

The Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Stayed Unchanged at **141,386** With Another **Zero** Death Day Over the Past 24 Hours, Iran's Health Ministry Announced on Tuesday

IRAN NEWS

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar In a Statement on Tuesday, Expressed Hope Over the Success Of the Talks in Reviving the 2015 Nuclear Deal and Hoped That Nuclear Talks in Doha Culminates In Positive Results

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Entire Region Under Monitor of Iranian Forces

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The commander of the Islamic revolution Guards Corps Navy says Iranian forces are closely monitoring the entire region.

Brigadier General Alireza Tangsiri said following the confiscation by Greece of an Iranian oil tanker at the order of the U.S., Iranian naval forces seized two Greek ships.

Tangsiri added that very strong winds were blowing when the Iranian forces landed on the Greek tankers, but that did not deter the Iranian naval troops from fulfilling their mission.

Tangsiri said the IRGC's Navy seized the two ships simultaneously while they were in two different locations.

Tangsiri also said following the seizure of the Greek vessels, extra-regional forces are not actively present in the Persian Gulf and they are actually in the southern parts of the waterway.

The IRGC's Navy commander said the foreign forces made a mistake by staying in the region after the overthrow of Iraq's Ba'athist regime. **See Page 7**

IRGC Chief Stresses Iran-Pakistan Integrated Security

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chief Commander of IRGC Brigadier General Hossein Salami in a meeting with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of Pakistan General Nadeem Raza on Tuesday emphasized the integrated security of Iran and Pakistan.

Major General Salami met and held talks with General Raza in Tehran on Tuesday.

Emphasizing the integrated security of Iran and Pakistan, Major General Salami stressed the need for closer cooperation between Tehran and Islamabad in all fields, especially in protecting the security of the common border and fighting against terrorism. He slammed the Zionist regime as the enemy of the Islamic world and humanity.

The IRGC commander warned regional rulers of the bitter consequences of normalization of ties with the "child-killing Zionists", saying the U.S., the main supporter of the Israeli regime, is basically the foe of Islam.

The question is that while the Zionist regime cannot even defend itself and is a regime completely without any policy, how would certain Islamic countries rely on it to provide their security or safeguard their economy? There is no logic behind it, Major General Salami underscored. **See Page 7**

Resistance the Reason Behind Victory of Iranian Nation



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said Tuesday that the enemy has been disappointed by the Iranian nation on a regular basis in the last four decades since the Islamic Revolution.

On the occasion of the National Judiciary Week and martyrdom anniversary of Ayatollah Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, the then Chief Justice of Iran, and 72 other Iranian officials, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei held a meeting with high-ranking Judiciary officials on Tuesday.

Judiciary Week in Iran is named after Seyed Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti who along with 72 colleagues was martyred in a terrorist bomb blast in June 1981. Ayatollah Beheshti served as the head of the Judiciary in the early years after the victory of the Islamic revolution.

At the start of his speech to the meeting, the Leader recalled the early years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution when the MKO elements were carrying out many terrorist actions against the Iranian people, senior government officials, and IRGC forces in Tehran.

In such an environment, the country lost a prominent figure, Seyed Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, the Leader said. However, the political situation of the country completely changed through the resistance of Imam Khomeini(RA), the Iranian officials, and the revolutionary youth and the Iranian nation, he further added.

According to the Leader, Iran's enemies constantly pinned hope on the weakness and shortcomings in the system of the Islamic Republic, however, Islamic Republic has proved that it can overcome pressures every time.

The Leader further said that the enemies have been disappointed by the Iranian nation on a regular basis in the last four decades since the Islamic Revolution.

The enemies cannot understand that, in addition to political calculations, there are other calculations, n divine traditions in the world.

"Divine laws, divine traditions are not changeable. These divine laws are unalterable laws," the Leader stressed. In 1981, the Iranian people were able to stand on their own feet and disappoint the enemy, he said, stressing that today the people are able to do that again as the divine traditions continue unchanged.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei spoke about the essential components of an Islamic government, saying that the Islamic government must promote spirituality based on Islamic values like justice, fairness, brotherhood, and fight against corruption.

Confirming the remarks of Iran's judiciary chief that "the fight against corruption within the judiciary is a priority", the Leader also underlined, "The majority of judiciary personnel are honorable, clean-handed, faithful and hardworking individuals, but the few corrupt people who harm the work and reputation of others must be dealt with."

Regarding the fight against corruption, the main task is to confront the corrupt structures and break them down, the Leader stressed, describing the judiciary as an important and influential pillar in the country.

U.S. Says Favoring Mutual Return to JCPOA

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan says a mutual return to the Iran nuclear deal, JCPOA, is in the interest of the United States and its partners.

Referring to Iran's nuclear program, Sullivan said Monday, "On Iran, the United States' view is straightforward and has been now for quite some time, which is that we're determined to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon. We think a diplomatic agreement is the best way to do that. We think a mutual return to the JCPOA is in the interest of the United States and our partners." "And there is a deal available on the table to Iran, and it's up to Iran to decide whether or not it wants to take it," Sullivan added.

A U.S. official familiar with the issue has said the latest talks, expected to be mediated by European officials because Iran refuses to engage directly with the United States, are likely to start Tuesday.

"Very low expectations," the official added.

Two senior Western officials said the talks in Qatar are not likely to last more than two or three days.

The Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson has quoted the European Union's Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell as saying that the United States will abide by its commitments stipulated in a 2015 nuclear deal and UN Security Council Resolution 2231, adding Washington will guarantee the Islamic Republic's economic interests.

"Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed," he stressed.

In 2018, the U.S., under President Donald Trump, pulled out of the nuclear deal and reinstated sanctions under the so-called 'maximum pressure campaign' against Tehran, effectively depriving Iran of the deal's benefits by forcing third parties to stop doing business with Iran. Iran remained patient for an entire year, after which it began to take incremental steps away from its nuclear obligations, especially after Europeans failed to salvage the deal under the US pressure.

Iranian officials have stressed the ball is in the US's court and that Washington must make the necessary political decisions.

Tehran Slams Economic Terrorism

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has listed the US government's violations in an annual report on rights, including its resort to "economic terrorism," describing the country as the "biggest violator of human rights."

In a statement on the occasion of the American Human Rights Review and Exposure Week (June 27-July 3), Iran's Foreign Ministry denounced the political approach and use of double standards on human rights by the United States.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes that US unilateralism and imposition of unilateral economic sanctions with the aim of forcing governments to change their policies is a gross and systematic violation of human rights," the ministry said.

Iran "considers the U.S. use of economic means to pressure politically independent countries as a clear example of human rights violations and the use of economic terrorism to achieve political goals, and believes that this has exposed known norms and frameworks of human rights to complex challenges", it added.

The Islamic Republic, the ministry said, is one of the countries most severely affected by the instrumental use of human rights by the United States. **See Page 7**

Gov't Tax Receipts Rise 55% y/y in 2 Months

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian National Tax Administration (INTA) says tax receipts in the two months to May 21 rose by 55% compared to the similar period last year.

INTA's Director General Davoud Manzur said on Monday that the government body had collected 610 trillion rials (over \$2 billion) in taxes in the two first months of the current calendar year.

Manzur said the figure does not include the customs tax revenue collected by the government over the same period.

The announcement comes several days after the INTA said its income tax receipts had exceeded 51 trillion rials (\$170 million) for the two months to late May, of which nearly 32 trillion rials were corporate income tax.

Iran has pushed to increase its tax revenues in recent years mostly through preventing tax avoidance and evasion by businesses. **See Page 7**

Iran Applies to Join BRICS Group

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran has submitted an application to become a member of the group of emerging economies known as BRICS, an Iranian official said.

Iran's membership in BRICS group, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, "would result in added values for both sides," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said.

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said separately that Argentina had also applied to join the group. Argentinian officials could not be reached for immediate comment.

Argentina's President Alberto Fernandez, currently in Europe, has in recent days reiterated his desire for Argentina to join BRICS, Al Jazeera reported.

"While the White House was thinking about what else to turn off in the world, ban or spoil, Argentina and Iran applied to join the BRICS," Zakharova wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

Russia has long been pushing to forge closer ties with Asia, South America and the Middle East, but it has intensified its efforts recently to weather sanctions imposed by Europe, the United States and other countries over its military operation in Ukraine.

The 14th BRICS Summit was held on Friday through video-conference due to the coronavirus condition under the slogan "Strengthening High-Quality BRICS Partnership, Starting a New Era for Global Development".

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Iranian, Russian Presidents to Meet in Turkmen Capital

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi will meet his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Turkmenistan's capital, Ashgabat, today (Wednesday).

The meeting will take place on the sidelines of the 6th summit of the heads of state of the Caspian Sea littoral states, reported Russian Sputnik News Agency citing Yuri Viktorovich Ushakov, Assistant to the Russian President for Foreign Policy.

Raisi and Putin last time met in the Russian capital Moscow in January 2022.

Israeli Presence Ominous for Regional Countries

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says he has cautioned his Turkish counterpart about the Israeli regime's "ominous" presence for regional countries, some of which have invited Israelis in and normalized their ties with the regime since 2020.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks in an Instagram post after his Monday meeting with Mevlut Cavusoglu in Ankara.

"I straightforwardly voiced Iran's sensitivities about Israel and cautioned [Cavusoglu] in a brotherly manner that the regime's presence is definitely ominous for the countries of the region," Amirabdollahian wrote.

"Though, no doubt, Turkey has not withdrawn its support for the liberation of al-Quds so far and will never do so Inshallah (God willing)," he added.

Amirabdollahian arrived in Turkey on an official visit on Monday to discuss the promotion of bilateral ties and exchange views on regional developments.

During an earlier joint press conference with Cavusoglu, Amir-Abdollahian said Israel is the number one enemy of the Muslim world.

