

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **141,404** With **8** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister For Economics Mehdi Safari Expressed the Readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Transfer Technology to the Friendly Country of Nicaragua

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Monthly Non-Oil Trade Increases 3%

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The value of Iran's non-oil trade increased three percent in the third Iranian calendar month Khordad (ended on March 21), from the same month of the previous year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Ruhollah Latifi put the country's non-oil trade at 13.622 million tons worth \$8.9 billion in the third month, and said the with the country's exports being more than imports in that month, a positive trade balance of \$204 million was achieved.

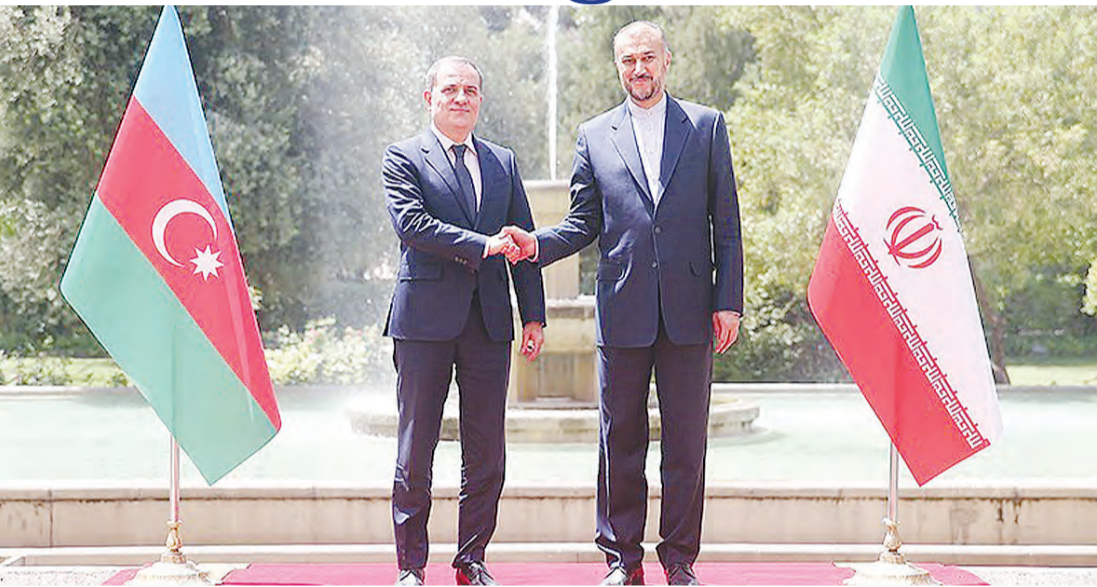
The official further put the monthly non-oil export at 10.65 million tons worth \$4.553 billion, and that of import at 2.972 million tons valued at \$4.349 billion.

As previously announced by the IRICA head, the value of Iran's non-oil exports reached \$13.69 billion in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year, up 21 percent compared to the last year's same period.

Alireza Moghadasi said Iran exported 27.7 million tons of non-oil commodities in the mentioned three months.

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Tehran-Baku Ties Now on Right Track



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister said that Tehran will host a tripartite meeting of Iran, Azerbaijan, and Turkiye foreign ministers, adding that the bilateral ties with Baku have changed from misunderstanding to interaction.

Hossein Amirabdollahian made the remarks on Monday in a joint press conference with his Azeri counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov in Tehran.

At the start of his comments, the top Iranian diplomat spoke about his meeting with Bayramov and said that a variety of issues were discussed between them including developing Tehran-Baku ties and cooperation and preserving the territorial integrity of countries.

Saying that the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict was another topic emphasized during their meeting, Amirabdollahian stated that from the beginning of the conflict, Iran announced its readiness to resolve the crisis through dialogue.

"We are ready for the remaining issues to be resolved based on respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the parties and through dialogue and diplomacy," he added.

Noting that it is important to consider the regional formats, the Iranian top diplomat continued that during his last week's trip to Ankara, he and the Turkish foreign minister agreed on holding a tripartite meeting of Iran, Azerbaijan, and Turkiye in Tehran at the level of foreign ministers.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amirabdollahian stated that the trip of the Azerbaijani President to Iran will be discussed between the Iranian and Azerbaijani sides.

Turning to the matter of electricity exchanges between Iran and Azerbaijan, Amirabdollahian said that the two sides have reached some agreements that would be finalized during the visit of the Iranian energy minister to Azerbaijan.

Saying that the Aras River's environmental issues were also discussed with the Azeri side, Amirabdollahian stressed the importance of implementing the existing projects as well.

"We are pleased to see a leap in the volume of trade between the two countries in the past months, and we hope that with today's talks, the commercial and economic areas in the private and public sectors will expand relations," Amirabdollahian continued, adding, "Last spring, we passed the stage of misunderstandings and now we are in the stage of increasing development of comprehensive relations in line with the interests of the two countries."

Bayramov, for his part, said that the Iranian and Azeri sides have reached agreements on joint production of cars and tractors.

He also added that Azerbaijan is ready to increase the capacity of the North-South corridor and implement its commitments regarding the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway, adding "We entrusted the construction of a hospital and a school to Iranian companies."

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U.S. Military Base Rocked by Sounds of Two Blasts in Syria

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Sounds of at least two explosions have rocked a military base used by American forces in eastern Syria, Iraqi outlet reports.

Sabereen News, which is associated with Iraqi anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), said sounds of at least two blasts were heard in a US base in al-Omar oil field in the Dayr al-Zawr province near the Syrian-Iraqi border in the early hours of Monday.

Al-Omar oil field is located on the border area between Iraq and Syria. No further details have been released on the possible casualties or damages. The report comes as American media outlets reported that Russia launched a string of strikes on US positions in Syria last month.

Citing US military officials, the Wall Street Journal reported last month that Russian forces conducted a series of operations against the US-led coalition in Syria, including one at a strategically located base in the southern part of the country.

According to the report, US military officials were concerned that a miscalculation might escalate into an unintended conflict between the American and Russian forces in Syria as tensions between Moscow and Washington have been already high since the start of Russia's offensive in Ukraine in February.

Russia had notified the US that it would be launching the air raids in response to attacks conducted against the Syrian troops. The United States and its allies invaded Syria in 2014 under the pretext of fighting Daesh terrorists. The terrorists had emerged as Washington was running out of excuses to extend its regional meddling or enlarge it in scale.

The US military has stationed forces and equipment in northeastern Syria. The Pentagon claims the deployment is aimed at preventing the oilfields in the area from falling into the hands of Daesh terrorists. Damascus says the deployment is meant to plunder Syria's rich mineral resources.

Former US President Donald Trump admitted on more than one occasion that American forces were in Syria for its oil.

Iran, EU Finalizing Date, Venue of Next Talks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top negotiator in talks to revive the 2015 Iran deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), says Tehran and the European Union are finalizing the time and location of the next round of the talks, whose main goal is to have sanctions imposed on Tehran removed.

Ali Bagheri Kani told reporters on Sunday that the recent indirect talks between Iran and the United States, mediated by the European Union, were held in the Qatari capital of Doha within a pre-planned framework.

"The talks will continue based on an agreement between Iran and the other side, namely [European Union deputy foreign policy chief Enrique] Mora," Bagheri Kani, who also serves as Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs, said.

Bagheri Kani added, "The date and venue of the next round of the negotiations are being finalized through our exchanges with Mr. Mora."

Iran and the U.S. concluded two days of indirect talks in Doha on Wednesday, in a high-stakes diplomatic process aimed at breaking the stalemate in the efforts to restore the JCPOA.

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Foreigners Without IDs Should Return Home

TEHRAN (IFP) - Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi says it is illegal for foreign nationals to remain on Iranian soil, and that those foreigners who do not possess the required legal documents must return to their home countries.

Vahidi on Sunday elaborated on a national plan for the census of foreign citizens in Iran and said that 2,300,000 had so far applied and received the ID documents required for them to continue their sojourn in Iran, without specifying the nationalities. A number of the foreign nationals, however, have not filed a request for identification documents and thus "we consider their presence [on Iranian soil] illegal," the minister said.

