aimed bullets were fired towards them [the journalists] from the direction of the Israeli security forces."

Shamdasani added that bullets continued to be fired at an unarmed man who tried to come to Abu Akleh's aid, as well as a journalist who was sheltering behind a tree.

The OHCHR head Michelle Bachelet continued to urge Israeli authorities to open a criminal investigation into Abu Akleh's killing, according to Shamdasani.

Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, initially tried to argue that Palestinian gunmen could have killed Abu Akleh.



Lula Retains Lead Over Bolsonaro in Brazil Opinion Poll

SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - Former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is retaining his lead over incumbent Jair Bolsonaro ahead of Brazil's October presidential election, according to a Datafolha opinion poll released.

Lula drew 47% support in the opinion poll against Bolsonaro's 28%. In May, Lula's lead was 48% to 27%.

The polling results suggest time is running out for other candidates hoping to make it a three-way race. While leftist former state governor Ciro Gomes gained 1 percentage point from the last poll, he had the support of just 8% of voters polled.

In a potential second-round runoff between the rivals, leftist leader Lula now has a 23 percentage-point lead over right wing Bolsonaro, down from 25 points in May, the survey showed.

This week, Lula presented an official government plan outlining priorities if elected, including a new fuel pricing policy, removing a cap on government spending, and dramatically reining in deforestation.

Lula welcomed Thursday's poll results on Twitter, saying that despite a month of "TV advertising and a flood of fake news on the internet," Brazilian people showed they want to "get rid" of the current government.

Bolsonaro's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Datafolha interviewed 2,556 Brazilians of voting age (16 years) on Wednesday and Thursday. The poll has a margin of error of 2 percentage points up or down.



New Antibody Therapies Fight Cancer, Drum Up Investment



PARIS (Dispatches) - Antibody therapies are offering promising treatment breakthroughs for cancer and other illnesses, generating greater investor interest more than 20 years after they were first commercialized.

Antibodies are proteins that recognize foreign substances, known as antigens, attaching themselves to them to alert the rest of the human immune system.

In 1975, scientists Georges Koehler and Cesar Milstein discovered how to produce them in a laboratory, which later earned them a Nobel Prize for medicine. Dozens of synthetic antibodies have since been developed.

New antibody treatments to be used with chemotherapy have arrived on the scene in recent years. Most recently, a clinical trial of an antibody developed by pharmaceutical groups Daiichi Sankyo and AstraZeneca caught the attention of leading cancer specialists gathered at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's annual congress in Chicago this month. The treatment, Enhertu, was already authorised for breast cancer patients who had large amounts of a protein called HER2.

The antibody also performed well in patients with smaller quantities of the protein — increasing the number of people who could benefit.

The antibody latches onto the surface of a cancer cell whose receptors no longer work and the cell then "digests" the receptors to recycle them, activating the chemotherapy, explained cancer specialist William Jacot. "We hadn't seen such progress, in terms of survival, with a chemotherapy treatment for dozens of years," said Jacot, a professor at the Montpellier Cancer Institute in southern France.

Although antibody therapy technology has a complex production process, it is less difficult to implement than new treatments using cellular therapy.

Antibodies can be used in different ways to fight cancer. They can target and destroy the proteins necessary to produce cancer cells or act to regulate the immune response.

French biotech firm Inatherys is in the first stage of clinical trials of an antibody treatment for leukaemia, its boss Pierre Launay said.

He said the company's antibody will be designed act as a "guided missile" and target a receptor that lets iron enter cancer cells, which need the substance.

The antibody will then release a poison within the cell to destroy it.

Some antibody treatments are being used preventively while others are treatments. For example, AstraZeneca's Evusheld antibody treatment is used preventively to ward off Covid-19, while Xevudy by British company GSK is used as a treatment.

Treatments are also being developed for inflammatory diseases, which are also a major killer.

The promising announcements have triggered interest beyond the scientific community and a flood of investment. French biotech firm ImCheck Therapeutics recently raised almost €100 million (RM465 million) for an antibody treatment in development.

Pharmaceutical giants are also prepared to spend big to ensure they do not miss out. French company Sanofi bought Belgian biotech firm Ablynx and its mini antibodies, nanobodies, for almost €4 billion in 2018.

Dupixent, Sanofi's flagship immunotherapy antibody medication, earned more than five billion euros for the pharma giant last year, and Keytruda, an oncological treatment by US firm MSD, generated more than US\$17 billion in 2021.

Vienna Reclaims Title of the World's Most Liveable City



VIENNA (Dispatches) - The Austrian capital, Vienna, has made a comeback as the world's most liveable city, according to an annual report from the Economist.

Vienna snatched the top spot from New Zealand city Auckland, which tumbled down to 34th place due to coronavirus pandemic restrictions, according to the report by the Economist intelligence unit published on Thursday.

"Vienna, which slipped to 12th place in our rankings in early 2021 as its museums and restaurants were closed, has since rebounded to first place, the position it held in 2018 and 2019," the report said. "Stability and good infrastructure are the city's main charms for its inhabitants, supported by good healthcare and plenty of opportunities for culture and entertainment."