His remarks came days after Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid claimed during a



visit to Ankara that Iran was behind attempted terrorist attacks against Israelis in the Turkish metropolitan city of Istanbul.

In his Instagram post, Amir-Abdollahian said the two sides also discussed developments in Syria and Turkey's security issues concerning the Arab country, adding that "Iran understands Turkey's concerns over its security, but we believe that we can allay such consternation peacefully through negotiations."

Turkey has been conducting several incursions against neighboring Syria's northern parts since 2016 to target the Kurdish militants known as the People's Protection Units (YPG).

Ankara associates the YPG with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been fighting a separatist war against Turkey for decades.

So far, Turkey has deployed thousands of troops in the areas, in what Damascus has denounced as an outright violation of its sovereignty.

D-8 Official Urges Schengen Style Visa Among Member States

TEHRAN (IP) - Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, Secretary-General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation, D-8, who is visiting Tehran, said he will do his best to activate a common visa program among member states.

D-8, also known as Developing-8, is an organization for development cooperation among the following countries: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkiye.

The establishment of D-8 was announced officially through the Istanbul Declaration of Summit of Heads of State/Government on June 15, 1997.

The objectives of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation are to improve member states' position in the global economy, diversify and create new opportunities in trade relations, enhance participation in decision-making at the international level, and improve living standards.

D-8 is a global arrangement rather than a regional one, as the composition of its members reflects. Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) is a forum with no adverse impact on bilateral and multilateral commitments of the member countries emanating from their membership in other international or regional organizations.

Majlis Shelves Industry Minister Impeachment for Now

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's parliament speaker says proposals for the impeachment of Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Reza Fatemi Amin has been shelved until after the government submits its bill to divide the ministry into two different ministries.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf says the impeachment proposals have already been handed to the parliament's presiding board and can be sent to the floor for a vote. Qalibaf added that the relevant commissions have backed the impeachment and 17 lawmakers have already laid their weight behind the proposals.

The speaker, however, said that the MPs have decided to delay a vote for two months to allow the government to make the changes it has announced.

"We talked with the president and the first vice president. The president has come to the conclusion that this ministry needs a review and should be divided into two ministries. This will be settled by a government bill," he said.

"As the government has decided to make reforms, I request that we give the government a two-month deadline."

Fatemi Amin has been under heavy criticism for his handling of the industries in the country, especially the sluggish auto-industry that has failed to rein in the skyrocketing prices and meet the domestic needs.

Tourism Official Attends Tourism Summit in S. Korea

TEHRAN (MNA)- Deputy Minister of Tourism of the Ministry of Heritage, Culture and Handicrafts attended the 2022 World Tourism Summit in South Korea, presenting a report on the actions and performance of tourism in Iran.

The event was attended by tourism officials from other countries. The Iranian deputy tourism minister presented a comprehensive report on the actions and performance of the Islamic Republic of Iran in tourism and ecotourism to review the latest approach to tourism management at the summit.

According to the Ministry of Heritage, Culture, Tourism and Handicrafts, Ali Asghar Shalabafian attended the 2022 World Tourism Summit, which was held for two days from June 24 to 25 in Seoul and Ulsan, South Korea, among ministers and tourism officials from 12 European countries and Asian came and presented a complete report on the actions, plans and approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the days of Corona and Post-Corona.

He described the nationwide vaccination, the reduction in the death rate of coronary patients to a minimum, as well as the management and support of tourism activists as part of the executive measures for the survival of tourism during the peak of Corona.

Shalabafian also pointed to the boom in domestic tourism and the significant number of compatriots traveling during Nowruz, increasing the number of incoming tourists following the re-issuance of visas, facilitating the required conditions and hosting tourists from neighboring countries.

Also, considering that one of the main approaches of the World Summit was to address the issue of ecotourism and nature tourism, the Deputy Minister of Tourism also gave a full report on the actions of the National Committee on Nature Tourism, Iran's approach to using natural resources in tourism development and achievements in launching eco-tourism and introduced eco-tourism resorts across the country.

Iran to Respond to Any Israeli Interventionist Move in West Asia



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN (IFP) - Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri has warned of Israel's interventionist moves, saying the Islamic Republic will give a befitting response to any act of Israeli intervention in West Asia.

Baqeri made the remarks in a meeting with his Pakistani counterpart Lieutenant General Nadim Reza Nishan in Tehran.

The top Iranian commander stated that Israel is at the core of all intrusions and destabilizing moves in the region, adding that "The regime, through the implementation of certain plots, seeks to forge relations with regional countries and achieve its interventionist goals."

Baqeri went on to say that Israel's accession to the CENTCOM, deployment of its military equipment, and its participation in military drills will constitute greater and more serious threats to the region.

"We (Iran) do not tolerate these threats and we will certainly respond to them," Baqeri said.

"The emergence of terrorist and Takfiri groups in the region, especially in Syria and Iraq, were among other projects developed and encouraged by the United States and the Zionist regime in the region. In their pursuit of colonial objectives, they advanced to the brink of toppling both governments," he said.

The senior Iranian commander also demanded an immediate end to the ongoing tragedy in Yemen.

General Baqeri said the ongoing Ukraine crisis will definitely affect the entire West Asia and the whole world, stressing that NATO's growth poses a threat to Russia. He expressed hope that both sides would resolve the conflict through dialog and negotiations.

He described Afghanistan as one of the most important areas of concern for both Iran and Pakistan, emphasizing that the inclusion of various ethnic groups will play a constructive role in the establishment of security and stability in the country.

"We are concerned about the growth of terrorism in Afghanistan. We have devised relevant plans, as we believe that these issues can be resolved through cooperation between Iran and Pakistan and that there is no need for foreign interference."

The high-ranking generals from Iran and Pakistan also weighed plans to promote military and security cooperation between the two neighbors.

General Nadim Reza arrived in Tehran on Sunday at the official invitation of Major General Baqeri, with the aim of expanding bilateral cooperation in order to establish lasting security in the region and increase military interactions and joint educational and security cooperation.

Iran-Uzbekistan Historical Commonalties Secure Both Nations' Interests

TEHRAN (IP) - Head of Iran-Uzbekistan Parliamentary Friendship Group said that Tehran-Tashkent relations are growing, adding that the two countries' historical and cultural commonalties, and close relations secure both nations' interests.

Uzbekistan Ambassador in Tehran Abdullaev Bakhodir in his meeting with Head of Iran-Uzbekistan Parliamentary Friendship Group Gholamreza Nouri Qezelje reviewed ways for securing the two nations interests.

Nouri Qezelje in the meeting referred to the increasing level of Tehran-Tashkent relations, arguing that broadening the two countries' comprehensive cooperation, especially in the economic field, is of special importance.

The head of Iran-Uzbekistan Parliamentary Friendship Group said that appropriate moves, such as lifting visa requirement, increasing flights, removal of the existing obstacles in the way of transportations and joint



investments have already been made, which need to be further accelerated and strengthened.

Uzbekistan Ambassador in Tehran Abdullaev Bakhodir, for his part, agreed with the Iranian side on the great importance of Uzbekistan-Iran relations, and said that it is necessary to expand the level of bilateral political, cultural

and especially economic ties, such as tourism.

He said that he knows the Islamic Republic of Iran has a good record of parliamentary interactions with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), emphasizing that the improvement of political and parliamentary relations plays a decisive role in improvement of comprehensive bilateral cooperation.

Abdullaev Bakhodir reiterated that Uzbekistan welcomes exchanging parliamentary delegations with Iran aimed at achieving mutual interests and sharing experiences.

Navy Force Ready to Defend Iran Authority Anywhere in Ocean

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Chief Commander of Iran's Army Navy Force Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said that the Navy Force is ready to defend authority of the country with utmost power anywhere in the oceans.

Speaking on the occasion of commemoration of the World Maritime Day on Monday evening, Rear Admiral Irani pointed to the direct and indirect escort of merchant ships by the country's naval destroyers and stated that Iran's Navy forces are present in Indian Ocean to establish peace and security.

The Navy forces of the country are prepared to confront any external threat authoritatively, he emphasized.

Emphasizing that Iran's Army Navy forces are present in any ocean if needed, he reiterated that Iranians are in favor of peace and do not want war unless enemies of the country wanted to threaten security of the country.

If enemies threaten security of the country, Navy forces of the country will respond to their malicious acts harshly, Iran Army Navy Commander added.

Iran-Iraq Trade Volume Increases by 15%

TEHRAN (IRNA) - From the time the 13th government took charge till June 22, 2022, the Iran-Iraq trade volume was over 25.933 million tons, worth \$638 million, which showed 15 percent increase compared with same period last year.

Iranian Customs Organization Spokesman Ruhollah Latifi announced the increase simultaneously with the Iraqi prime minister's visit of Iran, indicating that the increase in bilateral trade volume is related to non-oil imports and exports during the past 10 months.

He added that Iran's exports share of that volume is 23.516 million tons, worth \$7.577 billion, which shows 3 percent increase compared with the same period

last year, while during the same period Iraq exported 2.418 million tons of goods to Iran, worth 63 million dollars, that showed a 512 percent increase.

He said that the existence of lots of historical, cultural and religious commonalties between the Iranian and Iraqi nations, as well as increased bilateral political and economic relations, led to increasing non-oil export level from \$145 million in the year 2001 to 9 billion dollars in the year 2019, and breaking records again last year, to almost 30 million tons of goods, worth \$8.916 billion, while Iraq has during the recent years been the 2nd destination of Iranian export goods in the world and the 1st among Iran's neighbors.

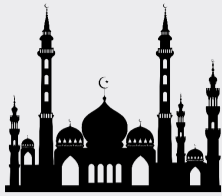
Iran, Tajikistan Sign MoU to Enhance Trade-Industrial Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) - A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was inked between Iran and Tajikistan on Monday to broaden bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade and industry.