Although Iran has good relations with neighbors, the presence of their nationals on Iranian soil need to be accounted for, he said, adding, those who have taken part in the national census plan will continue to enjoy public services, including insurance and bank accounts.

The foreign nationals who have failed to attend the census plan cannot stay in Iran any longer and should return home, he added. Iran says nearly 5 million Afghan refugees are living in the country.

The latest refugee influx from Afghanistan happened last August following the Taliban takeover of the country.

Tehran had said last month that the Afghans who fail to participate in the census for foreigners would be treated as illegal and deported from the country.

U.S. Not Qualified to Talk About Human Rights

TEHRAN (PresSTV) - A senior Iranian rights official says the United States is in no position to talk about the issue of human rights given its far-and-wide violations on the international stage.

The United States is, by no means, qualified to talk about [the issue of] human rights," Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi said.

The official passed the remarks on the sidelines of the fourth International Conference on the American Human Rights from the Perspective of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

"This government (the US administration) should be held responsible to the oppressed peoples, who have lost their lives as a result of terrorism, sanctions, aggression, and occupation," Gharibabadi added.

He cited the example of the people of Yemen, where Saudi Arabia and its allies have been waging a US-backed war. The Yemenis were still being deprived of receiving the most basic humanitarian assistance due to the invaders and their supporters' "imperialist disposition of and great human rights violations," the official noted.

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U.S. Offered No Initiatives At Doha Talks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister says the U.S. offered no initiatives during the negotiations in Qatari capital of Doha over the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal.

Hossein Amirabdollahian said that Iran was serious about achieving a good and lasting agreement on the deal, officially called the JCPOA.

He made the remarks in a telephone conversation with his French counterpart Catherine Colonna on Sunday night.

"We are serious and honest about reaching ... a good and durable agreement. We have always presented our positive suggestions and proposals during negotiations."

"We believe that repeating previous stances should not replace political initiatives," the top Iranian diplomat said.

Nevertheless, he described the talks as positive. "Our assessment of the recent talks in Doha is positive, but we have to see how the American side would take advantage of the diplomatic opportunity."

Amirabdollahian also reiterated that the path to diplomacy is still open. He noted that Iran has always adhered to all of its international obligations, saying Tehran expects the other sides to do the same.

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Kuwait Condolences With Iran Over Saturday Earthquake

TEHRAN (MNA) – Following UAE, Kuwait offered condolences to Iran over the quake that hit the southern province of Hormozgan, leading to several people's deaths and others' injuries. Kuwait Foreign Ministry, on Sunday, expressed compassion to Iran over the quake that hit the southern province of Hormozgan, leading to several people's deaths and others' injuries, Kuwait Times reported on Sunday. The Ministry also expressed sincere condolences to the Iranian leadership, government and people, wishing the injured quick recovery.

Iran Ready To Broaden Ties With Switzerland

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi in meeting with the new Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Nadine Olivieri Lozano, who was submitting her credentials, announced Tehran's full readiness for broadening its all-out ties with Switzerland.

In the meeting on Monday, the President criticized the U.S. for its unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA and reiterated it is up to the U.S. to decide its return to the deal and observe all the details of the talks and to be committed.

Raisi added that the U.S. and European troika's action in preparing the resolution to be approved at the meeting of the board of governors of IAEA which talks were underway was an irresponsible act and it was against the soul of talks and agreement and it was a behavioral contradiction.

He then pointed to the history of Iran and Switzerland ties which dates back to 100 years ago and said Iran is ready to broaden its ties with all countries especially in the fields of economy, politics and trade.

Raisi also pointed to the diplomatic role of Swiss Embassy in Tehran and said the U.S. and European countries are involved in miscalculation regarding Iran and expressed hope



Switzerland reflects the truth about Iran to other countries in order to realize Iran despite their hostilities has continued its progress and their hegemonic policies have had reverse effects.

He once again reiterate that the U.S. should decide for remaining committed to the details of talks and agreement if it wants return to the JCPOA.

Meanwhile Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Ms. Lozano pointed to the century-long relations between Iran and Switzerland and said that they have always had positive and constructive cooperation.

She then pointed to the roadmap of relation between Tehran and Bern and stipulated that her main program as the ambassador of Switzerland is to try to broaden relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Switzerland.

Lozano replaces former Swiss Ambassador Markus Leitner. Switzerland has helped Iran during the coronavirus era and it has been a channel for import of medicines.

Data Base Platform Launched for Traders

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has announced launching a platform that provides traders with a database containing information on Iran's trade partners, the TPO portal reported.

According to Alireza Peyman-Pak, the mentioned database has been established as part of the organization's strategy to move towards smart business and promoting new ways of foreign trade.

"In order to make foreign trade smarter and to move away from traditional ways, two important programs have been implemented by the Trade Promotion Organization," the official said.

The mentioned platform is designed so that traders can have a detailed analysis of the destination markets, Peyman-Pak said, adding: "Instead of spending days for identifying appropriate trade partners traders can quickly find potential markets with the help of data mining, whose job is to collect market information and analyze it."

Noting that using such platforms has been popular in developed countries for years, the official said: "With the information collected using artificial intelligence, our businessmen are able to identify certain products and learn about the target community that has a demand for those products to become prepared to get into the business without wasting too much time."

According to the TPO head, the mentioned platform is currently undergoing trial stages for the validation of the collected data, and it will go into the operational stage in the coming weeks and the information extracted by this platform will be available to traders.

He also announced reaching agreements with China, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to connect the mentioned platforms to the databases of these countries and said: "Since billions must be spent for a platform to be recognized in the world, and our domestic companies cannot afford this cost, we negotiated with China, UAE, and Russia to prepare the ground for connecting our database to the platforms of these countries."

Loading, Unloading of Goods in Chabahar Port Up 40% in Q1

TEHRAN (MNA) - Loading and unloading of goods in Chabahar port, in the southeast of Iran, increased 40 percent in the first quarter of the present Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the country's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced.

According to the PMO, loading and unloading of goods in the ports of Iran increased seven percent in the three-month period of this year, from that of the previous year, as 51,661,306 tons of commodities were loaded and unloaded in the ports during the mentioned three-month period.

Quarterly loading and unloading of oil products stood at 25,453,417 tons, with nine percent growth, and that of the non-oil goods stood at 26,207,889 tons, with seven percent rise year on year.

Meanwhile, loading and unloading in the container sector was 622,524 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in the first quarter of the present year, showing 12 percent as compared to 555,334 TEUs in the first quarter of the previous year.

As Iran's only oceanic port on the Gulf of Oman, Chabahar port holds great significance for the country both politically and economically. The country has taken serious measures for developing this port in order to improve the country's maritime trade.

Iran Puts 319 New Rail Fleet Vehicles Into Operation

TEHRAN (IP) - In the presence of Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development and the CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, 319 new rail fleet vehicles worth of 946b Tomans were put into operation.

In the knowledge-based, employment-generating production year, 319 rail fleet vehicles worth of 946 billion Tomans were put into operation.

At this stage, 305 new freight wagons, 6 new locomotives, 7 passenger wagons together with 1 locomotive have been renovated. This number of fleets is 100% produced in domestic companies.

Int'l Protest Against Violation of Human Rights by Britain

TEHRAN (IP) - The chorus of international opposition to the UK's instrumental use of human rights and its violations continues to grow louder, the deputy chief of the Iranian Judiciary and secretary of the High Council for Human Rights tweeted.

By releasing a video of a answers questions session in the British Parliament about that country's policies towards the Middle East and Saudi Arabia, which London refers to as its most important trading partner, Kazem Gharibabadi wrote on his Twitter page: "However, it falls on deaf ears as Britain is hell-bent on concluding lucrative trade deals with those whose hands are stained with innocent people's blood."

Majlis Speaker Describes Education As Top Priority for the Country

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker says that education is the most important priority of the Islamic Republic.