Melbourne has retained its place as one of the world's most liveable cities, ranking 10th, as other Australian capitals dropped out of the global top 10. Last year Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth were all in the top 10, but they have fallen to 27th, 30th and 32nd respectively.

The Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, was not included this year after Russia invaded the country in late February, while Russian cities Moscow and St Petersburg fell in the rankings over "censorship" and the impact of western sanctions. Europe boasted six out of the top 10 cities.

The Austrian capital was followed by the Danish capital, Copenhagen, and Switzerland's Zurich. Fellow Swiss city Geneva came sixth, Germany's Frankfurt seventh, and the Netherlands' Amsterdam ninth.

Canada also did well. Calgary came in joint third position, followed by Vancouver in fifth place and Toronto in eighth.

Japan's Osaka and Australia's Melbourne shared 10th place. France's capital, Paris, came 19th, 23 places up from last year. The Belgian capital, Brussels, was 24th, just behind Canada's Montreal.

The premier of Victoria, Daniel Andrews, said the ranking shows Melbourne is back on the world stage after years of Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

"It's hard to get a table at a restaurant, it's hard to get a room in a hotel," Andrews told reporters on Thursday. "The city's back. We are thriving and Victorians can be very proud of what they've achieved."

Melbourne held the title of the world's most liveable city for seven years from 2011, before it was unseated in 2018 by the Austrian capital, Vienna.

Auckland's fall in the rankings reflected the changing landscape of the coronavirus pandemic over the past year, with vaccination allowing many societies to reopen.

While it was demoted for its Covid restrictions this year, they were responsible for it gaining top spot in 2021, with the Economist saying at the time: "New Zealand's tough lockdown allowed their society to reopen and enabled citizens of cities like Auckland and Wellington to enjoy a lifestyle that looked similar to pre-pandemic life."

More bluntly, politics reporter Thomas Coughlan remarked then that: "I guess there's no pandemic here so it's technically easier to be alive here versus being dead elsewhere."

In this year's rankings, the UK's capital, London, was the world's 33rd most liveable city, five places behind Manchester in 28. Spain's Barcelona and Madrid came 35th and 43rd respectively. Italy's Milan ranked number 49, the US city of New York 51, and China's Beijing came 71st.

Lebanon's capital, Beirut, which was ravaged by a 2020 port explosion and is battling a crippling financial crisis, was not included in the ranking of business destinations.



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Turkish Central Bank's Net FX Reserves at 20-Year Low at \$7.4b

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - The Turkish central bank's net international reserves fell to their lowest level in 20 years at \$7.38 billion as of June 17, data from the central bank showed on Thursday.

The exchange rate used by Reuters on Thursday was 17.2880. The net forex reserves stood at \$8.15 billion a week earlier.

Forex reserves have dropped sharply in recent years, most recently due to the billions of dollars the bank sold in market interventions in the wake of a currency crisis in December.



Germany Triggers Gas Alarm Stage, Accuses Russia of Economic Attack

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany triggered the "alarm stage" of its emergency gas plan in response to falling Russian supplies but stopped short of allowing utilities to pass on soaring energy costs to customers in Europe's largest economy.

The measure is the latest escalation in a standoff between Europe and Moscow since the Russian invasion of Ukraine that has exposed the bloc's dependence on Russian gas supplies and sparked a frantic search for alternative energy sources.

The step is largely symbolic, signalling to companies and households that painful cuts are on the way. But it marks a major shift for Germany, which cultivated strong energy ties with Moscow stretching back to the Cold War.

Lower gas flows sparked warnings this week that Germany could fall into recession if Russian supplies halted altogether. A major survey on Thursday showed the economy losing momentum in the second quarter.

"We must not fool ourselves: The cut in gas supplies is an economic attack on us by (Russian President Vladimir) Putin," Economy Minister Robert Habeck said in a statement.

Gas rationing would hopefully be avoided but cannot be ruled out, Habeck said and warned:

"From now on, gas is a scarce commodity in Germany ... We are therefore now obliged to reduce gas consumption, now already in summer."

Russia has denied the supply cuts were deliberate, with state supplier Gazprom (GAZPMM) blaming a delay in return of serviced equipment caused by Western sanctions. The Kremlin on Thursday said Russia "strictly fulfils all its obligations" to Europe.

Under its Phase 2 plan, Berlin will provide a 15 billion euro (\$15.76 billion) credit line to fill gas storage facilities and launch a gas auction model this summer to encourage industrial users to save gas.

The second "alarm stage" of a three-stage emergency plan kicks in when the authorities see a high risk of long-term supply shortages. It includes a clause allowing utilities to immediately pass on high prices to industry and households.

Habeck said Germany was not at that point, but the clause might get triggered if the supply squeeze and price gains persisted, pushing power companies deeper into the red.

"If this minus becomes so big that the companies can't bear it any more and they fall down, the whole market threatens to fall down at some point - so a Lehman Brothers effect in the energy system," he said, referring to U.S. investment bank's 2008 collapse that rippled through global financial markets.

Germany's local utility association VKU asked the government to protect consumers with subsidies and ensuring liquidity, or risk utilities going bust because of low-income retail customers defaulting on payments.

A move to Phase 2 has been anticipated since Gazprom cut flows via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline across the Baltic Sea to just 40% of capacity last week.