A MoU was signed at the end of Working Group meeting between Head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) Alireza Payman-Pak and First Deputy Minister of Industry and New Technologies of Tajikistan Bakhtiar Sharifi.

Under the deal, the two countries of Iran and Tajikistan agreed to strengthen and diversify industrial, mining and trade cooperation in accordance with national laws and international obligations.

Also, the two sides agreed on exchanging specialized trade and marketing delegations especially during specialized exhibitions. The two sides also reached an agreement on constructing a stone production plant in Tajikistan, developing cooperation in the field of knowledge-based technologies and reducing tariff duties with the aim of increased bilateral trade, etc.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:05
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:51

16. And why did ye not, when ye heard it, say? - "It is not right of us to speak of this: Glory to Allah, this is a most serious slander!"
17. Allah doth admonish you, that ye may never repeat such (conduct), if ye are (true) Believers.
Surah 24. Light (16 - 17)

Tehran, Ankara Explore Ways to Broaden Trade Ties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Ankara explored ways for broadening economic ties during a trade forum which was held at Tehran Chamber of Commerce in presence of Iranian businessmen and a trade delegation led by President of the Association of Businessmen and Entrepreneurs of Turkey TUMKIAD Mr. Nihat Tanrikulu.

In the opening of the forum, Head of international department of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Hesamudin Hallaj pointed to the historic relation between Iran and Turkey and said that despite geopolitical and geo-economic competitions, Turkey attaches importance for its ties with Tehran and for this reason both sides should work to elevate the level of current economic cooperation.

He then pointed to the drop in the place of Turkey's trade partner rankings, adding that in the past, Iran was Turkey's fourth to eight trade partner but this place has been reduced to the 20th and talks between economic activists of the two countries in the events like this can provide more opportunities for increasing the exchanges.

He noted that this is the first Turkish trade delegation visiting Tehran in the post-coronavirus era and expressed hope that Tehran Chamber of Commerce would host more delegations from Turkey in the future.

Then Seyedeh Fatemeh Moghimi, a member of the presiding board of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, in her speech pointed to the commonalities of the two countries in different fields like cultural, political, economic, historical and religious and called for close cooperation between Iran and Turkey for taking advantage of opportunities.

She added that Turkey is a gateway for Iran's economic ties with Europe and Iran is also a corridor for connecting Turkey to the Silk Road, CIS region and India, adding that using these capacities can bring interests for both states.

Moghimi added that joint investments and exports of the jointly-produced exports to the third party countries in some industries like in the field of home appliances, chemical industries, auto, furniture, wood industries can be of the solutions for



broadening cooperation and added that of course this point should be considered that reinforcement of trade exchanges will be impossible without improving the infrastructure of the transportation and development of the infrastructures should be taken into consideration by the two side.

She then pointed to the current condition of the trade between Iran and Turkey and said that Iran's exports to Turkey increased from \$3.247b in six years ago to \$6.07b last year and Iran's imports from Turkey have increased from \$2.724b to \$5.158b in the same period. She added that but Iran ranks 19th among exporting countries to Turkey and the country ranks 36th among Turkey export destinations.

She then announced readiness of Tehran Chamber of Commerce with its some 30,000 members for any cooperation for deepening economic cooperation with Turkey.

Then President of TUMKIAD Mr. Tanrikulu, for his part, said that Turkey can be a bridge between Iran and Europe, adding that despite sanctions against Iran and restrictions because of the sanctions, Turkey seeks to broaden its relations with Iran. He added that in fact both sides can produce new products and export to new markets like Europe through joint cooperation and this strategy can lead to boom in economy of both states.

He stated that Turkey is keen to use experiences of Iran in some fields, adding that the association wants to improve trade ties with Iran because both countries have great potentials and are hungry for greater activities.

Then Head of Iran-Turkey Chamber of Commerce Mr. Mehrdad Saadat, for his part, talked about the current condition of trade between Iran and Turkey and hailed Turkish traders for setting record of \$225 exports in the coronavirus era. He then pointed to some hurdles in way of trade between Ira and Turkey and said getting 6% double tax from Iranian goods is one of major hurdles in way of developing Iran's exports.

All Seafarers of IRISL Are Iranians

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) says he is proud that all seafarers of the group are all Iranians, reiterating that the group uses all capacities and capabilities of the domestic manufacturers.



Speaking in a ceremony marking the International Day of Seafarer, Mr. Mohammad Reza Modarres Khiabani said that three years ago some 670 foreign seafarers worked for the IRISL and this figure was almost halved 2 years ago and he announced with pride that since last year, all seafarers of the group have become Iranians.

He added that now the IRISL fleet is present in any part of the world which is sign of the power of the Islamic Republic of Iran which can show the power of the country with the world powers.

He went on to say that today IRISL group ranks 14th in the world in terms of container fleet and it is the biggest fleet in the Middle East and then pointed to some problems and sanctions hurdles of sanctions.

Modarres Khiabani stated that IRISL last year set a historic record for transportation of 27m tons of goods which showed 41% growth comparing to the preceding year. He hailed the seafarers of the IRISL for the success which was achieved with using ocean liners.

He added that with the current trend in the first quarter of the year, it is expected the group to set a new record for transportation of the goods.

He then reiterated that the group will not wait for foreigners for manufacture of ships as manufacture of some vessels is underway.

The CEO of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company:

We Are Winners of Economic War With Modeling Martyrs and War-Disabled

During the meeting between the Director General of the Martyr and Veterans Affairs Foundation of Hormozgan Province and the CEO of the Persian Gulf Star Oil Company, the situation of the families of the veterans working in the world's largest gas condensate refinery was reviewed and followed up.

According to the report of Public Relations and International Affairs of the Persian Gulf Star Oil Company, the CEO of the Persian Gulf Star Oil Company said in this meeting: "Veterans are living martyrs and they suffer a lot of pain. It affects their individual and family circumstances, and it is a great honor for me to meet the martyrs. Alireza Jafarpour continued: "As the Supreme Leader has said, our war today is an economic war. It should be seen that unfortunately the enemy has targeted the Achilles heel of our country and our economy. They are trying hard in this economic front so that the economic cycles of the country do not stop for a moment, and this situation needs a lot of attention. He added: "At a time when gasoline sanctions had intensified, we won the economic war by launching the Persian Gulf Star refinery in this area, and the valuable role of this refinery in the country's economy should not be underestimated." Jafarpour added: "Despite the fact that we did not deserve martyrdom and martyrdom, but we have succeeded in serving the nation, the holy system of the Islamic Republic and the great authority of the province in this economic war as a conscientious soldier." He said: "Persian Gulf Star Refinery has two main tasks in the country's oil industry, the first of which is the production of most of the strategic products of the country's fuel basket and the second task is to extract gas condensate to supply the country with gas after operating three phases of the refinery." The



capacity building project has begun, and now the refining capacity of the world's largest gas condensate refinery has reached 455,000 barrels per day, and we have big goals for the future of this global super-refinery. The CEO of the Persian Gulf Star Oil Company added: "Considering the launch of the four refineries, we definitely need to attract experts in the technical field, and according to the policies made with the priority of a permanent local force, we will pursue this important issue by holding a specialized test." At the end, he said to the director general of the Hormozgan Foundation for Martyrs and Veterans Affairs: "Martyrs are one of the greatest honors of the Islamic Revolution and have a special place. The director general of the Foundation for Martyrs and Veterans of Hormozgan Province also said in this

meeting: "Economic defense is not less than jihad for the sake of ... and you, the activists in the Persian Gulf Star refinery, have a serious responsibility in the field of economic jihad." Ata Navaki, stating that the community of martyrs of Hormozgan province are with you in order to advance the goals of the Persian Gulf Star Oil Company, added: "Today, the command of the Persian Gulf Star Oil Company is in the hands of a young man who should be auspicious To be in the general management of the country's refining industry. He said: "With the support of the esteemed governor, the employment of the children of the martyrs in Hormozgan industries has been implemented and I am very grateful to the industry managers who have cooperated with the community of martyrs and removed the burden from the honorable martyrs." Nawki said: Memorandums of understanding have been signed for the education of self-sacrificing children, and despite the various industries in the province, the necessary training should be implemented for these nobles in order to provide them with more employment opportunities. In the end, the director general of the Hormozgan Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation said: "We hope that the quota of veterans for the recruitment test in the Persian Gulf Star Oil Company will be implemented and according to the promises of the Minister of Oil, the situation of the children of martyrs will be implemented in this complex." This feature should be removed. In this meeting, the honorable veterans Mr. Amir Kasbat and Ali Darvishnejad and the father of the esteemed martyr Khalil Takhtinejad, who defended the shrine, accompanied a boat. He emphasized the commemoration and protection of the memory, character and method of the martyrs.

Jordan Toxic Gas Blast Kills 10, Injures Over 200

AMMAN (Dispatches) - Ten people were killed and more than 200 injured Monday in a toxic gas explosion in Jordan's Aqaba port, authorities said.

Footage on state TV showed a large cylinder plunging from a crane on a moored vessel, causing a violent release of a yellow gas.

The force of the blast sent a truck rolling down the harbourside, while port workers could be seen running for their lives.

Nearby areas were evacuated and residents told to stay indoors.



Support for Japan PM Slides Further

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's approval rating continued its slide ahead of an upper house election next month, but support for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was way ahead of rivals, public broadcaster NHK reported.

The Kishida cabinet's approval came to 50 per cent in NHK's voter survey conducted on June 24-26. That was down from 59 per cent two weeks ago and 55% last week.

The report did not give reasons behind the decline, but Kishida's support weakened in other media surveys as well in recent weeks with the public hit hard by soaring energy and food prices.