Speaking at the first congress of Islamic Revolutionary Teachers held in Tehran, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that culture was one of the country's first and most important priorities.

By paying attention to education, we will save the country from serious, even immediate economic challenges, he noted. Qalibaf referred to the corona pandemic: Corona was a great and challenging experience, especially in the field of education; Coronavirus shifted us from linear management to cybernetic management of the third generation."

He said that education should not go towards privatization and the money-making sector, stressing that it was a social institution with all the beliefs of the Islamic Revolution based on the people, community building, and civilization. In conclusion, Iran's Parliament Speaker reiterated: "Today, the first and last priority of the country is not the economy, but culture and education; Education has an important and fundamental element, i.e., the teacher."

World to Never Forget U.S. Crimes in Vietnam

TEHRAN (MNA) – President Ebrahim Raisi has called for broadening Iran-Vietnam relations, adding that the world will never forget the crimes committed by the U.S. military against the Vietnamese nation in the 1970s.

President Raisi made the remarks on Monday morning in a meeting with the new ambassador of Vietnam to Tehran to receive his copy of credentials.

He expressed his dissatisfaction with the current level of cooperation and relations between Iran and Vietnam calling for taking proportionate actions to enhance friendly relations between Tehran and Hanoi.

The president said that holding regular meetings of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation can help find solutions to materialize the capacities of the two

countries in agriculture, technology, transportation, etc.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Raisi stated that "We know Vietnamese as people who stood up to colonialism and hegemonism and share close stances in this regard with Iran," adding, "History will never forget the crimes committed by the United States against the Vietnamese people."

The new ambassador of Vietnam, for his part, hailed Iran's long-standing resistance against the sanctions, saying "Despite years of sanctions and pressure, Iran has made brilliant progress and achievements."

According to him, Vietnam has always had good relations with Iran and is working to promote cooperation, especially in the economic and trade fields.



U.S. Has committed Countless Crimes in Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - The IRGC's legal deputy underlined that the Americans have committed many crimes in Iran, including supporting terror outfits such as the MKO, which assassinated 17,000 Iranians.

The conference on exposing American human rights was held today in the former US embassy in Tehran with the participation of the Member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Iranian Parliament, Abolfazl Amouei, the legal deputy of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Sohrab-Ali Shamkhani, the Commander of the Judiciary Mobilization and Iran's Deputy Attorney-General Saeed Omrani.

Sohrab-Ali Shamkhani added that shooting down Flight 655, an Iranian passenger plane, sanctioning the Islamic Republic, and assassinating the international hero of the fight against terrorism, Lt. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, were among the U.S. crimes against Iran.

Referring to the Iraqi Saddam regime's incitement to attack Kuwait by the United States, he said: "The United States used this as an excuse to attack Iraq. By invading Iraq, the US destroyed the country's infrastructure and kept the country under siege for 10 years, and 500,000 Iraqi children were harmed by the sanctions."

Sohrab-Ali Shamkhani underlined that the Americans trained groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS and provided them weapons to pursue their sinister goals in West Asia.

He noted that the propagation in the cyberspace of Iran and other countries was designed by the US in such a way that no one would say that there are 6 million homeless in the United States.

He pointed out that the Americans launched more than 94 wars and coups in other countries since 1901; they waged war from Colombia to Afghanistan and killed 20 million innocent people after World War II.

Lifting Sanctions on Iran Would Open Door for Deal

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The removal of the cruel sanctions against Iran will pave the way for a final deal in the talks on the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, President Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday.

"Lifting the cruel sanctions against Iran will prepare the ground for an agreement and cooperation," the Iranian president said in a meeting with Lithuania's new ambassador to Tehran, referring to the talks for the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal.

He also lashed out at the US and the European states for their brazen action to initiate an anti-Iranian resolution at the UN nuclear agency's Board of Governors in the course of negotiations for reviving the JCPOA, saying their move was in contradiction to the requirements for talks and agreements.

"As confirmed by all observers, the Islamic Republic of Iran has honored its commitments under the deal (JCPOA), but the US, in turn, has pulled out of this agreement and the

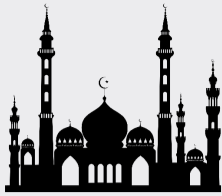
European states have also failed to honor their commitments," the Iranian president added.

He also highlighted the ample and diverse capacities for the enhancement of relations and economic cooperation between Iran and Lithuania.

For his part, Lithuania's Ambassador Ricardas Degutis called for the promotion of Iran's economic and trade cooperation with the EU members, including his own country.

The meeting came a few days after Iran and the US concluded two days of indirect talks, mediated by the European Union, in the Qatari capital of Doha, in an attempt to break the stalemate in reviving the JCPOA.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:09
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:44
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:09
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:54

25. On that Day Allah will pay them back (all) their just dues, and they will realise that Allah is the (very) Truth, that makes all things manifest.

26. Women impure are for men impure, and men impure for women impure and women of purity are for men of purity, and men of purity are for women of purity: these are not affected by what people say: for them there is forgiveness, and a provision honourable.

Surah 24. Light (25 - 26)

Senegal Welcomes Iranians' Investments

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Ambassador of Senegal to Tehran Mr. Salion Niang Deing in his meeting with economic activists of Alborz Province Chamber of Commerce said his country welcomes Iranians for investment in different fields especially in the pharmaceutical industries.

In the meeting, Deing pointed to the lack of pharmaceutical industries in his country, adding that Senegal like other countries have special directives in the field of medicines and medical services, and Iranian investors can easily with observing the regulations export their products to this country.

Deing who was leading a trade delegation from Senegal to Alborz Province also hailed the meeting which provides opportunity for economic activists to exchange views and to get acquainted with potentials of Iran and Senegal.

He noted that currently lack of knowledge and acquaintance about potentials of the two countries is the main hurdle for boosting bilateral trade ties and reiterated that the visit helped the Senegalese delegation to know potentials of Alborz Province.

He went on to say that Senegal is currently developing and there are infinite opportunities in all fields in Senegal, and Iran can have important role in Senegal for its development.

Deing stated that Senegal can be a good market for Iranian products because currently most of products are imported in his country, for example, it imports 250,000 tons of rice annually and it has other requirements like fruits and foodstuff. He added that Senegal is famous for its mango production and Iran can take advantage of it through its processing technology.

He reiterated that the Senegalese government fully supports foreign investment and it is the general policy of the country, adding that Senegal is a very safe and peaceful country and people can start economic activities in Senegal without restrictions after registering their companies.

He said when it is spoken about Senegal market, it is not just its 17m population but



due to the country's membership in the West African Economic Bloc like Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Ghana or Mali, it is a 300m-people market.

Deing added that the opportunity is ready for trade exchange between economic activists of the two countries and it will happen through knowing each other.

He stated the Senegalese delegation is representatives of 120,000 member companies of the West Africa Economic Bloc and his embassy is ready for any cooperation in any fields like easing the visa process for Iranian traders.

Meanwhile in the meeting, Head of Karaj Chamber of Commerce Mr. Parham Rezaee said that Alborz Province is one of the leading provinces of the country in terms of industry and production, adding that some 4,000 production and industrial units are active in Alborz and the province is strong in medicine and food industries, textile and agro, auto parts, plastic industries and chemical products.

Rezaee went on to say that some 92% of Senegalese are Muslims and it can help Iranian products to be welcomed in Senegal. He stated that there are some important problems on way to trade between Iran and Senegal and expressed hope that they would be resolved by governments of the two states for having an acceptable trade balance.

He went on to say that one of the important problems is easing the transportation that by easing it, the trade and export between Iran and Senegal will boost and according to Mr. Deing, an Iranian airliner is to launch direct flight between Tehran and Dakar.

Constructive Leap of Mehr Housing For Development of Cities

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – First Majlis First Vice-Speaker Ali Nikzad criticized passiveness in implementing the value added tax law and said in meeting with the head of National Tax Administration (NTA) it was decided to pay legal rights of municipalities and rural administration.