Facing dwindling deliveries from main supplier Russia, Germany has since late March been at Phase 1, which includes stricter monitoring of daily flows and a focus on filling gas storage facilities.

Eurozone Business Growth Slumps in June

LONDON (Dispatches) - Eurozone business growth has slowed significantly this month - and by much more than expected - as consumers concerned about soaring bills opted to stay at home and defer purchases to save money, a survey showed.

S&P Global's flash Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), seen as a good gauge of overall economic health, slumped to 51.9 in June from 54.8 in May, far below the 54.0 predicted in a Reuters poll and its lowest level since February 2021.

"Euro zone economic growth is showing signs of faltering as the tailwind of pent-up demand from the pandemic is already fading, having been offset by the cost of living shock and slumping business and consumer confidence," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global.

The composite new business index dropped to a 16-month low of 50.0, the dividing line between growth and contraction, from 53.3.

A PMI covering the bloc's dominant services industry sank to 52.8 from 56.1, missing expectations for 55.5 and its weakest reading since April 2021.

Growth in demand for services all but dried up and firms faced input costs rising at a near-record rate, forcing them to pass some of that burden on to customers. The input prices index rose to 78.3 from 77.4 and has only been higher twice in the survey's 24-year history - in March and April.

Inflation in the bloc hit a record 8.1% last month and could still go higher in the coming months so the European Central Bank is expected to raise its deposit rate above zero for the first time in a decade in September, a Reuters poll found.

High prices meant demand for manufactured goods fell at the fastest rate since May 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic was taking hold, and the headline factory PMI fell to a near two-year low of 52.0 from 54.6. The Reuters poll had predicted a modest drop to 53.9.

An index measuring output, which feeds into the composite PMI, dropped to 49.3 from 51.3, its first time sub-50 in two years.

"Inflows of new business have stalled, led by a slump in demand for goods and reduced demand for services from cash-strapped consumers in particular," Williamson said.

"At the same time, business confidence has fallen sharply to a level rarely seen prior to the pandemic since the region's economic contraction during 2012, hinting at an imminent downturn unless demand revives."



India Ready to Help Sri Lanka in Quick Economic Recovery

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - A top Indian official has held talks with Sri Lanka's president and prime minister as India signals its willingness to go beyond the \$4bn in loans, swaps and aid that it has already provided its cash-strapped neighbour.

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis in seven decades, with a severe foreign exchange shortage hampering the importation of essentials including food, fuel and medicines.

The island nation off the tip of southeast India needs about \$5bn in the next six months to cover basic necessities for its 22 million people, who have been struggling with long queues, worsening shortages and power cuts.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra, accompanied by finance ministry officials, held talks with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in the commercial capital, Colombo, officials said on Thursday.

"Underlined India stands ready to help Sri Lanka in quick economic recovery through promoting investments, connectivity and strengthening economic linkages," Indian foreign ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi posted on Twitter.

The Indian team held a separate meeting with Wickremesinghe, the central bank governor and finance ministry officials, an official from the prime minister's office said.

"The delegation will also hold discussions with senior officials on the economic situation in the country and the short-term and long-term assistance requirements," Sri Lanka's foreign ministry said in a statement.

India has been the principal source of foreign assistance to Sri Lanka this year, supplying more than \$4bn, Wickremesinghe told parliament this week.

The neighbors are also in talks for additional support including a \$500m credit line for fuel and help with importing fertilizer and rice as Sri Lanka attempts to stave off a food crisis, officials said.

Sri Lanka plans to hold a donor conference with China, India and Japan, Wickremesinghe said, as it continues talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout package of about \$3bn.

A critical shortage of foreign currency and runaway inflation have made life a misery for the South Asian country's 22 million people.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's parliament cancelled its remaining sittings for the week to save fuel, officials said on Thursday, with a disastrous economic crisis rapidly depleting the island nation's already scarce petrol supplies.

Parliamentary officials said politicians decided not to hold sessions on Thursday and Friday to avoid unnecessary petrol use, days after authorities closed schools and some state offices for the same reason.



Maersk Sees No Let-Up in Surging Cost of Shipping Goods

LONDON (Dispatches) - The cost of shipping goods has surged 25-30% since the start of the pandemic due to array of inflationary pressures that are "unlikely to abate in the short term," world No. 1 container shipping company Maersk told Reuters.

Maersk is viewed as a bellwether for global trade as it transports goods for retailers and consumer companies from Walmart and Nike to Unilever.

Higher supply chain costs have rocked the retail and packaged goods industries since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, particularly over the past year as economies have started to recover, with logjams at key ports holding up containers of everything from food and health products to toys.

"I think some more inflation (will) come through in the years to come," Vincent Clerc, chief executive of Ocean and Logistics at Maersk said in an interview during the Consumer Goods Forum's Global Summit conference in Dublin.

"Logistics is very energy and labour intensive, and those are two of the areas of the economy that are subject to significant inflationary pressure."

Clerc said that while congestion is improving in some parts of the world, it is becoming worse in others -- for instance, the East Coast of the United States and in Northern Europe.