West Pledges Unwavering Support for Ukraine



KREMENCHUK (Dispatches) - Western nations pledged unwavering support for Ukraine in the war with Russia, including more sanctions on Moscow and air-defense systems, as Ukrainian officials said two Russian missiles struck a shopping center, killing at least 11 people.

Leaders of the Group of Seven major democracies, meeting in Germany, said they would keep sanctions on Russia for as long as necessary and intensify international pressure on President Vladimir Putin's government and its ally Belarus.

"Imagine if we allowed Putin to get away with the violent acquisition of huge chunks of another country, sovereign, independent territory," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the BBC.

"The lessons for that would be absolutely chilling. The point I would make to people is I think that sometimes the price of freedom is worth paying."

The United States said it was finalising a weapons package for Ukraine that would include long-range air-defence systems - arms that Zelenskyy specifically requested when he addressed the leaders by video link on Monday.

Ukraine meanwhile endured another difficult day on the battlefield following the loss of the now-ruined city of Sievierodonetsk after weeks of bombardment and street fighting.

Russian artillery was pounding Lysychansk, its twin just across the Siverskiy Donets River, which eastern Luhansk province governor Serhiy Gaidai said was suffering "catastrophic" damage. He urged civilians to evacuate urgently.

Lysychansk is the last big city still held by Ukraine in Luhansk, half of the industrial Donbas region, a main target for the Kremlin after Russian troops failed to take the capital Kyiv early in the war, now in its fifth month.

The General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces said the Russians were trying to cut off Lysychansk from the south. Russian war planes had also struck near the city, the general staff said in its daily update.

Russian Sunday reports that troops had already entered Lysychansk could not be confirmed by Reuters.

Two Russian missiles struck the shopping centre in the central city of Kremenchuk, southeast of Kyiv, killing at least 11 people and wounding 40, senior Ukrainian officials said.

"It's useless to hope for decency and humanity from Russia," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram.

Russia did not immediately comment on the Ukrainian accusations.

A Reuters reporter in Kremenchuk saw the charred husk of the shopping centre with a caved-in roof. Firefighters and soldiers were pulling out mangled metal and other debris as they searched for survivors.

NATO to Boost Troops on High Alert to Over 300,000

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - NATO will boost the number of troops on high alert by more than sevenfold to over 300,000, its secretary-general said, as allies prepared to adopt a new strategy describing Moscow as a direct threat four months into the Ukraine war.

Russia's February invasion of Ukraine has sparked a major geopolitical shift in the West, prompting once neutral countries Finland and Sweden to apply to join NATO and Ukraine to secure the status of candidate to join the European Union.

"Russia has walked away from the partnership and the dialogue that NATO has tried to establish with Russia for many years," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in Brussels ahead of a NATO summit later this week in Madrid.

"They have chosen confrontation instead of dialogue. We regret that - but of course, then we need to respond to that reality," he told reporters.

The June 28-30 NATO summit comes at a pivotal moment for the alliance after failures in Afghanistan and internal discord during the era of former U.S. President Donald Trump, who threatened to pull Washington out of the alliance.

Stoltenberg said NATO in future would have

"well over 300,000" troops on high alert, compared to 40,000 troops that currently make up the alliance's existing quick reaction force, the NATO Response Force (NRF).

The new force model is meant to replace the NRF and "provide a larger pool of high readiness forces across domains, land, sea, air and cyber, which will be pre-assigned to specific plans for the defense of allies," a NATO official said.

Stoltenberg said NATO combat units on the alliance's eastern flank nearest Russia, especially the Baltic states, are to be boosted to brigade level, with thousands of pre-assigned troops on standby in countries further west like Germany as rapid reinforcements.

"Together, this constitutes the biggest overhaul of our collective deterrence and defense since the Cold War," he said.

The NATO official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the moves would enable NATO to respond with more forces at short notice should the need arise.

The official added that the precise scale and composition of the force was still being worked on and that the transition was planned for completion in 2023.



Protesters Reject Ecuador President's Insensitive Fuel Price Cut

QUITO (Dispatches) - Indigenous protesters in Ecuador vowed to continue a disruptive country-wide protest against high living costs, rejecting a fuel price cut announced by the government as insufficient and "insensitive."

President Guillermo Lasso on Sunday announced a 10-cents-per-gallon reduction in fast-rising diesel and gasoline prices that sparked the uprising, now in its 15th day and severely hampering the oil-dependent economy.

The cut was not nearly as much as protesters had demanded, and the powerful Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Conaie), which has been blockading roads and occupying oil wells since June 13, said the gesture was "not enough, it is insensitive." It showed, said a Conaie statement signed by its leader Leonidas Iza, that the government "does not sympathize with the situation of poverty faced by millions of families."

The group added: "Our struggle is not over."

Indigenous people make up more than a million of the South American nation's 17.7 million people, and Conaie is credited with unseating three presidents between 1997 and 2005.



Crisis-Hit Sri Lanka Shuts Schools, Urges Work From Home

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Troops in Sri Lanka handed tokens today to people queuing for petrol amid a severe fuel shortage in the nation battling its worst economic crisis in seven decades, while schools shut in Colombo and public employees were asked to work from home.

With its foreign exchange reserves at a record low, the island of 22 million is struggling to pay for essential imports of food, medicine and most critically, fuel.

"I have been in line for four days, I haven't slept or eaten properly during this time," said autorickshaw driver WD Shelton, 67, one of those who received a token meant to hold his place in the queue for when fuel becomes available.

"We can't earn, we can't feed our families," added Shelton, who was 24th in line at a fuel station in the center of Colombo, but set to stay there as he had no petrol for the journey to his home just 5 km (3 miles) away.

It was not immediately clear how far the government could stretch its fuel reserves. The stockpiles stand at about 9,000 tons of diesel and 6,000 tons of petrol, Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera said yesterday, but no fresh shipments are due.

The government has told employees to work from home until further notice, while schools have been shut for a week in the commercial capital of Colombo and surrounding areas.

Fuel station queues have grown rapidly since last week.

"This is a tragedy, we don't know where this will end," Shelton said.

Public transport, power generation and medical services will get priority in fuel distribution, with some rationed to ports and airports.

A team from the International Monetary Fund is visiting Sri Lanka to hold talks on a US\$3-billion (RM13-billion) bailout package.

Although the Indian Ocean nation is hoping to reach a staff-level agreement before the visit ends on Thursday, that is unlikely to unlock any immediate funds.

Fuel prices, which are subsidized in oil-producing Ecuador, have risen sharply since 2020, almost doubling for diesel from \$1 to \$1.90 per gallon and swelling from \$1.75 to \$2.55 for gasoline.

Conaie wants the price to be lowered to \$1.50 per gallon for diesel and \$2.10 for gasoline.

An estimated 14,000 protesters are taking part in a nationwide show of discontent against rising hardship in an economy dealt a serious blow by the coronavirus pandemic.

Most of the ire is concentrated in the capital Quito, where some 10,000 people are gathered, mainly from other parts of the country.

Other than fuel price cuts, the protesters also want jobs, food price controls, and more public spending on healthcare and education.

The action has been costly, with losses of some \$50 million per day to the economy, and production of fuel -- Ecuador's biggest export -- halved from about 520,000 barrels per day, according to the energy ministry. Hundreds of wells are besieged.

North Korea Accuses U.S. of Setting Up Asian NATO

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea has accused the United States of setting up a military alliance like NATO in Asia, saying the unwavering U.S. aim to oust North Korea's government compelled it to develop stronger defenses.

The North Korean criticism comes amid concern it could be preparing its first nuclear test in five years and after a recent agreement between South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and U.S. President Joe Biden to deploy more U.S. weapons if deemed necessary to deter the North.

"While blatantly holding joint military exercises with Japan and South Korea, the United States is making a full-fledged move to establish an Asia-style NATO," North Korea's foreign ministry said in a statement on its website on Sunday.

It was referring to recent military exercises conducted by U.S., South Korean and Japanese forces. The United States also held exercises with South Korean forces that involved a U.S. aircraft carrier, for the first time in more than four years.

North Korea, which has been conducting regular missile tests this year, repeated its assertion that such drills were preparation for war aimed at overthrowing it.

"This proves the hypocrisy of the U.S. rhetoric of 'diplomatic engagement' and 'dialogue without preconditions', while at the same time revealing again that there is no change in the U.S. ambition to overthrow our system by force," the North Korean ministry said.

It did not refer explicitly to its nuclear or missile programs but said U.S. hostility compelled it to develop its defenses.

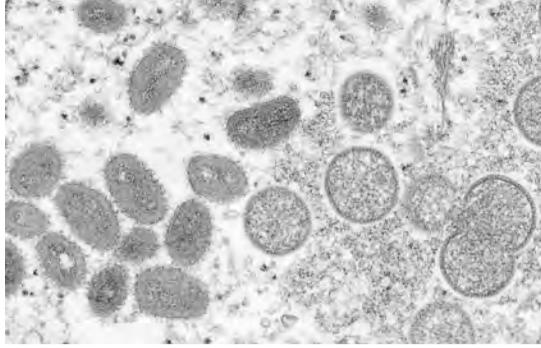
"The reality ... makes us feel the need to make all-out efforts to develop even stronger power to be able to subdue all kinds of hostile acts by the United States," it said.

The United States is insisting that North Korea give up its nuclear weapons and has repeatedly offered to meet North Korean officials "at any time without preconditions" to discuss the issue. North Korea has rebuffed the offers.

The North Korean criticism came a day before South Korea's president left to attend a NATO summit in Spain, the first South Korean leader to do so.



Monkeypox Not a Global Emergency at This Stage



LONDON (AP) - The World Health Organization said the escalating monkeypox outbreak in more than 50 countries should be closely monitored but does not warrant being declared a global health emergency.

In a statement, a WHO emergency committee said many aspects of the outbreak were "unusual" and acknowledged that monkeypox — which is endemic in some African countries — has been neglected for years.