Nikzad, who was minister of roads and urban development during former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and was also custodian of Mehr Housing scheme and helped middle-class people to own houses, reacted to the passiveness in implementing the law of value added tax and depositing some part of the revenues into accounts of municipalities and rural administrations. He added that the NTA will issue a directive for implementing this law.

Nikzad added that some money is in possession of the interior ministry which should be handed over to the municipalities and rural administrations but its process is progressing very sluggishly and it was decided the ministry hand over the money in five days after receiving the money from the NTA.

Implementation of the law will resolve cash shortage which is one of the biggest problems of the municipalities and rural administrations for implementing the developmental projects.

Iran Net Foreign Assets Up 43.7% y/y

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Figures by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) shows assets held by the country in foreign banks rose by 43.7% in the year to April 20.

CBI figures published on the bank's website on Sunday showed that Iran's net foreign assets had reached a total of 8380.1 trillion rials (\$26.18 billion), up from 5830.4 trillion rials reported in late April 2021.

The figure included 5593.5 trillion rials in CBI assets and 2786.6 trillion rials in assets held by Iranian banks and credit institutions in other countries.

The CBI data showed, however, that Iran's foreign assets in April had dropped by 0.7% from the calendar month to March 21.

The figures come amid reports showing that Iran has been selling more crude oil to customers in Asia despite a series of American sanctions that have banned any

purchases of Iranian oil since four years ago.

An Iranian administrative government that came to office in August last year has touted its success in getting round the US sanctions and earning more hard currency resources for the country.

Iranian finance ministry said last month that oil exports proceeds are collected no later than three months from shipment deliveries despite banking restrictions imposed by the US.

Excerpts of a report by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) published in the Iranian media on Saturday showed that the country had earned more than \$25.313 billion from crude oil exports in 2021, up from just \$7.914 billion reported in 2020.

CBI's Sunday figures showed that Iran's M3 money supply, which includes CBI's foreign assets, had reached 48,232.9 trillion rials (\$150.7 billion) in late April.

Over 44,000 Individuals Registered in Iran National Quran Contest

TEHRAN (ABNA) - According to Iran's Awqaf and Charity Affairs Organization, more than 44,000 individuals have completed their registration for taking part in the 45th edition of the country's national Quran competition.

According to a statement by Awqaf's Quranic Affairs Center, 44,138 persons have registered to participate in 12 categories of the event from across the country.

This year's event will be held in 12 categories, including memorization of the Quran (at four levels), recitation, Tarteel, Quran interpretation, Adhan (call to prayer), translation of Nahj-ul-Balaqa, and translation of Sahifeh Sajjadiyeh.

Some of the categories have been added to the competition for the first time this year.

The first round of this year's national Quran competition will begin in July.

In April, Hamid Majidimehr, the head of Awqaf and Charity Affairs Organization's Quranic Affairs Center, said the first round will continue for nearly a month before the start of the provincial stage.

According to the official, the semifinal round will be organized in a new way so as to ensure more fairness in determining the outcome of the competition. One of the differences between this year's event and those in previous years is that the competition in the categories of Adhan (call to prayer), prayer recitation and eulogy recitation will be held separately both in terms of time and venue, he stated.

Majidimehr went on to say that the northern city of Qazvin will host the contest in the above-said categories in December while the southwestern province of Khuzestan is slated to host the Quran memorization and recitation categories in January.

Necessity to Set Innovation System in MSC

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) Mr. Mohammad Yaser Tayebnia says the issue of innovation has been raised in the MSC for years and it is also being raised but today there is some question about studying how to create innovation system, institutionalize it and turn it into a dominant current in the organization.

Speaking the meeting of the development committee of the company, Tayebnia said that the approach of MSC is to maximum use of existing capacity and this needs innovation, development of human capitals, qualitative and quantitative and balanced development, adding that this innovation should be accompanied with the modern technologies because none of these approaches are achievable without innovation and technology.

He noted that green industry is one of the indexes which is raised as a necessity and this is also unachievable without innovation. He added the question is how they can coordinate inside and outside of the company in order to use all organizational capacities in order that the company can act strongly both in exploration and performance.

He reiterated that preparation for this has been carried out and now the company wants to enter the operational phase and the company is in a point where all works are being formed under a system.

Tayebnia reiterated that the company needs organized think-tanks with presence of the domestic element or outside elements in order to connect the link and its meetings to be held regularly.

He once again reiterated that becoming knowledge-based and using knowledge-based in missions of the MSC is one part of the innovation approach and this should be kept comprehensively.



Iran Discuss Boosting Tourism Cooperation With Russia, Chechnya

TEHRAN (MNA)- In a meeting held on Sunday, the Deputy Minister of the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts discussed developing and promoting tourism relations with a number of Russian and Chechen officials.

The Deputy Minister of the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ali Asghar Shalbafian met with Yevgeny Kozlov, the head of the Moscow Tourism Committee, and Chechen Minister of Tourism Muslim Baitaziev.

In this meeting, important issues related to the field of tourism were discussed by Tatiana Charshavitskaya, Deputy Head of the Moscow Tourism Committee, Orhan Rezayev, Head of Projects of the Moscow Tourism Committee, Sergey Baratov, Deputy Director of International Relations of the Moscow Department of Foreign Economy and International Relations, and Nikitenko Petar, Cultural Attaché, Third Secretary of the Russian Embassy in Iran.

The current tourism situation of the two countries and the prospects of joint cooperation, the implementation of the joint action plan document, the cancellation of group visas for tourists, and the importance of the diversity of tourism capacities in Iran, including many historical and tourist attractions, were among the most important issues that were discussed in this meeting.

Rebuilding Agility and Playing Role of Developmental Organization in Knowledge-Based Production



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Rebuilding agility and revival of financial and legal resources of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) along with planning and maximum expert endeavor and inter-organizational synergy among the active sectors in the field of national knowledge-based help essentially to optimal role-playing and more achievement of the goals in this strategic scene.

In a year which has been named as the Year of Production, Knowledge-Based and Job Creation by the Supreme Leader as the strategy of the year for achieving fair progress and resolving the problem of poverty, maximum provision of grounds and requirements for materialization of this strategy and defining the place of each organ for maximum and optimal role-playing in the eco-system of national knowledge-based seems more necessary and imminent than ever.

IDRO as the first and oldest national developmental organization of the country with 55 years of age has experienced investment and easing the ground in the risky scenes as its common nature. IDRO considers the field of investment in the technology projects as one of the scenes for playing its role in line with materializing the slogan of the year. The organization has played its role either directly or indirectly.

Developments in the field of knowledge-based and nature of science in the current era are very fast and they are continuously improving. Actually activity in this field needs the same speed and high capability for compatibility with such fast developments. Developmental organizations should always be with its highest agility and flexibility for playing role in the scenes of its activity.

Removing hurdles and restrictions will lead to agility in IDRO and it is necessary and fortunately capacities exist in the organization that it can be carried out through talks and offering proposals.

Provision of financial resources for big investments in the knowledge-based production is necessary.

To sum up, rebuilding agility and revival of the financial and legal resources of this oldest developmental organization is crucial for supporting the knowledge-based production.

India Landslide Death Toll Rises to 37

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The death toll from a massive landslide in India hit 37, authorities said, as rescue teams battled teeming rain to search for 25 others still missing three days later.

A wall of mud and rock swamped a camp housing railway construction workers and members of the Territorial Army in remote Manipur state in the northeast after heavy rain early on Thursday.

Emergency teams rescued 18 survivors within the first few hours of the incident.