"We're talking here about the availability of truck drivers, the availability of capacity to move the goods through to the inland infrastructure," he said.

India Aims to Keep FY2023 Fiscal Deficit at Last Year's Level

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's government will not be able to cut its budget deficit this fiscal year as previously projected, officials said, but will seek to cap the shortfall at last year's level to prevent a major deterioration in public finances.

Efforts to maintain some fiscal discipline reflect New Delhi's concern around risks to its sovereign credit rating but will likely limit the government's firepower to contain inflation and provide relief to households and businesses.

In February, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government set a fiscal deficit target of 6.4% of gross domestic output (GDP) for the year that started on April 1, compared with a deficit of 6.7% last year.

The sources said that while increased spending to provide relief from inflation meant the government would miss this year's target, policymakers would seek to limit the deviation to 30 basis points.

"We will try to contain the slippage to last year's levels," one of the officials, who declined to be identified, told Reuters.

Surging costs forced India in May to cut fuel taxes and change duty structures, hitting revenues by about \$19.16 billion, while additional fertilizer subsidies lifted expenditure.

The government and central bank have scrambled to contain prices through fiscal measures and monetary tightening after inflation jumped to multi-year highs.

Retail inflation has held above the Reserve Bank of India's 6% mandated ceiling for five straight months while wholesale price inflation has risen to 30-year highs.

The government is wary of the risks fiscal slippage poses to its sovereign credit ratings. Its debt to GDP ratio, which stands at around 95%, is significantly higher than the 60-70% levels for other, similarly rated economies.

That leaves the government with little room to provide additional relief, as the May measures are already expected to drive up the deficit by more than 30 basis points if revenue collection does not exceed the budget target.

"The government can definitely do more but at what cost? If more steps are taken, it will require additional market borrowing and that will drive up yields and eventually cause higher inflation," said a second source who is aware of the discussions.

The government is reluctant to expand its record market program of 14.31 trillion rupees this fiscal year, both officials said, adding that a decision on an additional borrowing requirement would only be taken in November.

EU, Norway Agree to Increase Gas Deliveries as Russian Cuts Deepen



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Union and Norway agreed to cooperate to bring more gas from western Europe's biggest producer to the EU's 27 countries, nearly half of which are now grappling with cuts to Russian gas supplies.

Brussels said on Thursday that 12 EU member states are facing gas cuts, after Russia reduced flows through its Nord Stream 1 pipeline last week, citing technical problems.

Moscow had previously halted deliveries to Poland, the Netherlands and other countries that refused to comply with a new payment scheme.

Norway and the European Commission will "step up cooperation in order to ensure additional short-term and long-term gas supplies from Norway," they said in a statement, after EU climate policy chief Frans Timmermans and Norway's energy minister Terje Aasland met in Brussels.

"There is strong potential for increased sales to Europe in 2022, bringing close to 100 TWh of extra energy to the European market," said the statement, which was also signed by EU energy commissioner Kadri Simson.

Norway has hiked gas production in response to shortages in Europe and previously said it expected its gas sales to rise by 8% to 122 billion cubic metres this year. That equates to an additional 100 TWh of supply - meaning all of its additional production is likely to go to the EU.

The EU imports roughly a fifth of its gas from Norway, compared with the 40% it got from Russia before Moscow's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

The statement said Norway will remain a "large supplier" to Europe beyond 2030 and expressed support to increase its oil and gas exploration. It also pledged to cooperate on renewable energy and green technologies such as hydrogen.

Iraq to Increase Importing Iranian Gas

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iraqi ministry of electricity announced that the country's debts for energy imports from Iran have been paid off and Baghdad is now consulting to increase gas imports from Iran.

The spokesperson for the Iraqi ministry of electricity told media sources that Iraq imports 40 million cubic meters of

Iranian gas per day currently but the country needs to receive 50 to 55 million cubic meters of gas per day to supply its electricity.

"The Ministry of Electricity is trying to increase its daily production to 24,000 MW, and this depends on increasing Iran's gas exports from 40 million cubic meters to 50 to 55 million cubic meters per day," he added.



G7 Hopes to Show Unity on Ukraine Despite Darkening Economic Outlook

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The Group of Seven rich democracies will seek to demonstrate their long-term support for Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression at a summit starting on Sunday even as the war's growing impact on the world economy tests their resolve.

The leaders of the United States, Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Canada and Japan will discuss how to tighten the screws on the Kremlin at the three-day summit at Schloss Elmau, a luxury hotel in a Bavarian mountain valley.

But as the war drags into its fifth month, they will be wary of any sanctions that could further darken the global economic outlook. The conflict has already created food and energy shortages that are stoking inflation and global hunger.

Price rises are hitting the global south particularly hard, where countries were already struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic and climate crises.

Speaking ahead of the back-to-back European Union, G7 and NATO summits, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the German parliament on Wednesday the task was greater than sending the message that the West was as united "as never before".

The summits must also show "that the democracies of the world stand together in the fight against Putin's imperialism, as well as in the fight against hunger, poverty, health crises and climate change," he said.

If the West did not show solidarity with the countries of the global south - many of which have criticised Western sanctions - Russia and China would benefit, he warned.