"While a few members expressed differing views, the committee resolved by consensus to advise the WHO director-general that at this stage the outbreak should be determined to not constitute" a global health emergency, WHO said in a statement.

WHO nevertheless pointed to the "emergency nature" of the outbreak and said controlling its spread requires an "intense" response.

The committee said the outbreak should be "closely monitored and reviewed after a few weeks." But it would recommend a re-assessment before then if certain new developments emerge — such as cases among sex workers; spread to other countries or within countries that have already had cases; increased severity of cases; or an increasing rate of spread.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus convened the emergency committee on Thursday after expressing concern about the epidemic of monkeypox in countries that haven't previously reported the disease.

"What makes the current outbreak especially concerning is the rapid, continuing spread into new countries and regions and the risk of further, sustained transmission into vulnerable populations including people that are immunocompromised, pregnant women and children," the WHO chief said.

Monkeypox has sickened people for decades in central and West Africa, but until last month, the disease had not been known to cause significant outbreaks in multiple countries at the same time and involving people with no travel links to the continent.

Declaring a global health emergency means that a health crisis is an "extraordinary" event requiring a globally-managed response and that a disease is at high risk of spilling across borders. WHO previously made similar declarations for diseases including COVID-19, Ebola in Congo and West Africa, Zika in Brazil and the ongoing effort to wipe out polio.

The emergency declaration mostly serves as a plea to draw more global resources and attention to an outbreak. Past announcements have had mixed impact, given that WHO is largely powerless when trying to convince countries to act.

WHO said this week it has confirmed more than 3,200 monkeypox infections in about 40 countries that haven't previously reported the disease. The vast majority of cases are in men who are gay, bisexual or have sex with other men and more than 80% of the cases are in Europe.

A leading WHO adviser said last month the spike in cases in Europe was likely tied to sexual activity by men at two raves in Spain and Belgium, speculating that its appearance in the gay and bisexual community was a "random event." British officials have said most cases in the U.K. involve men who reported having sex with other men in venues such as saunas.

Scientists warn that anyone in close, physical contact with someone infected with monkeypox or their clothing or bedsheets is at risk of catching the disease, regardless of their sexual orientation.

People with monkeypox often experience symptoms like fever, body aches and a rash; most recover within weeks without needing medical care.

Pakistan Losing LNG Bidding War to Europe



KARACHI (Dispatches) - With a spiraling energy crisis brought on by the Russian invasion of Ukraine putting pressure on global fuel reserves, a key member of the Pakistan federal cabinet admitted on Saturday that the country simply could not compete with the buying power of European countries who were also potential customers for the same reserves that Pakistan desperately needed.

According to State Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik, Pakistan's failure to find a bidder for liquefied natural gas (LNG) slots had forced authorities to shift to alternative sources of energy for power generation, which would take a month or so to yield results.

"The situation is that we have carried out two rounds of tenders of three to four tenders each, but no one responded to them," he said in reply to a question put to him by a journalist during a media interaction on the sidelines of a two-day conference organised by the Centre for Excellence in Journalism (CEJ) at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA).

"Since supply from Russia is suspended due to the war with Ukraine, European countries are also buying gas from everywhere it's available. As a result, LNG, which was priced at \$4 two-and-a-half years ago, is no longer available for even \$40. So, Russia's war [with Ukraine] created a real crisis," he said.

Musadik Malik says 'pain' from power shortages to last till at least July 15; gov't exploring alternative means of energy generation

His thoughts came a day after the country failed to find a bidder for three LNG slots and received the highest-ever rate for another slot for the last week of July as European customers lapped up spot market quantities to compensate for the Russian supply disruption amid widespread electricity shortages.

The state-run Pakistan LNG Ltd (PLL) had floated a tender on June 16 for four cargoes — one each in the first and second weeks, and two in the last week, of July. However, no bidders came forward for the July 2-3, 8-9, and 25-26 delivery windows.

It is worth noting that this was the third futile attempt by PLL to have an LNG cargo in the first week of July. The earlier two tenders, issued on May 31 and June 7, attracted only two and one bidder, respectively, but none was technically responsive. Hence, the bids were returned unopened.

The minister told reporters point-blank: "We don't have enough energy right now. The gas is not available and we can't afford such expensive gas. So what we are doing is arranging alternates. The recent increase in production, imports of coal and furnace oil is part of the same strategy," Senator Malik said.

Sharing the fresh moves the government was making to meet the growing energy glut, he referred to the import of five ships worth of furnace oil within a month and the larger amount of coal acquisition to keep power production units running.

Senator Malik was also confident that nature would favour them with the upcoming monsoon, which could help turn the tide of the power crisis to a large extent.

However, he cautioned that the 'pain' caused by power shortfall and loadshedding could take weeks to heal, adding that the situation was only likely to improve after July 15.

"We produce around 6,000MW to 8,000MW through hydel energy, but for that you need a certain amount of water flow," he said. With an increase in imports of furnace oil and coal as alternative energy sources and the approaching monsoon rains that would improve water flows to enhance power generation through hydel energy, he said the government hoped to see some relief after July 15.



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Draghi Backs Large Investments in Developing Countries

SCHLOSS ELMAU (Dispatches) - Large investments in gas infrastructure in developing countries are needed, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi said as leaders of the Group of Seven rich democracies unveiled projects on energy and infrastructure financing on Sunday.

"(It) is quite clear that in the present situation we'll have short-term needs that will require large investments in gas infrastructure in developing countries and elsewhere," Draghi said during a joint statement with G7 leaders. He added it should be possible to reconvert such infrastructure to hydrogen, to reconcile "short term needs with long term climate needs".



India Exported 1.8m Tons Wheat To Several States Since Ban

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India has exported 1.8 million tons of wheat to a dozen-odd countries, including Bangladesh and Afghanistan, since the country banned exports of the grain on May 13, according to Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey.

About 33,000 tons of wheat as humanitarian assistance has already been supplied to Afghanistan against the commitment of 50,000 ton, he said. Mr. Pandey, addressing a ministerial conference on 'uniting for global food security' held at Berlin, Germany on June 24, said India has always taken the needs of the world into consideration, even while meeting the onerous obligations of feeding its population of 1.38 billion people, an official statement said.

The Secretary said, "It is important here to explain that the recent decision by the Government of India [GoI] to bring about regulation on wheat exports was essentially taken to protect domestic availability as well as availability to vulnerable countries to whom supplies cannot be ensured by market forces."

India has nonetheless continued with its commitment to cater for the genuine needs of neighbouring countries and food-deficit nations through Government-to-Government mechanism and also to fulfil supply commitments already made, he said.

"After the regulation until June 22nd this fiscal year, 1.8 million tons of wheat have been shipped out, almost four times from the previous year to countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Israel, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Oman, Philippines, Qatar, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, UAE, Vietnam and Yemen," he said.

On May 13, the government suspended wheat export with immediate effect. It moved the export of all varieties of wheat, including high-protein durum, from "free" to the "prohibited" category. The decision was aimed at controlling rising prices of wheat in the domestic market.

India had exported a record 7 million tonnes of wheat during 2021-22 fiscal, while typically, the country exports around 2 million tonnes which is around 1% of global wheat trade, he said.

Stating that India is deeply conscious of its responsibilities towards the most vulnerable in various parts of the world, Mr. Pandey said the country continued to provide humanitarian assistance, both through the supply of vaccines as well as food consignments, during and beyond the pandemic.

For instance, the country has dispatched several shipments of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan, including 33,000 tons of wheat of a total commitment of 50,000 tons made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and continues to do so in the wake of the devastation caused by the earthquake a couple of days ago, he said.

During the pandemic, India has also provided food aid in the form of wheat, rice, pulses and lentils to several countries around the world including Afghanistan, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Myanmar, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Zambia, Zimbabwe and others, to strengthen their food security, he said.

Russia Slides Towards Default as Payment Deadline Expires

LONDON (Dispatches) - Russia edged closer to default on Sunday amid little sign that investors holding its international bonds had received payment, heralding what would be the nation's first default in decades.

Russia has struggled to keep up payments on \$40 billion of outstanding bonds since its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, which provoked sweeping sanctions that have effectively cut the country out of the global financial system and rendered its assets untouchable to many investors.

The Kremlin has repeatedly said there are no grounds for Russia to default but is unable to send money to bondholders because of sanctions, accusing the West of trying to drive it into an artificial default.

The country's efforts to swerve what would be its first major default on international bonds since the Bolshevik revolution more than a century ago hit an insurmountable roadblock when the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) effectively blocked Moscow from making payments in late May.

"Since March we thought that a Russian default is probably inevitable, and the question was just when," Dennis Hranitzky, head of sovereign litigation at law firm Quinn Emanuel, told Reuters. "OFAC has intervened to answer that question for us, and the default is now upon us." Whiel a formal default would be largely symbolic given Russia cannot borrow internationally at the moment and doesn't need to thanks to rich oil and gas revenue, the stigma would probably raise its borrowing costs in future.

The payments in question are \$100 million in interest on two bonds, one denominated in U.S. dollars and another in euros, Russia was due to pay on May 27. The payments had a grace period of 30 days, which will expire on Sunday.

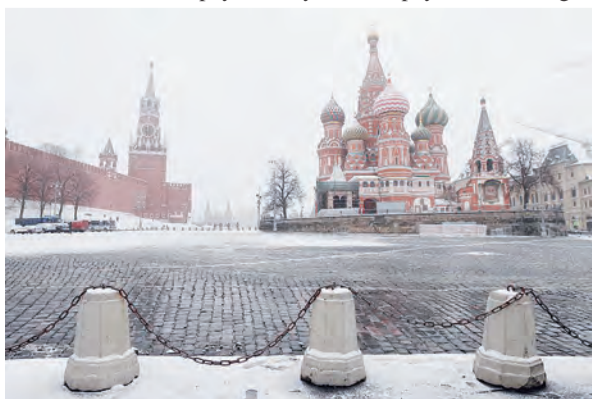
Russia's finance ministry said it made the payments to its onshore National Settlement Depository (NSD) in euros and dollars, adding it has fulfilled obligations.