Palestinian Teen Shot By Israeli Forces Dies

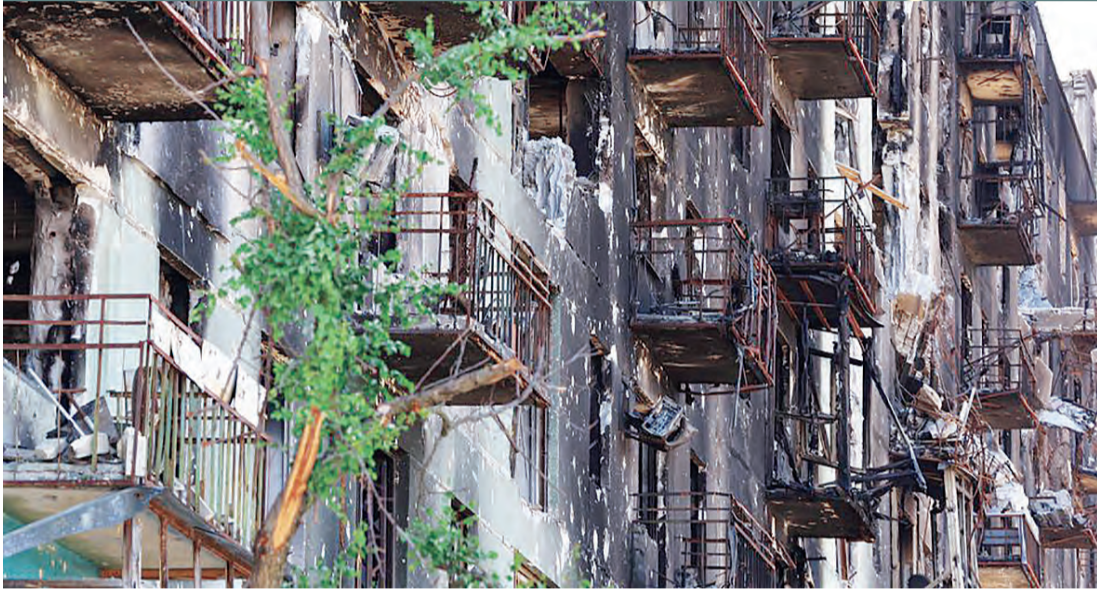
RAMALLAH (Dispatches) - A Palestinian teenager died on Sunday after being shot by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank a day earlier, Palestinian medical sources said.

The 17-year-old was identified as Kamel Alawnah by the Palestinian health ministry, which said he "succumbed to wounds from live fire by the occupation (Israeli army) in the abdomen and hand in Jenin".

A Palestinian medical source told AFP that Alawnah was wounded in Jaba, a village in the Jenin governorate of the northern West Bank.



Russia Forces Fully Control Ukraine's Luhansk Region



KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia said it had taken full control of the eastern Ukrainian region of Luhansk after capturing the final Ukrainian bastion of Lysychansk, the city where Kyiv said it had withdrawn to save the lives of its troops.

The region's capture, a major Russian war aim, is a political victory for the Kremlin after weeks of grinding advances and shifts the battlefield focus to neighboring Donetsk region, where Kyiv still controls swathes of territory.

Since abandoning an assault on the capital Kyiv, Russia has concentrated its military operation on the industrial Donbas heartland that comprises the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, where Moscow-backed separatist proxies have been fighting Ukraine since 2014.

Russia says it is capturing Luhansk region in order to give it to the self-proclaimed Russian-backed Luhansk People's Republic whose independence it recognized on the eve of the war.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu informed President Vladimir Putin that Luhansk had been "liberated", the defence ministry said, after Russia earlier said its forces had captured villages around Lysychansk and encircled the city. Ukraine's military command said its forces had been forced to retreat from the city.

"The continuation of the defense of the city would lead to fatal consequences. In order to preserve the lives of Ukrainian defenders, a decision was made to withdraw," it said in a statement on social media.

Ukrainian officials, who say references to "liberating" Ukrainian territory are Russian propaganda, had reported intense artillery barrages on residential areas.

"Ukrainian forces likely conducted a deliberate withdrawal from Lysychansk, resulting in the Russian seizure of the city on July 2," analysts at the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, wrote in a briefing note. They based their assessment on footage showing Russia forces walking casually in northern and eastern neighborhoods of Lysychansk, saying it suggested few or no Ukrainian forces remained. It said the footage included images posted on social media and geolocated to confirm where it was filmed.

West of Lysychansk in Donetsk region, at least six people were killed when the Ukrainian city of Sloviansk was hit by powerful shelling from multiple rocket launchers on Sunday, local officials said.

Thousands of civilians have been killed and cities levelled since Russia invaded on Feb. 24, with Kyiv accusing Moscow of deliberately targeting civilians. Moscow denies this.

Russia says what it calls a "special military operation" in Ukraine aims to protect Russian speakers from nationalists. Ukraine and its Western allies say this is a baseless pretext for its flagrant aggression that aims to seize territory.

While Russia would try to frame its advance in Luhansk as a significant moment in the war, it came at a high cost to Russia's military, said Neil Melvin of the London-based think tank RUSI.

"Ukraine's position was never that they could defend all of this. What they've been trying to do is to slow down the Russian assault and cause maximum damage, while they build up for a counteroffensive," he said.

Russia's defence ministry also said on Sunday it had struck military infrastructure of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city in the northeast, where a Reuters reporter said Ukrainian forces had been building fortifications after nightly shelling.

Outside a school in Kharkiv, some residents threw debris into a large crater created by an early morning rocket strike while others got help repairing damaged houses.

"The wife was lucky that she woke up early in the morning because the roof fell exactly where she had been sleeping," one resident, Oleksii Mihulin, told Reuters.

Hundreds in Sudan Continue Protests Against Military Rule

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Hundreds of Sudanese protesters demanding an end to military rule took to the streets of the capital Khartoum and its suburbs for a fourth straight day, witnesses said.

A violent crackdown by security forces during mass rallies on Thursday killed nine people, according to medics, the deadliest day for several months in the long running protests against a military takeover last October led by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.

Recent protests have seen crowds burn tyres and barricade roads with bricks, with security forces using live bullets, firing barrages of tear gas canisters and using powerful water cannons, according to medics and the United Nations.

Demonstrators demand a restoration of the transition to civilian rule that was launched after the 2019 ouster of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir, which the coup derailed. "We will continue this sit-in until the coup is overturned, and we have a fully civilian government," demonstrator Muayyad Mohamed told AFP in central Khartoum.

The death toll from protest-related violence has reached 114 since last year's coup, with the latest fatality recorded Saturday when a demonstrator died from wounds sustained at a June 16 rally, according to pro-democracy medics.

"We will not compromise until the goals of our revolution are realised," said Soha, 25, another protester, who only gave her first name. "We are here in the street demanding freedom, peace, justice, a civil state and the return of the military to the barracks."

The coup plunged Sudan further into political and economic turmoil that has sent consumer prices spiralling and resulted in life-threatening food shortages.

On Sunday, witnesses reported a heavy deployment of security forces on the streets of Khartoum, including both army vehicles as well as those of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a feared paramilitary unit commanded by Burhan's deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The RSF incorporated members of the Janjaweed militia, which was accused by rights groups of atrocities during the conflict that erupted in 2003 in the western region of Darfur. More recently, the RSF has been accused of taking part in crackdowns on protesters marching against the army.



Uzbekistan Reports Casualties in Unrest

ALMATY (Dispatches) - Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev said on Sunday there were casualties among civilians and law enforcement officers after rare protests in the Central Asian country, and an exiled opposition politician said at least five people had been killed.

Separately, a local government official told an Uzbek news website that thousands of people have been hospitalized.

In a statement posted online, Mirziyoyev said rioters had carried out "destructive actions" in the city of Nukus, capital of the northwestern Karakalpakstan region, by throwing stones, starting fires and attacking police. "Unfortunately there are victims among civilians and law enforcement officers," he said. The statement did not specify the number and nature of the casualties.

Sultanbek Ziyayev, the head of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, told news website Daryo.uz that hospitals in Nukus were full of patients who had been wounded when protesters clashed with security forces.

"Thousands of wounded have been hospitalised and are being treated," he said, according to the website.

Photographs from Nukus published on Sunday by another news website, Kun.uz, showed street barricades, burned trucks and a heavy military presence including armored personnel carriers.

Videos shared on social media showed at least two severely wounded people being carried by their arms and legs. One was bleeding from the abdomen, while the other was screaming.