Finding a new approach to China that reflected human rights concerns, supply chain problems and the often negative impact of its global investments would play a "very big role" at the summit, a German government official said.

G7 leaders will launch a new infrastructure initiative aimed at offering low- and middle-income countries high-quality, transparent investments, senior U.S. officials said, a clear response to China's Belt and Road project, which has been criticised for opaque contracts and onerous loan terms.

Scholz has invited as partner nations the leaders of Senegal - which holds the rotating chair of the African Union - and Argentina - which holds the presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States - as well as India, Indonesia and South Africa.

As Ukraine battles Russian forces in its East in a war that has killed thousands and flattened cities, the leaders will discuss the need for long-term financial aid to help the country rebuild, the German official said.

"We are talking about considerably bigger sums than the current 5 billion euros (of external aid) a month," the official said. Scholz said the country needed a "Marshall Plan", like the U.S. programme that rebuilt Europe after World War Two.

On Monday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will address them by video link.



Attempts to hit Russia's war chest have been constrained by Europe's reliance on Russian energy imports. A sharp cut in deliveries over the past week has sent the region scrambling for alternatives. A senior EU official said on Wednesday a temporary shift back to coal would not derail longer term climate goals.

G7 leaders are set to discuss setting up a climate club to better coordinate carbon pricing and other schemes for reducing emissions, not least in the hope of avoiding trade wars, the German official said.

They will also discuss the darkening global economic outlook, the official said - the challenge being controlling government spending without sending the economy into shock.

Nearly 20,000 police officers have been deployed to ensure security at the summit, with Scholz keen to avoid a rerun of the G20 summit he hosted as Mayor of Hamburg in 2018 that was marred by violent protests.

The G7 was founded in 1975 as a forum for the richest nations to discuss crises such as the OPEC oil embargo.

China, the world's second-largest economy, has never been a member of the G7. Russia, admitted as a G8 member six years after the fall of the Soviet Union, was suspended in 2014 after it annexed the Ukraine's Crimean peninsula.

What a Strange World

FROM PAGE 1

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."

This is not the first and will not be the last time that Iran is accused of violating human rights and each time that nuclear talks or some regional developments are in favor of Tehran, suddenly such a report on human rights violation resurfaces in order to put pressure on Iran for giving concessions or pushing it back from its rightful demands.

In recent days most of the world media have covered the UK government's decision for deporting asylum-seekers to Rwanda against their wills and people inside and outside the country has protested to this decision but the British government is determined to do it but at the same time the UN and its Human Rights commissioner is watching this horrible violation of human rights without taking any serious action or condemning it.

For years the Zionist regime has been violating the rights of the Palestinians and it still continues this atrocity without getting due reaction and punishment from the UN and even it is getting bolder for more bloodshed due to the full support of the major Western powers.

Several people in Iran have been assassinated by the Zionists or their elements in the country but the UN has avoided condemning officially the Zionists or issuing a statement against this fake regime.

Iranians recommend the UN Chief and this major international body to stop politicizing the issues and taking unfair stands against the country because this double-standard approach to the human rights will lead to the loss of credibility of the UN and emergence of mistrust against this international body.

The problem is that definition of human rights in every country is different and for this reason the West misuse of this and tries to impose its own style definition which is not acceptable for many countries. The UN and the West should not expect Iran to close its eyes over violation of laws by its citizens because everybody should abide by the law and any violation of the law should face punishment and it is natural in all countries. But the problem is that the West and unfortunately the UN sticks to their own laws and they do not give a damn on the domestic laws of other countries which have been approved by parliaments whose representatives have been elected by the public.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran follows the laws of Islam which are not accepted by the West and the UN, and for this reason such biased and West-oriented human rights violation report is released against Tehran.

The UN is recommended to have a fair approach to this important human issue and not to resort to politicizing the issue and to release such anti-Iran reports whenever the country is achieving some success or strengthening its position in the country, mainly, nuclear talks which are in their final stages.

Currently the UN is like a strange world with its strange decisions and approaches and this double-standard approach and world harms the credibility of this body.



European Banks Ace U.S. Fed's Stress Test



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. units of major European lenders including Deutsche Bank, Barclays and Credit Suisse sailed through the Federal Reserve's annual "stress tests" on Thursday, showing they hold enough capital to weather an economic shock.

For the seven European bank subsidiaries the Fed oversees with more than \$100 billion in assets, the average capital ratio -- a measure of the cushion a bank has to withstand potential losses -- remained well above the regulatory minimum of 4.5%.

It was also higher than the average ratio for the broader group of 34 banks tested, according to a Reuters analysis of the results.

The average capital ratio for the seven European lenders stood at 15.2%, compared with 9.7% for the 34 banks.

Deutsche Bank's U.S. operations had the highest ratio of all banks at 22.8%, while Credit Suisse was the third-highest of the group with a ratio of 20.1%. HSBC was the straggler of the foreign pack with a ratio of 7.7%.

However, Credit Suisse's core capital ratio suffered the biggest fall of all the banks tested under the severe stress scenario, eroding by more than 7 percentage points from its starting point. HSBC's buffer fell the second most, dropping more than 6 percentage points.