However, it is unlikely that funds will find their way to many international holders. For many bondholders, not receiving the money owed in time into their accounts constitutes a default.

With no exact deadline specified in the prospectus, lawyers say Russia might have until the end of the following business day to pay the bondholders.

The legal situation surrounding the bonds looks complex.

Russia's bonds have been issued with an unusual variety of terms, and an increasing level of ambiguities for those sold more recently, when Moscow was already facing sanctions over its annexation of Crimea in 2014 and a poisoning incident in Britain in 2018.



Sri Lanka Hikes Fuel Prices

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka hiked fuel prices on Sunday, creating further pain for ordinary people as officials from the United States arrived for talks aimed at alleviating the island's dire economic crisis.

Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) said it raised the price of diesel, used widely in public transport, by 15 per cent to 460 rupees (RM5.62) a litre while upping petrol 22 per cent to 550 rupees (US\$1.52).

The announcement came a day after Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera said there would be an indefinite delay in getting new shipments of oil.

Wijesekera said oil due last week had not turned up while shipments scheduled to arrive next week would also not reach Sri Lanka due to "banking" reasons.

Wijesekera apologised to motorists and urged them not to join long queues outside pumping stations. Many have left their vehicles in queues hoping to top up when supplies are restored.

Official sources said the island's remaining fuel supply was sufficient for about two days, but that authorities were saving it for essential services.

A delegation from the US Treasury and the State Department arrived for talks to "explore the most effective ways for the US to support Sri Lankans in need", the US embassy in Colombo said.

"As Sri Lankans endure some of the greatest economic challenges in their history, our efforts to support economic growth and strengthen democratic institutions have never been more critical," US ambassador Julie Chung said in a statement.

The embassy said it had committed US\$158.75 million (RM698.8 million) in new financing in the past two weeks to help Sri Lankans.

The UN has already issued an emergency appeal to raise US\$47 million to feed the most vulnerable segments of the island's 22 million people.

About 1.7 million residents need "life-saving assistance", according to the UN, with four out of five people reducing their food intake due to severe shortages and galloping prices.

Last week, the government closed non-essential state institutions and schools for two weeks to reduce commuting because of the energy crisis.

Several hospitals across the country reported a sharp drop in the attendance of medical staff due to the fuel shortage.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe warned parliament on Wednesday that more hardships were on the way.

"Our economy has faced a complete collapse," Wickremesinghe said. "We are now facing a far more serious situation beyond the mere shortages of fuel, gas, electricity and food."

Unable to repay its US\$51 billion foreign debt, the government declared it was defaulting in April and is negotiating with the International Monetary Fund for a possible bailout.



Four G7 Powers Impose Gold Export Ban on Russia

ELMAU CASTLE (Dispatches) - Four G7 powers will ban Russian gold exports in a new bid to stop oligarchs from buying the precious metal to avoid the impact of sanctions against Moscow, Britain said.

The joint action taken by Britain, Canada, Japan and the United States, "will directly hit Russian oligarchs and strike at the heart of (President Vladimir) Putin's war machine," said British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Given London's central role in the international gold trade and parallel US, Japanese and Canadian action, "this measure will have global reach, shutting the commodity out of formal international markets," Britain said. Worth £12.6 billion (\$15.5 billion) to the Russian economy in 2021, gold — a refuge commodity in times of turmoil — is a major export for the country.

With Putin's Russia now under severe sanctions, the country's richest have rushed to convert their assets into gold to avoid the impact of the financial restrictions.

The London Bullion Market had already suspended six Russian refineries in action announced on March 7. The latest move targeting the commodity came as leaders of the Group of Seven wealthiest nations were meeting in the Bavarian alps, with their talks to be focused on how to sustain backing for Ukraine against Russia's invasion.

The G7 is expected to take stock of how unprecedented sanctions taken against Moscow have worked so far, discuss further financial and military aid for Ukraine, as well as look at longer reconstruction for the war-torn country.

Banking Body Urges Decisive Wave of Global Rate Hikes to Stem Inflation

LONDON (Dispatches) - The world's central bank umbrella body, the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), has called for interest rates to be raised "quickly and decisively" to prevent the surge in inflation turning into something even more problematic.

The Swiss-based BIS has held its annual meeting in recent days, where top central bankers met to discuss their current difficulties and one of the most turbulent starts to a year ever for global financial markets.

Surging energy and food prices mean inflation in many places is now its hottest in decades. But the usual remedy of ramping up interest rates is raising the spectre of recession, and even of the dreaded 1970s-style "stagflation", where rising prices are coupled with low or negative economic growth.

"The key for central banks is to act quickly and decisively before inflation becomes entrenched," Agustín Carstens, BIS general manager, said as part of the body's post-meeting annual report published on Sunday.

Carstens, former head of Mexico's central bank, said the emphasis was to act in "quarters to come". The BIS thinks an economic soft landing - where rates rise without triggering recessions - is still possible, but accepts it is a difficult situation.

"A lot of it will depend on precisely on how permanent these (inflationary) shocks are," Carstens said, adding that the response of financial markets would also be crucial.

"If this tightening generates massive losses, generates massive asset corrections, and that contaminates consumption, investment and employment - of course, that is a more difficult scenario."

World markets are already suffering one of the biggest sell-offs in recent memory as heavyweight central banks like the U.S. Federal Reserve - and from next month the ECB - move away from record low rates and almost 15 years of back-to-back stimulus measures.

Global stocks are down 20% since January and some analysts calculate that U.S. Treasury bonds, the benchmark of world borrowing markets, could be having their biggest losing first half of a year since 1788.

Carstens said the BIS's own recent warnings about frothy asset prices meant the current correction was "not necessarily a complete surprise". That there hadn't been "major market disruptions" so far was also reassuring, he added.

Part of the BIS report published already last week said that the recent implosions in the cryptocurrency markets were an indication that long-warned-about dangers of decentralised digital money were now materialising.

French Energy Giants Urge Consumers to Cut Energy Use



PARIS (Dispatches) - The heads of France's big energy companies on Sunday urged individuals and businesses to limit power consumption immediately to prepare for a looming energy crisis.

"We need to work collectively to reduce our consumption in order to regain room to manoeuvre," the chief executives of Engie, EDF and Total said in an open letter published by weekly newspaper Journal du Dimanche.

The letter signed by Engie's Catherine MacGregor, EDF's Jean-Bernard Levy and TotalEnergies' Patrick Pouyanne cited sharp declines in Russian gas shipments as well as limited electricity generation because of maintenance issues.

France aims to fill its gas storage facilities by early autumn, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said on Thursday. The country's gas storage sites are 59% full at present.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has thrown the spotlight on the Europe's reliance on Russian gas, prompting a scramble to find alternative energy sources.

French media reported in March that the government was in talks with TotalEnergies about boosting capacity to receive LNG after the United States said it was prepared to increase deliveries to Europe.

"Taking action as soon as this summer will allow us to be better prepared at the start of next winter, notably by preserving our gas reserves," the energy company executives said in their letter, adding that efforts to limit consumption should be "immediate, collective and massive".

They cited their own efforts to find new sources of gas and build a floating liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in the northern port of Le Havre.

UN Chief Stresses Removing Unilateral U.S. Sanctions Against Iran

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized the need for the removal of anti-Iranian sanctions.

Speaking at his 13th report on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 on Tuesday, he stressed the removal of unilateral US sanctions against Iran, implementation of JCPOA and Iran's taking advantage of its economic benefits. The periodical meeting of the UN Security Council will be held in New York on Thursday, June 30 to review the UN Secretary-General's report on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2231 and the implementation of JCPOA.



Spain Seeks Focus on Southern Security

MADRID (Dispatches) - Spain is lobbying for NATO to pay more attention to security threats on its southern flank when the military alliance gathers for a summit in Madrid later this week.

But with the war in Ukraine entering its fifth month, the priority for Spain's NATO partners remains firmly on deterring Russia in the east.

When NATO leaders convene in Madrid on June 28-30 they are due to revamp the alliance's strategic concept, which outlines its main security tasks and challenges but has not been revised since 2010.

Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares has been pushing for NATO to broaden its scope to help deal with non-military threats such as "the political use of energy resources and illegal immigration" in Africa.

"The threats are as much from the southern flank as from the eastern flank," he told a Madrid news conference on Wednesday.

Madrid is also concerned about lawlessness and violent Islamist movements in the Sahel region, a vast territory stretching across the south of the Sahara Desert.

"We have this war in Europe, but the situation in Africa is really worrying," said Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles.

The issue is particularly acute for Spain, a main gateway into Europe for irregular migration from Africa and a country which relies on Algeria for gas supplies.

Last year Morocco allowed thousands of migrants to enter Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta during a diplomatic crisis over the disputed Western Sahara, prompting Madrid to accuse Rabat of "blackmail".

Although the two countries recently normalised their relations after Spain ended its decades-long position of neutrality over Western Sahara to publicly support Morocco's stance, the migration crisis hasn't come to an end.

On Friday at dawn, around 2,000 African migrants tried to storm the border with Melilla, the other Spanish enclave on Morocco's northern coast. At least 23 died in the incursion, making it the deadliest incident to occur at the borders of the two Spanish enclaves -- the only borders between the EU and Africa.

And earlier this month Morocco's arch-rival Algeria suspended a co-operation treaty with Spain in response to Madrid's U-turn over Western Sahara.

But with an active conflict on NATO's eastern flank, it is going to be "an uphill struggle" to convince member states to make a commitment to the southern flank, said Sinan Ulgen, a NATO expert at the Carnegie Europe think-tank in Brussels.