Another showed a young man crouching by an apparently lifeless body in the street, screaming "A man is dying" and then running for cover as shots rang out. Reuters could not immediately verify the authenticity of the videos.



Several Hit by Gunshots at Copenhagen Mall

COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Danish police said several people had been hit by gunshots and one person had been arrested at a shopping center in the capital Copenhagen on Sunday, in an attack which the mayor of the city described as "very serious".

The capital's main hospital, Rigshospitalet, had received a "small group of patients" for treatment from the incident, possibly more than three, a spokesman told Reuters. It had called in extra staff, including surgeons and nurses, the spokesman added.

Copenhagen police tweeted that officers had been sent to Field's mall after reports of a shooting, and asked people to send footage and other relevant details from the scene.

Register now for FREE unlimited access to Reuters.com Copenhagen's police will host a press briefing about the shooting at 8.45 p.m. (1845 GMT).

"We do not yet know for sure how many are injured or dead, but it is very serious," Lord Mayor of Copenhagen, Sophie Haestorp Andersen, said in a post on Facebook.

Local media published images showing heavily armed police officers at the scene, as well as people running out of the mall. Footage published by tabloid Ekstra Bladet showed one person being carried by rescue workers into an ambulance on a stretcher.

The police did not provide further information about the arrest, or say how many had been injured. They advised people inside the centre to stay put and await police assistance, and asked other people to stay away from the area.

An event in Southern Denmark to commemorate the end of the first three stages of the Tour de France cycling race, hosted by the Danish Crown Prince and with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in attendance, had been cancelled late on Sunday, the Royal House said on its website.

British singer Harry Styles was due to perform later in the evening, at 8 p.m. (1800 GMT), at a concert venue less than a mile from the mall.

The concert will go ahead as scheduled after close dialogue with the police, and half of the audience has already entered the venue, the concert promoter Live Nation said in an emailed comment to Reuters.



Sri Lanka Grinds to a Halt As Fuel Reserves Shrink

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka has less than a day's worth of fuel left, the energy minister said Sunday, with public transport grinding to a halt as the country's economic crisis deepened.

Petrol and diesel queues snaked through the capital for kilometers, though most pumping stations have been without fuel for days.

Energy minister Kanachana Wijesekera said petrol reserves in the country were about 4,000 tons, just below one day's worth of consumption.

"The next petrol shipment is expected between the 22nd and 23rd (of July)," Wijesekera told reporters in Colombo.

"We have contacted other suppliers, but we can't confirm any new supplies before the 22nd."

Last week, cash-strapped Sri Lanka announced a two-week halt to all fuel sales except for essential services to save petrol and diesel for emergencies. Most shops were closed Sunday, with the situation expected to worsen when banks and offices reopened on Monday.

Desperate people were seen trying to flag down the few vehicles on the road hoping for a ride.

Privately owned buses, which account for two-thirds of the country's fleet, said they operated a skeleton service on Sunday as they were badly affected by the fuel shortage.

"We operated about 1,000 busses across the country out of the 20,000 owned by our members," Private Bus Operators Association chairman Gemunu Wijeratne said. "The situation will certainly get worse tomorrow because we have no way of getting diesel."

He said services would be curtailed further on Monday and saw no immediate solution.

Three-wheel taxis -- a popular last-mile transport -- were also off the streets, with most seen in days-long queues to get a ration of six litres of petrol.

A shortage of foreign currency to finance even the most essential imports has led to the country's worst economic crisis, with its 22 million people facing severe hardships daily.

The country has also faced record-high inflation and lengthy power blackouts since late last year.



Outgunned Island States Vow to Fight Deep-Sea Mining



LISBON (Dispatches) - A handful of postage-stamp nations in the South Pacific launched an uphill battle this week against the deep-sea mining of unattached, fist-sized rocks rich in rare Earth metals.

The stakes are potentially enormous.

Companies keen to scrape the ocean floor five to six thousand metres (17,000 to 20,000 feet) below sea level stand to earn billions harvesting manganese, cobalt, copper and nickel currently used to build batteries for electric vehicles. But the extraction process would disfigure what may be the most pristine ecosystem on the planet and could take millennia, if not longer, for nature to repair.

The deep-sea jewels in question, called polymetallic nodules, grow with the help of microbes over millions of years around a kernel of organic matter, such as a shark's tooth or the ear-bone of a whale. "They are living rocks, not just dead stones," former US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) chief scientist Sylvia Earle said in Lisbon.

"I look at them as miracles."

An incipient deep-sea mining industry also sees them as miraculous, though for different reasons.

Nodules also have low levels of heavy elements, which means less toxic waste compared to land-based extraction, according to the company.

Commercial mining has not started anywhere in the world, but about 20 research institutes or companies hold exploration contracts with the International Seabed Authority (ISA) in the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

Surangel Whipps Jr., president of Palau, kicked off the anti-mining campaign at the just-concluded UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, flanked by Fiji Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama.

"Deep-sea mining compromises the integrity of our ocean habitat and should be discouraged to the greatest extent possible," Whipps said, calling for an open-ended moratorium.

Likeminded neighbouring nation states Samoa, Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands have backed the call, along with more than 100 mostly green party legislators from three dozen nations across the world.

A similar motion put to a vote last September before the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) -- an umbrella organisation of 1,400 research institutes, environmental NGOs and indigenous groups -- passed easily.

"Mining, wherever it occurs, is well known to have environmental costs," said Earle, the scientist.

"On the land at least we can monitor, see and fix problems, and minimise the damage. Six thousand metres (20,000 feet) beneath the surface, who's watching?"

But in Lisbon, explicit support from other countries for a temporary ban on ocean-floor mining on the high seas, outside of national territorial waters known as exclusive economic zones (EEZs), was scarce.

Chile stepped up, calling for a 15-year pause to allow for more research.

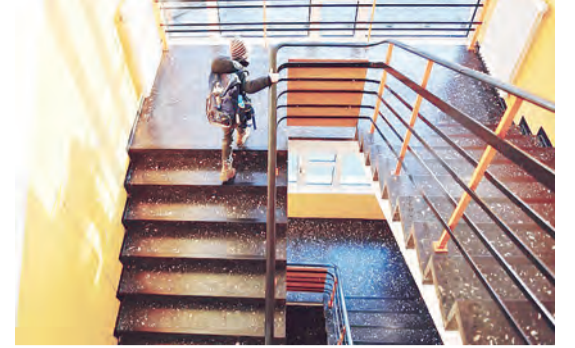
The United States, along with other developed nations, took a more ambiguous stance, calling for scientific evaluation of environmental impacts but not closing the door to future mining.

To the surprise of many in Lisbon, France's President Emmanuel Macron appeared to endorse a halt to deep-sea mining on the seas, despite the fact that France holds mining exploration licenses from ISA, the intergovernmental body overseeing exploitation of the ocean floor.

"I think we have, indeed, to create the legal framework to stop the high-sea mining and not to allow new activities putting in danger these ecosystems," Macron said at a side event.

Deep-sea mining opponents were thrilled with the statement, but are waiting to see what follows.

Covid Air War Being Lost, Experts Warn



PARIS (Dispatches) - The world is still not using one of its most effective weapons against Covid -- properly ventilating public spaces -- more than two years into the pandemic, experts warn.

At the moment there is a "fragile, armed peace" with Covid-19, said Antoine Flahault, director of the Institute of Global Health at the University of Geneva.

"In the hopes of stemming the tide of the pandemic and reducing mortality, we need to reduce the level of contamination, which the vaccine cannot do alone," he told AFP.

"We need a new phase -- improving the quality of indoor air."

Covid-19 is primarily transmitted through the air. It is carried in large droplets or fine aerosols when an infected person breathes -- and even more so when they talk, sing or shout.

In a closed off or poorly ventilated room, these aerosols can remain in the air for some time, moving around the space and greatly increasing the risk of infection.