Under its annual stress test exercise established following the 2007-2009 financial crisis, the Fed assesses how banks' balance sheets would fare against a hypothetical severe economic downturn. The results dictate how much capital banks need to be healthy and how much they can return to shareholders.

This year's severely adverse scenario saw the economy contract 3.5%, driven in part by a slump in commercial real estate asset values, and the jobless rate jumping to 10%.

The other four European subsidiaries tested were UBS America Holdings, Santander Holdings USA, and BNP Paribas USA.

While the scenarios were devised before Russia's invasion of Ukraine and a sharp jump in inflation, the tests should reassure policymakers that Europe's top lenders are resilient enough to withstand a possible recession this year or in early 2023.

U.S. Recession Fears Darken Outlook for Global Growth

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Manufacturing growth is slowing worldwide as China's COVID-19 curbs and Russia's invasion of Ukraine disrupt supply chains and keep inflation at the highest in years, while the growing risk of a U.S. recession poses a new threat to the global economy.

Gauges of factory activity released Thursday in Japan, Britain, the eurozone and the United States all softened in June,

with U.S. producers reporting the first outright drop in new orders in two years in the face of slumping consumer and business confidence.

S&P Global's flash U.S. Composite PMI Output Index, which tracks the manufacturing and services sectors, dropped to 51.2 this month from a final reading of 53.6 in May and the slowest growth pace in five months. The manufacturing component dropped to 52.4, the lowest in nearly two years, from 57 in May and was notably weaker than the estimate of 56 in a Reuters poll of economists.

"Business confidence is now at a level which would typically herald an economic downturn, adding to the risk of recession," said Chris Williamson, a chief business economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Meanwhile, high prices in the eurozone meant demand for manufactured goods fell in June at the fastest rate since May 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic was taking hold, with S&P Global's headline factory Purchasing Managers' Index falling to a near two-year low.

"June's eurozone PMI surveys showed a further slowdown in the services sector, while output in the manufacturing sector now seems to be falling outright," said Jack Allen-Reynolds at Capital Economics.



"With the price indices remaining extremely strong, the eurozone appears to have entered a period of stagflation."

There is a roughly one-in-three chance of a recession in the bloc within 12 months, economists in a Reuters poll published earlier on Thursday predicted. They also said inflation - which hit a record high of 8.1% last month - was yet to peak.

Jerome Powell, chair of the Federal Reserve, said on Wednesday the central bank was not trying to engineer a recession in the United States to stop inflation but was fully committed to bringing prices under control even if doing so risks an economic downturn.

He acknowledged a recession was "certainly a possibility." Inflation continues to run at least three times higher than the Fed's targeted level of 2% and it is expected to deliver another 75 basis point interest rate hike next month, according to economists polled by Reuters.

Tehran Pledges Continued...

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The top Iranian diplomat also referred to the deployment of 18-member team of medical experts from the Iranian Red Crescent Society to Afghanistan in the aftermath of the quake, saying "[we] are prepared to send over [another] medical team if need arises."

Muttaqi, for his part, expressed gratitude to the Islamic Republic for its sympathetic stance and provision of assistance to the disaster-stricken people in Afghanistan.

"In the current circumstances, provision of shelter for the quake-hit people is very important," he noted.

The disaster poses fresh challenge to Afghanistan's new rulers and relief agencies that are already struggling with a rapidly worsening humanitarian crises precipitated by the botched exit of US-led foreign forces last year and freeze on Afghan assets.

According to aid agencies, around 19 million Afghans - nearly half of the country's population - are grappling with severe food shortages in a crisis that aggravated dramatically since the US-led foreign forces withdrew last August.

On Thursday, Majid Takht Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations, urged the United States to unfreeze the nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank.

"As we have repeatedly stated, Afghanistan's frozen assets belong to the Afghan people, and their release, which is crucial for helping the Afghan economy and saving lives, should not be politicized or conditional in any way," he said in an address to the UN Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan.

Politicization...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran's Judiciary has opened several cases on international issues, including U.S. sanctions and assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists, where the rights of Iranian citizens have been violated, the official continued, singling out the case of EB patients who were hurt by a lack of medical items due to U.S. sanctions.

Iran has aimed at clarifying the international public opinion on the impacts of unilateral sanction on the people of Iran and their inconsistency with the international law, as said by Gharibabadi.

In this regard, he said, the U.S. special rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures travelled to Iran and offered a report, saying that unilateral sanctions contrasted international law and the UN charter and have impacted human rights of the Iranian people.

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ISSN 1024-6053
P.O. Box: 15875-8551
Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St.,
Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran
Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Printed by:Honar Sarzmin Sabz
Distributed by:
Cities of Iran Cultural and
Artistic Institute
Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Nkunku Extends With RB Leipzig Until 2026

BERLIN (Dispatches) - RB Leipzig have extended the contract of their top-scoring France forward Christopher Nkunku until 2026, it was announced.

The 24-year-old was in stellar form last season, banging in 35 goals, including 20 in the Bundesliga, plus 19 assists in 50 matches in all competitions.

His performances earned him a debut in the France team last March and attracted interest from his former club Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester United.