"The war in Ukraine has changed the equation. The threat from Russia has become the main preoccupation for almost all the countries," the former Turkish diplomat told AFP.

In Washington, US national security spokesman John Kirby said "the focus right now is on the eastern flank".

"But there remains a continued effort to make sure we are also paying attention to the southern flank," he added.



In an interview published Saturday by Spanish daily El Pais, NATO secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg said the Alliance would "strengthen (its) cooperation with southern countries", mentioning Mauritania in particular.

Aside from Russia, Washington's other major concern is China, which is expected to be mentioned in NATO's strategic concept for the first time.

To try to convince its NATO allies, Spain has sounded the alarm over the growing presence of Russian mercenaries in African nations like Mali and the Central African Republic, arguing instability could increase African migration to Europe.

Madrid has also suggested that Russia was behind Spain's recent diplomatic spat with Algeria. "Unfortunately the threats from the south are increasingly Russian threats from the south," Albares said.

Ulgen said that another difficulty is that while other southern European nations want a greater NATO engagement in Africa, they have different priorities, making it hard to set a common alliance-led strategy.

"Rome, Paris, Madrid, Ankara still assess the political and security challenges differently. That is the fundamental reason why there is not a stronger push for NATO to have a bigger role" in the southern flank, said Ulgen.

In addition, many top US policymakers believe NATO should focus on territorial defence, not non-conventional threats, said Angel Saz, the director of the Centre for Global Economy and Geopolitics at Spain's Esade business school.

"And the only threat to territorial defence is Russia. The Sahel can destabilise Europe, but it will not conquer Spain or Italy," he said.

Spain has "perhaps put too much emphasis" on the call for a greater NATO role in the southern flank and "it runs the risk of under accomplishing," he added.

Entire Region Under...

FROM PAGE 1

The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy also said that the force will soon unveil a new homegrown helicopter carrier named after top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated by the Pentagon more than two years ago.

"We now manufacture our own frigates. Shahid (Martyr) Soleimani helicopter carrier is also expected to join the IRGC naval fleet in the near future. We indigenously build various types of high-speed boats that cruise at speeds of 70 to 90 nautical knots," Rear Admiral Tangsiri said at a ceremony.

IRGC...

FROM PAGE 1

He further noted that the awful consequences of the presence of U.S. forces in the Islamic world, including the great seditions, long civil wars, destruction of houses, displacement of people, insecurity, poverty, and underdevelopment.

When "we look" at Afghanistan, "we notice" the harmful and irreparable effects of the US interference, the general added, noting that the neighboring states, including Pakistan, suffer from the effects of destructive U.S. interference in Afghanistan.

General Nadeem Raza, for his part, referred to the commonalities between the Pakistani and Iranian nations, described divisions within the Muslim world as a result of the US and Western plots, and noted that the US withdrew from Afghanistan after twenty years without managing to establish security in that country.

He emphasized the necessity of intelligence and operational cooperation with Iran in protecting the security of the joint border.

Tehran Slams...

FROM PAGE 1

"The imposition of unilaterally coercive sanctions by the United States has become a tool for violating the natural and legal rights of the Iranian people, including the right to life, the right to health, the right to adequate living standards, the right to education and access to knowledge and technology, and the right to development in addition to the gross violation of the rights of women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities."

The ministry touched on some of the repercussions of the sanctions, saying they had endangered food security, led to the non-cooperation of companies supplying medical and health goods and equipment with Iran and disrupted purchase of drugs for rare and acute diseases.

As a result of the sanctions, it said, Iranian researchers and physicians have been banned from accessing medical resources available on the servers of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and PubMed, especially during the peak of the coronavirus outbreak.

Sanctions on the aviation industry and aircraft parts have seriously endangered the safety of Iranian passenger planes, while the lack of access to the international financial system and refusal of foreign companies to accept foreign exchange guarantees issued by Iranian banks have put additional economic pressure on bread-earning Iranian women and led to a decline in purchasing power of the elderly and problems for people with physical and mental disabilities in accessing medicines and medical equipment, adequate care and rehabilitation, it added.

Still, Iran is not the only nation that has suffered from the double standards and systematic human rights violations by the United States, the ministry said.

While the U.S. claims to be an advocate of human rights, there is no meaningful monitoring of the violations of the rights of minorities such as Muslims and people of color within the United States where hate-mongering is widely pursued by officials and police forces, it added.

According to the Iranian Foreign Ministry, the US "is the biggest supporter of the Israeli occupation regime, which, through its material and non-material support of the regime, provides the basis for the continuation of human rights violations in the occupied territories."

Moreover, "the oppressed and defenseless people of Yemen are targeted daily by American weapons, which are sold to the aggressor and warring countries for financial and commercial purposes, while any end to the crisis in the country is opposed", it said.

Using the two concepts of human rights and counterterrorism as a tool, the United States has also physically eliminated the greatest heroes of the fight against terrorism, most recently Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani who was assassinated by the US government in 2020, the ministry added.

"As highlighted by the UN Human Rights Council's thematic rapporteurs, the assassination of General Soleimani is an arbitrary violation of the right to life and contrary to the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

Chilean Experts Try to Innovate Children's Diet With 3D Printed Food



LONDON (Dispatches) - Technology is advancing rapidly and opening up new and never-before-seen opportunities for everyone. For example, back in the day, nobody would believe you if you said your printer could also cook your dinner but in Chile, nutritional experts hope a nutritious menu of 3D printed food with ingredients of some dehydrated "cochayuyo" seaweed, some instant mashed potatoes and hot water, will revolutionize the food market, particularly for children.

With a 3D food printer and a modern twist on the traditional use of cochayuyo, an algae typically found in Chile, New Zealand and the South Atlantic, Roberto Lemus, a professor at the University of Chile, together with several students, have managed to create nutritious and edible figures that they hope children will love to eat.

Pokemon figures, or any type of animal imaginable, are all fed into the 3D printer, together with the gelatinous mixture, and the food is "printed" out seven minutes later.

"We (are) looking for different figures, fun figures ... visual, colors, taste, flavors, smells," Lemus told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

But, he stressed, the main focus is on nutritional content. "The product has to be highly nutritious for people, but it also has to be tasty," he said.

3D food printers are expensive, costing from \$4,000 to more than \$10,000, but Lemus hopes that as technology advances, their cost will come down and reach more people.

The technology is developing in the culinary field in dozens of countries, and 3D food printers are used to design sweets, pasta and other foods.

NASA already tested it in 2013 with the idea of expanding the variety of foods that astronauts dine on in space.

Chile is making progress with cochayuyo seaweed, one of the typical ingredients of the coastal nation's cuisine, and which is rich in amino acids, minerals and iodine, according to Alonso Vasquez, a 25-year-old postgraduate student who is writing his thesis on the subject.

The young researcher takes dehydrated cochayuyo, cuts it and grinds it to create cochayuyo flour which he then mixes with instant mashed potato powder.

He then adds hot water to the mixture to create a gelatinous and slimy substance that he feeds into the printer.

Despite Strong Summer Start, Europe's Aviation Industry Frets

ROME (Dispatches) - Air traffic is booming this summer, but after European vacations are over will passenger demand hold up?

The question was the focus of the annual congress of the Airports Council International (ACI) Europe in Rome this week, held at the cusp of the approaching peak season.

The summer period is shaping up to be by far the best since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis that has severely affected the airline industry since 2020.

Some airlines, such as Ryanair, and countries, in particular Greece, have already recovered or even exceeded their 2019 daily flight numbers, according to Eurocontrol, a pan-European air traffic agency.

Across the continent, air traffic was last week at 86 percent of the same period in 2019, Eurocontrol said, and expected to reach up to 95 percent in August under its most optimistic estimate.

And companies are filling seats for the coming weeks despite the sharp rise in ticket prices, long lines in various airports from Frankfurt to Dublin to Amsterdam and strikes by flight attendants, pilots or air traffic controllers.

But after that? "Visibility is low because there is a lot of uncertainty," said Olivier Jankovec, director general of ACI Europe.

"We're now in a war economy in Europe, we have the prospect of a quite harsh recession, we have inflation at record levels, so how all of this is going to play into consumer sentiment... the jury's still out."

The director general for transport and mobility at the European Commission, Henrik Hololei, echoed that thought.

"We really need to tighten the seatbelt because there's going to be a lot of turbulence," he told delegates.

"We are entering... a period of uncertainty which



we have never experienced in the last decade. And that of course is the biggest enemy of the business," he said.

Hololei listed the war in Ukraine, high energy prices and shortages of energy, food and labour. "We have also interest rates which are going up for the first time in a decade," he said.

The price of jet fuel has doubled over the past year, with a refinery capacity shortage compounding the explosion in crude oil prices.

Fuel accounts for about a quarter of the operating costs of airlines, which have passed them on to consumers in ticket prices as they seek to refill coffers drained by the two-year health crisis.

Still, strong demand has returned, confirmed Eleni Kaloyirou, managing director of Hermes Airports, which manages the airports of Larnaca and Paphos in Cyprus, where the high tourist season extends into November.

"People want to take their holidays," she said, acknowledging, however, "we do worry about next year".

The general manager of Athens International Airport, Yiannis Paraschis, similarly expressed fears that "the increase in energy costs and inflation will consume a great part of European households' disposable income".

The head of Istanbul International Airport, Kadri Samsunlu, voiced concerns about inflation's effect in Western Europe.

And if consumer confidence is damaged, "We don't know what's going to happen to the demand," he warned.

The last unknown hanging over European air travel in the medium term is a possible new outbreak of coronavirus.

"Covid has not disappeared, and it is not a seasonal flu either," Hololei warned.

Gov't Tax...

FROM PAGE 1

The push is aimed at shoring up government finances that have been affected by American sanctions on Iran's oil exports.