Real Madrid to Begin La Liga Title Defense at Almeria

MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid will begin the defense of their Spanish league title away to Almeria on Aug. 14 and Barcelona host Rayo Vallecano the same weekend, La Liga said.

With the World Cup in Qatar scheduled to be played for the first time in the middle of the European domestic season, the La Liga campaign will not end until next June.

The World Cup is due to start on Nov. 21 and La Liga will resume on Dec. 31, two weeks after the final.

Grizzlies Make Two Deals Involving Four First-Rounders

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Memphis Grizzlies were one of the busiest teams during the NBA Draft in Thursday night, reportedly making deals involving four first-round picks and two veteran players.

The Grizzlies first sent the 22nd and 29th overall picks to the Minnesota Timberwolves for the 19th pick, which Memphis used on Wake Forest forward Jake LaRavia.

The Grizzlies then reportedly acquired No. 23 pick David Roddy, a guard from Colorado State, and veteran Danny Green from the Philadelphia 76ers in exchange for De'Anthony Melton.

Melton, a 24-year-old guard, averaged career bests in points (10.8 per game), rebounds (4.5) and assists (2.7) last season. Green, a 35-year-old forward, averaged 5.9 points per game last season, his lowest figure since 2010-11.

Minnesota ended up with Auburn's Walker Kessler, the No. 22 pick, and Kentucky's TyTy Washington, the No. 29 pick.

Trades made on draft day are not official until fully approved by the NBA.

Here is a rundown of other trades reported on the draft:

--French forward Ousmane Dieng, selected by the New York Knicks with the No. 11 pick, is reportedly on his way to the Oklahoma City Thunder in exchange for three future first-round draft picks.

Dieng, a 19-year-old who stands 6-foot-10, averaged 8.9 points and 3.2 rebounds for the New Zealand Breakers last season.

--Memphis center Jalen Duren, chosen 13th overall by the Charlotte Hornets, reportedly wound up with the Detroit Pistons as part of a three-team deal. The swap also saw the Knicks send veteran Kemba Walker to Detroit, where he is expected to have his expiring contract bought out.

Charlotte allegedly landed a protected 2025 first-round pick from Detroit and four future second-round picks.

--The Dallas Mavericks selected Duke forward Wendell Moore Jr. with the 26th overall pick, but he was ticketed for the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Kvitova Reaches Eastbourne Semis

EASTBOURNE (Dispatches) - Petra Kvitova moved into the Eastbourne semi-finals with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Harriet Dart as the former Wimbledon champion stepped up her preparations for next week's Grand Slam.

Kvitova, who won Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014, is using the WTA Tour event on England's south coast to warm up for her grass-court title bid.

The 32-year-old veteran might be past her peak these days, but she is still a danger on grass.

Dart showed glimpses of her talent during a spirited display against 14th seed Kvitova but never seriously threatened an upset.

Kvitova dominated thanks to a series of powerful groundstrokes and deservedly claimed a second British scalp, having eliminated Katie Boulter in the previous round.

Dart, 25, denied her Czech opponent's first two match points but, having briefly turned that precarious position into her first break point of the afternoon, was unable to save the third.

Kvitova will play Beatriz Haddad Maia in the semi-finals after the Brazilian 15th seed received a walkover against Lesia Tsurenko, who was suffering from an elbow injury.

In the other semi-final, former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko faces Italy's Camila Giorgi.

Latvia's Ostapenko, the reigning Eastbourne champion, overcame Anhelina Kalinina 6-3, 6-2, while Giorgi defeated Viktoriya Tomova 6-2, 6-1.

Halep Pulls out of Bad Homburg Semis

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Former world number one Simona Halep pulled out of her semi-final match at the Bad Homburg Open in Germany due to a neck issue, days before the start of Wimbledon.

The 30-year-old Romanian was due to play Canadian Bianca Andreescu, who will advance to the final of the WTA 250 event against a Frenchwoman - either Alize Cornet or Caroline Garcia.



The move was part of an earlier deal that saw Christian Wood move from the Houston Rockets to the Mavericks.

--The 30th and final pick of the first round, UCLA forward Peyton Watson, was chosen by the Thunder and dealt to the Denver Nuggets. Oklahoma City received JaMychal Green and a future protected first-round pick, while Denver also got two future second-round selections.

--The Los Angeles Lakers acquired the 35th overall pick from the Orlando Magic for a future second-round choice, and they selected Michigan State forward Max Christie. General manager Rob Pelinka said last week that the Lakers hoped to find a way to add a draft pick or two to a roster loaded with veterans.

--Dallas sent Sacramento two future second-rounders to acquire pick No. 37, which the Mavericks used on G League point guard Jaden Hardy.

--The San Antonio Spurs traded Tennessee guard Kennedy Chandler, the 38th pick, to Memphis for a future second-round pick and financial considerations.

--The Timberwolves sent the No. 40 pick, Nebraska guard Bryce McGowens, to the Hornets in exchange for the No. 45 selection, Memphis forward Josh Minott, and the New York Knicks' 2023 second-round pick.

--The Golden State Warriors reportedly acquired the 44th pick from the Atlanta Hawks and selected Toledo guard Ryan Rollins. The trade cost Golden State the No. 51 pick, Tyrese Martin from UConn, and \$2 million in cash.

--The Nuggets reportedly sent a 2024 second-round pick to the Portland Trail Blazers for the 46th pick, which Denver used on Ismael Kamagate, a 6-foot-11 French center.

--Indiana drafted Baylor guard Kendall Brown with the 48th pick, which the Pacers obtained from Minnesota for future considerations.

--The Cavaliers agreed to send Aleksandar "Sasha" Vezenkovic to the Sacramento Kings in exchange for the rights to the 49th pick in the 2022 draft (Southern California forward Isaiah Mobley).



Chelsea, Tottenham Submit Offers for Carrasco

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea and Tottenham have reportedly both submitted offers for Atletico Madrid star Yannick Carrasco.

The Belgium international has made 219 appearances for Atletico Madrid in two stints, with 37 goals and 39 assists to his name for the La Liga side.

Carrasco spent two years in the Chinese Super League in a hiatus from the Spanish club, before returning to Atletico in the summer of 2020.

He's a key part of Diego Simeone's side, playing frequently as a left wing-back, but just as comfortable in more forward positions.

And that versatility, as well as his quality, has caught the eye of a number of Premier League suitors.

A report on Thursday claimed Manchester United, Spurs and Chelsea are all 'knocking on the door' with the idea of signing Carrasco in the summer transfer window.

And now, Diario AS (via CaughtOffside) claim Carrasco has had 'important offers' from Chelsea and Spurs.

Simeone isn't interested in selling the 28-year-old, but if a club does trigger the player's release clause, the Argentine manager won't have a say in the matter.

Carrasco reportedly has a release clause worth €60m (£51m), which expires in the summer of 2024.

Carrasco is believed to be 'very comfortable' in Madrid and is unlikely to push for a transfer, although he does 'feel entitled' to a 'review of his contract'.



Dortmund on Verge of Signing Haller

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Ajax forward Sebastien Haller flew to Germany to complete a medical check before signing with Borussia Dortmund as a replacement for Erling Haaland.

Haller was picked up by Dortmund officials after landing at the city's airport from where he was taken for his medical.

The 28-year-old Ivory Coast international

is reportedly poised to ink a four-year deal with Dortmund to replace Haaland, who has joined Premier League champions Manchester City.

German daily Bild say Haller's transfer from Ajax is set to cost Bundesliga runners-up Dortmund around 31 million euros (\$32.5 million) including bonuses.

Haller was in superb form in the Champions League last season, scoring 11 goals in eight games including four in a 5-1 win over Sporting Lisbon in Ajax's opening group match.

The Dutch champions bowed out in the last 16, but Haller went on to score 21 goals in 31 games in the Eredivisie.

Milan Begin Serie A Title Defense With Udinese Visit

ROME (Dispatches) - AC Milan will begin their Serie A title defence with the visit of Udinese after the 2022/23 season's fixture list was announced.

Stefano Pioli's side then face Atalanta, Bologna and Sassuolo before hosting the first Milan derby of the season in early September.

Milan took the Scudetto from Inter on the final day of last season's enthralling title race and will likely be doing battle with their local rivals -- who are set to bring back Romelu Lukaku -- for the title in a campaign which starts earlier than usual.

The opening round of fixtures are on August 13, due to the World Cup which kicks off in Qatar in November, and finishes on June 4 next year.

The first week of the season will be held around when Italian families traditionally set off to the seaside, lakes or mountains on holiday to escape the intense summer heat.

The league will break from November 13 to make space for the World Cup but unlike the Premier League will not return in December, with the action starting up again on January 4.

Inter start with a trip to Serie B champions Lecce, one of only three teams from Italy's southern regions, before facing Spezia, Lazio and promoted Cremonese before their first local derby of the season.

Should the season go down to the wire as it did in May, there are some big matches in the final few weeks which could have an impact on the destination of the title.



Tsitsipas Reaches Mallorca Semifinals

PALMA (Dispatches) - World number one Daniil Medvedev lost to Roberto Bautista Agut in the quarter-finals of the Mallorca Open, while second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced to the last four.

Medvedev was beaten 6-3, 6-2 by Bautista Agut who avenged his defeat by the Russian in last week's quarter-finals at Halle.

"I had to play very good to beat Daniil. He's the number one, the last champion here in Mallorca. He just beat me a few days ago. I played a really complete match," said Bautista Agut.

Bautista Agut broke Medvedev once in the first set and twice in the second as he earned a fourth win in five meetings with the US Open champion. The loss marks the end of Medvedev's grass-court season. He is one of several players banned from Wimbledon following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Bautista Agut takes on Switzerland's 303rd-ranked Antoine Bellier in the semi-finals. The qualifier defeated Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor 5-7, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2.

Bellier is the lowest-ranked semi-finalist since Juan Manuel Cerundolo, then 335th in the world, triumphed in Cordoba in 2021.

Tsitsipas needed three sets to get past American Marcos Giron.

The Greek saved two break points to start the final set and then broke Giron in the eighth game before completing a 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-3 victory.

Tsitsipas, who has lost in the first round on three of his four appearances at Wimbledon, will play France's Benjamin Bonzi for a place in the final. He has never won a title on grass.