Manzur said the INTA will this month unveil a prototype of its automated point-of-sale system which it wants to be deployed by all businesses in Iran in the upcoming years.

The INTA chief said a full deployment of the system, which seeks to prevent tax dodging, will take several years although he insisted it will be faster than other countries with similar experiences.

Iran's tax receipts are expected to increase this calendar year with the implementation of a parliament legislation that imposes tax on vacant homes and luxury goods.

The country had reported a tax receipt increase of 61% in rial terms for the 11 months to late February at around 2,780 trillion rials (\$10.69 billion).

Wolff Latest to

Leave PGA for LIV Golf

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - World number 77 Matthew Wolff, a 23-year-old American, is the latest player to leave the US PGA Tour for the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series, according to multiple reports.

The Golf Channel and ESPN reported that Wolff has joined the rebels who will depart for the upstart series, which stages its second event starting Thursday at Portland, Oregon. Wolff, who won his only US PGA title at the 2019 3M Open in suburban Minneapolis in just his third tour start, was the 2020 US Open runner-up and shared fourth in the 2020 PGA Championship, each result coming in his event debut.

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Cech to Leave Role as

Chelsea's Technical Adviser

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Chelsea goalkeeper Petr Cech will step down from his role as technical and performance adviser at the end of June, the Premier League club said, the latest staff member to leave Stamford Bridge following the takeover led by Todd Boehly.

Cech, who was appointed to the role in 2019 following his retirement, spent 11 years at Chelsea between 2004-15 and won 13 major trophies, including four Premier League titles and the Champions League.

Djokovic Survives Scare to Win 80th Match at Wimbledon

LONDON (Dispatches) - Defending champion Novak Djokovic overcame a scare to notch up his 80th Wimbledon win on Monday with a four-sets victory over Kwon Soon-woo of South Korea. Six-time champion Djokovic triumphed 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 under the Centre Court roof.

But the top seed was made to work after falling a break down in the opening two sets against his 81st-ranked opponent -- losing the second of those.

Djokovic becomes the first player, man or woman, to record 80 singles wins at all four Grand Slam tournaments.

"Now we have got to 80, let's get to 100," said Djokovic, a 20-time Grand Slam title winner. "I didn't play any lead-up tournaments before Wimbledon so you always feel less comfortable."

"Kwon stays close to the lines, hits clean forehands and backhands so I had to find a way to go through him. "That meant figuring out tactically how to get control of the points."

Djokovic will face either Australia's Thanasi Kokkinakis or Poland's Kamil Majchrzak for a place in the last 32.

Meanwhile Tunisian third seed Ons Jabeur proved far too strong for Mirjam Bjorklund of Sweden, sweeping past the qualifier 6-1 6-3 to book her spot in the second round of Wimbledon.

After reaching a career-high ranking of second, 2021 quarter-finalist Jabeur served strongly and dominated from the baseline against the 125th-ranked Bjorklund who made her debut at the grasscourt Grand Slam this year.

Jabeur arrived in London having lifted a grasscourt title in Berlin two weeks back and was in an attacking mood in her first career meeting with the 23-year-old Swede on a cloudy day on Court One.

The Tunisian broke Bjorklund's serve three times to take the opening set and a single break was enough in the second for Jabeur to seal victory in 53 minutes.



Man Utd in Race for €40m Star Up for Auction

LONDON (Dispatches) - According to reports, Man Utd are among the clubs interested in signing Real Madrid winger Marco Asensio this summer.

The forward has played 235 times for the La Liga giants over the past six seasons.

Asensio was in and out of the team last term, as he only started 19 times in the league. He was involved in 14 goals in 42 appearances across all competitions.

His contract is due to expire in 2023 and he is yet to commit his long-term future to Real Madrid.

Last week, it was reported that they are 'waiting for the player's decision' regarding his future. Spanish outlet Sport (via Sport Witness) are reporting that Man Utd are 'pushing' to sign Asensio. Chelsea and AC Milan are also interested.

It is said that the player is 'up for auction' this summer while his value remains high. He is rated at around €40m.

Asensio is said to want his next club to 'meet his wage demands of between €7-8m per season post-tax' and 'guarantee' that he will be a starter. Meanwhile, Dutch journalist Marcel van der Kraan has claimed that Ajax have put Man Utd in an "awkward position" by valuing two of their targets at a combined £130m.

Bairstow Blitz Seals England Rout of New Zealand

LEEDS (Dispatches) - Jonny Bairstow led England to a whitewash of Test world champions New Zealand with a stunning fifty on his Headingley home ground.

Bairstow made a blistering 71 not out, England's second quickest Test fifty of all time, to follow a majestic 162 that helped revive the hosts from a first-innings collapse after they had slumped to 55-6.

Former captain Joe Root, largely reduced to the role of a spectator by Bairstow, was 86 not out after sharing a partnership of 111 with his Yorkshire team-mate, having started the day unbeaten on 55.

England reached their target of 296 with just three wickets down to complete a 3-0 series clean sweep in a first campaign under their new leadership duo of captain Ben Stokes and red-ball head coach Brendon McCullum, a former New Zealand skipper.

"To walk away with a 3-0 win over the best team in the world is very special," said Stokes at the presentation ceremony.

"The team has been phenomenal. For me when I took over this job it was about more than results, it was about changing mindsets towards Test cricket.

"I wanted them to have fun and enjoy representing their country."

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson added: "It's been an incredible series.

"In all three matches we had our opportunities and we were ahead of the game at times in each one but credit to England, they chose to counter-attack when they were under pressure and they did it well, especially in this match."

Rain washed out the morning session to leave England, 183-2 overnight, with a nominal 78 overs in which to score the remaining 113 runs they needed for victory.

But they took just 15.2 overs, scoring at a rapid rate of 7.43 an over, with Bairstow sealing victory in storybook style with a six off spinner Michael Bracewell.

Ollie Pope, 81 not out overnight, was bowled off the fifth ball of the day by Tim Southee to end a sparkling stand of 134 with Root.

But that was as good as it got for New Zealand, with Trent Boult's first over of the day costing 17 runs.



Jesus Arsenal Deal Done

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal will have a new striker next season after Gabriel Jesus agreed a five-year contract with the Gunners.

The Brazilian forward will leave Manchester City for £45m just a year before he is available on a free transfer, which represents something of a gamble for Mikel Arteta.

Jesus leaves City after scoring 95 goals in 236 games for the club since joining in January 2017.

Gabriel Jesus might be brilliant for Arsenal - but he's a £45m gamble for Mikel Arteta

Arteta and Edu are described as being 'key to the deal', with Jesus having a close relationship with the Arsenal manager after working with him at City.

Jesus started just 21 Premier League games for City last season, with half of his eight goals coming against Watford in April.

He retained the support of City coach Pep Guardiola and started both legs of their Champions League semi-final defeat to Real Madrid.

A deal to sign Jesus' Brazilian teammate Raphinha is proving more complex both in terms of the club and the player, with Fabrizio Romano tweeting that the race is 'still open'.

What we do know is that Leeds United want £65m for the winger and nobody has yet got close to agreeing that sum, though Arsenal are set to return with a second bid.

He clearly wants to join Barcelona and has agreed terms with the Spanish club, who lack the funds to buy him at least until they sell Frenkie de Jong to Manchester United.

Chelsea and Tottenham are both still being linked with Raphinha, though it seems that both are more interested in Everton forward Richarlison.

Wimbledon Doesn't Care What Looks Cool

LONDON (Dispatches) - Nick Kyrgios would rather wear all black when competing at Wimbledon instead of adhering to the all-white dress code, with the Australian saying that the Championships were out of tune with what looks 'cool' on court.

The grasscourt major is famous for its strict dress code and does not even allow players to wear off-white or cream, while the measuring tape comes out to ensure the trim of colour on necklines or sleeves are no wider than a centimetre.

"I always want to wear all black, obviously," Kyrgios said with a smile at a news conference ahead of his first round match with British wildcard Paul Jubb.

"But I don't think it's something that's going to change, I don't know. "I think it would be cool to allow, like, a black headband or black sweatband. I think it would look cool. Obviously Wimbledon doesn't really care what looks cool... I don't think it will ever change."

But the prestige associated with Wimbledon was still enough to lure Kyrgios to compete despite the lack of ranking points this year due to the ban on Russian and Belarusian players.

The decision essentially reduced Wimbledon to an exhibition event but the major's organizers are also dishing out record prize money to the tune of 40.3 million pounds (\$49.42 million).

Kyrgios, who said he did not agree with the ban as the sport's number one ranked Daniil Medvedev would not be playing, added that he did not pick tournaments based on the ranking points on offer.



Madrid Interested In Hosting Formula One Race

MADRID (Dispatches) - Madrid has officially expressed an interest in hosting a Formula One race, the city's regional government announced.

Although there are no Formula One-grade tracks in Madrid and Spain already hosts a race in Barcelona, which has a contract until 2026, the Spanish capital believes it can open talks with Formula One organizers, Liberty Media, about hosting a race.

"I would like to confirm our commitment to you and to this project, as well as our willingness to sign the appropriate agreements to promote the race and offer a great sporting and entertainment spectacle," local government cabinet minister Enrique Lopez wrote in a letter to F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali.

Further details about the bid were not disclosed. Formula One organizers declined to comment.

Madrid hosted F1 Grands Prix between 1968 and 1981 at the Jarama Circuit, which is outdated and would need a major upgrade to be able to host a race again.

Last year, the local government of Morata de Tajuna, 36km south of Madrid, confirmed that it was seeking to build an FIA Grade 1 circuit with the ambition of hosting F1 and MotoGP races in the future.

There are a record 23 Formula One races scheduled this year and while organizers are keen to expand the sport's geographical reach, they have looked primarily at adding venues in Africa and the United States.