While it is generally accepted that Covid can be transmitted within two meters (6.5 feet) via both droplets and aerosols, there is still no consensus on the importance of long-distance airborne transmission indoors.

A team of researchers from the UK Health Security Agency and the University of Bristol reviewed 18 studies in several countries on airborne transmission.

In research published in the BMJ this week, they found that people can infect each other when they are more than two metres apart.

We know one thing for sure: if you open a window, or well-ventilate a space, the virus-carrying aerosols dissipate like smoke.

But experts say that nowhere near enough is being done to ventilate public and private spaces across the world. "On the whole, this is an issue that governments have not yet taken up," Flahault said.

Schools are among the places that need governmental action to properly ventilate

He called for massively increased funding to ventilate many public spaces, starting with schools, hospitals, public transport, offices, bars and restaurants.

"Just as we knew to filter and treat drinking water" in homes at the beginning of the 1900s, "one can imagine some households will equip themselves with air purifiers and consider opening their windows," Flahault said.

Only a few countries have announced ventilation plans since the start of the pandemic.

In March the US government called on all building owners and operators, as well as schools and universities, to "adopt key strategies to improve indoor air quality".

The plan, dubbed the Clean Air in Buildings Challenge, is covered by previously announced Covid funding and also includes a review of existing ventilation, heating and air conditioning systems.

The European Union has not issued any binding statements on improving air quality in light of Covid. However Belgium has announced a plan to have a carbon dioxide meter situated in all places open to the public. Having such a meter is voluntary until the end of 2024, when it becomes mandatory.

Stephen Griffin of the School of Medicine at Britain's University of Leeds lamented that the UK had not acted more on ventilation.

"Sadly, the UK has not embraced the opportunity to safeguard its citizens in public spaces, its children in schools, or the longevity of the vaccination programme in this way," he told the Science Media Centre.

He said that setting minimum safety standards for ventilation in public buildings would also "greatly mitigate the impact of other diseases".



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U.S., South Korea Discuss Russia Oil Price Cap

SEOUL (Dispatches) - The top economic policymakers of South Korea and the United States have discussed a Washington-led proposal to impose a price cap on Russian oil as part of sanctions against Moscow, Seoul's finance ministry said Saturday, Yonhap reported.

Finance Minister Choo Kyung-ho and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen held a conference call on Friday to discuss the issue, ahead of her planned travel to South Korea on July 19-20, according to the ministry. Yellen raised the need to introduce a price cap on Russian oil in a bid to help stabilize high energy prices and reduce Russia's revenue from oil exports, the ministry said.



Asia's Manufacturing Slows, Adding to Global Recession Fears

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Asia's manufacturing activity stalled in June as many companies were hit by supply disruptions caused by China's strict COVID-19 lockdowns, while sharp economic slowdown risks in Europe and the United States reinforced fears of a global recession.

While a string of surveys on Friday showed China's factory activity rebounding solidly in June, a slowdown in Japan and South Korea, as well as a contraction in Taiwan, highlighted the strain from supply disruptions, rising costs and persistent material shortages.

China's manufacturing activity expanded at its fastest pace in 13 months in June, a private survey showed, as the lifting of COVID lockdowns sent factories racing to meet robust demand.

The rollbacks of China's lockdowns could ease supply chain snags, and allow automakers and other manufacturers to resume operations after suffering severe disruptions.

Some analysts, however, warn of new headwinds amid growing market fears that aggressive US interest rate hikes to tamp down soaring inflation will push the country into recession, dragging down global demand.

Policy tightening across many other economies amid red-hot consumer price pressures have stoked fears of a sharp global economic downturn and shaken financial markets in recent months.

"There's hope that China's economy will pick up after a period of some weakness. But now there's a risk of slowdown in the US and European economies," said Yoshiki Shinke, chief economist at Japan's Dai-ichi Life Research Institute.

"It will be a tug-of-war between the two, though there's a lot of uncertainty over the global economic outlook."

The final au Jibun Bank Japan Manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) slipped to 52.7 in June from 53.3 in the previous month, staying above the 50-mark separating contraction from expansion.

South Korea's S&P Global PMI also fell to 51.3 in June from 51.8 in May, dropping for a second month due to the drag from supply constraints and a truckers' strike in June.

Separate data showed South Korean exports, seen as a proxy for global trade because the nation's manufacturers are positioned in many parts of the world supply chain, growing at their slowest pace in 19 months in June.

On the brighter side, China's Caixin/Markit manufacturing PMI rose to 51.7 in June from 48.1 in the previous month, marking the first expansion in four months. That was well above analysts' expectations for an uptick to 50.1.

The Caixin survey, which focused on more export-oriented and small firms in coastal regions, follows official data showing the country's factory and service sectors snapped three months of activity decline in June.

Taiwan's S&P global PMI fell to 49.8 in June from 50.0 in May, while that of Vietnam was down to 54.0 in June from 54.7 in the previous month.

Lockdowns in China have snarled regional and global logistics and supply chains, with both Japan and South Korea reporting sharp declines in output.

China's economy has started to chart a recovery path out of the supply shocks caused by strict lockdowns, though risks remain such as soft consumer spending and a fear of a fresh wave of infections.

China's June Factory Activity Expands

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's manufacturing activity expanded at its fastest in 13 months in June, buoyed by a strong rebound in output, as the lifting of COVID lockdowns sent factories racing to meet recovering demand, a private sector poll showed.

The Caixin/Markit manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose to 51.7 in June, also indicating the first expansion in four months, from 48.1 in the previous month. That was well above analysts' expectations for an up-tick to 50.1.

The 50-point index mark separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis.

The recovery suggested in the Caixin survey, which focused on more export-oriented and small firms in coastal regions, was more convincing compared with findings in an official survey.

Economic activity has sped up in June since various COVID lockdowns have been rolled back as COVID-19 cases fell, with a range of support measures unveiled by the State Council in late May to stabilize growth gradually kicking in.

A sub-index for output bounced to the highest level since November 2020, while new orders, bolstered by the first increase in export orders in about a year, snapped three months of decline and posted the fastest growth in four months.

Delivery times for suppliers stabilized in June amid easing supply chain snags, after worsening for the past two years.

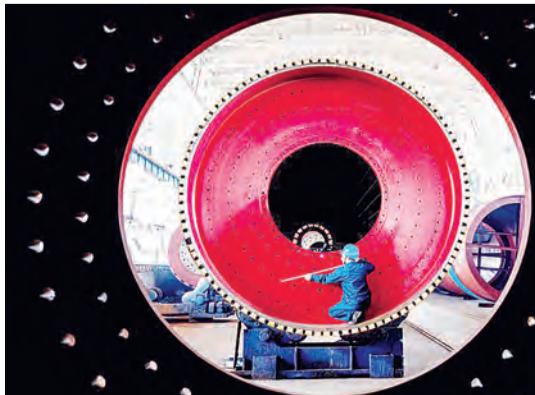
However, despite the strong rebound, factories remained cautious in terms of hiring more staff, with employment falling for the third month in a row.

"Restoration in the post-pandemic era remained the focus of the current economy, yet its base was far from strong," said Wang Zhe, senior economist at Caixin Insight Group.

"Deteriorating household income and expectations caused by a weak labor market dampened the demand recovery. Correspondingly, supportive policies should target employees, gig workers and low-income groups impacted by the outbreaks."

China's economy has started to chart a recovery path out of the supply shocks caused by strict lockdowns, but headwinds persist, including record high jobless rate in big cities, a still subdued property market, soft consumer spending and fear of any recurring waves of infections.

Analysts expect further improvement in economic conditions in the third quarter, although the official GDP target of around 5.5% for this year will be hard to achieve unless the government abandons the zero-COVID strategy.



Japan to Provide Support to Sri Lanka for Economic Program

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese Ambassador to Sri Lanka Mizukoshi Hideaki said that Japan is ready to support Sri Lanka for its economic program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and for the development activities of the country.

In a statement, the President's Media Division said that during the discussion between the Japanese Ambassador and Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Hideaki said that continuous efforts will be made to further strengthen the economic, social and cultural relations with island nations, Daily Mirror Online reported.

Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa during the discussion expressed his deep appreciation to Japan for its support to Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Embassy in a statement on their FaceBook page said that Japan is closely paying attention to the current difficult economic situation in Sri Lanka and the severe humanitarian situation accompanying it.

"Considering such a situation, the Government of Japan has decided to provide Emergency Grant Aid of USD three (3) million through UNICEF and WFP in order to provide medicine and food in a manner that would directly benefit the Sri Lankan people. Japan sincerely hopes that this assistance will be of help to overcome the hardship faced by the people of Sri Lanka, Japan's long-standing friends," the Embassy said as quoted by Daily Mirror Online.

IMF to Bolster Internal Safeguards After Outcry on Brazil Report

LONDON (Bloomberg) -- The International Monetary Fund plans to improve transparency and fairness in its economic analysis after a rare outcry by hundreds of staff members last year over a Bloomberg News report that officials softened a warning about Brazil's climate-change risks.

While there are strong frameworks and processes in place to protect the integrity of data and analysis, the IMF board and management believe that improvements can be made to strengthen procedures, the Washington-based institution's board and management said in a statement.

The announcement follows an "institutional safeguards review" by executive directors, management and two staff working groups. They looked at the fund's framework and practices to ensure data integrity, examine the procedures for finalizing staff analysis -- including internal clearance of reports by the board and management -- and the availability and effectiveness of channels to express concerns. "The system should be bolstered further by clarifying the terms of engagement of offices of executive directors in staff's conduct of analysis, improving the transparency of internal processes, clarifying the role of management in the clearance process, and identifying principles for evenhanded coverage of emerging economic policy areas," the fund said.

The review and conclusions came after Bloomberg News reported in October that IMF officials including Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva -- who's made climate change a signature issue -- softened a warning about environmental risks to Brazil's economy after President Jair Bolsonaro's government objected to the language. The management decision around the end of last July involved the IMF's key annual evaluation, known as an Article IV consultation, for Latin America's largest economy. Managers initially gave their seal of approval to the staff report before revoking it hours later and subsequently removing phrasing.

The IMF last October said the decision to change the language was part of the normal process that reports on any of the fund's 190 member countries go through, with back-and-forth between the staff, their managers and officials from the country being evaluated. And it's standard practice for senior managers to review and sign off on the country evaluations, a spokesman said at the time. But for management to revoke approval for a report and remove phrasing that a country objects to is rare, several past and current fund employees who have worked on Article IV evaluations said then. Management made the decision after Georgieva met with Brazil's representative to the fund board, Afonso Bevilacqua, who had complained several times that the IMF's evaluation wasn't supposed to encompass the nation's climate policy.

Indonesia-UAE Economic Partnership To Increase Exports To Middle East

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - The Agreement on the Indonesia-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IUAE-CEPA) is expected to boost trade and investment performance with Gulf and Middle Eastern countries.

The Indonesia-UAE CEPA agreement was signed by Indonesian Minister of Trade Zulkifli Hasan and Minister of Economy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, Friday (July 1), on the sidelines of President Joko Widodo's working visit to Abu Dhabi, the UAE.

"The President of the Republic of Indonesia positively welcomes the completion of the IUAE-CEPA agreement. This agreement is Indonesia's entry point to the UAE, which is a hub for increasing exports to non-traditional destination countries, such as the Persian Gulf, Middle East, Africa, and South Asia," Trade Minister Hasan noted in a statement here, Saturday.

The signing of the IUAE-CEPA is also a historic moment, as it is the first time that Indonesia has a trade agreement with a country in the Persian Gulf Region.

"We hope that when the IUAE-CEPA is implemented, improvement of the performance of the trade and investment sectors, driven by the IUAE-CEPA, can further accelerate economic recovery efforts after the COVID-19 pandemic and increase Indonesia's competitiveness," the trade minister noted.

Meanwhile, Director General of International Trade Negotiations at the Ministry of Trade (Kemendag) Djatmiko Bris Witjaksono remarked that the IUAE-CEPA negotiations were immensely beneficial for Indonesia, one of which was market access to the UAE through reducing and eliminating import duty rates of around 94 percent of the total tariff posts.

The IUAE-CEPA agreement covers arrangements in the areas of trade in goods, trade in services, investment, intellectual property rights, Islamic economics, provisions of origin of goods, customs procedures and trade facilitation, economic cooperation, government procurement of goods and services, small and medium enterprises, digital trade, as well as legal provisions and institutional issues.

The issue of Islamic economics in the IUAE-CEPA has also become a historical record for Indonesia. This is because, for the first time, the issue of Islamic/sharia economics has been included as one of the scopes of a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with Indonesia's trading partner countries.

Global Nuclear Capacity Needs To Double to Meet Net-Zero Goals



LONDON (Dispatches) - Nuclear power capacity needs to double worldwide over the next three decades to reach net-zero carbon emissions targets to ensure energy independence, argued the International Energy Agency (IEA).

The Paris-based group's executive director Fatih Birol outlined that nuclear has a unique opportunity for a revival in the context of the global energy crisis, skyrocketing fossil fuel prices, energy security challenges, and climate commitments.

However, he suggested this was not guaranteed, and instead depended on government policy geared toward greater expansion.

Birol said: "It will depend on governments putting in place robust policies to ensure safe and sustainable operation of nuclear plants for years to come."

In the group's latest report, Nuclear Power and Secure Energy Transitions, the IEA revealed nuclear power has to be significantly ramped up to meet the twin aims of supply security and net zero carbon emissions.

It has warned that to reach net-zero emissions, nuclear power capacity has to increase to 812 gigawatts (GW) by 2050 from its current 413 GW total.

While advanced economies operate nearly 70 percent of global nuclear capacity, the IEA noted nuclear fleets across the West were aging, amid stalled investment and over-budget projects.

The IEA calculates that around 260 GW, or 63 percent, of nuclear plants in the world, are currently over 30 years old and nearing the end of their initial operation licenses.

In the 2030s, annual additions of nuclear power capacity needed to reach 27 GW just to offset closed-down power plants -- which could shrink by a third over the coming decade in developed economies.

For context, the UK's 'big new' bet on nuclear, which represents a historic boost in nuclear power generation, is an increase from 7GW to 24GW over the next three decades.

Hinkley Point C is expected to open within the next five years, with the Government looking to secure public funding for Sizewell C -- as it targets the greenlighting of eight new reactors by 2030.

Non-Oil Exports From Bushehr Doubled

TEHRAN (MNA) – The non-oil exports from Bushehr province have doubled in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, a provincial official said.

Mehdi Safavi, the head of the Industry, Mine, and Trade office in Bushehr said that during the first quarter of this year, four billion

dollars of commodities were exported abroad from the province.

He went on to say that Bushehr province has ranked first in the country in this regard.

Non-oil exports from Bushehr are planned to hit \$11 billion this year, he speculated when he revealed the prospect of the non-oil exports from the province.



Ukraine Wheat Harvest Hangs in the Balance

KYIV (Dispatches) - Standing in one of his huge wheat fields in war-racked southeastern Ukraine, farmer Sergiy Lyubarsky wonders how on earth he'll manage to harvest his crops.

Between the lack of fuel to run his combine harvester and the risk of being bombed, the chances seem remote.

"The harvest is due normally to begin around July 15 but diesel is expensive and anyway there isn't any," he says.

His old combine harvester sits idle in his farmyard in the village of Rai Oleksandrivka, not far from positions held by Russian forces on the other side of the hill, about 30 kilometres (18 miles) west of the city of Lugansk.

Lyubarsky farms 170 hectares (420 acres) of land, producing mostly wheat but also barley and sunflowers -- grains whose prices have shot up on international markets especially since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a key global producer of wheat.

But he has been forced to leave 40 hectares fallow.

"We couldn't buy maize seed because the war started," he says, with the imported seeds taking up to two months to arrive.

Now the land that is not under cultivation is "used in part by the army to store military equipment", he adds.

Pointing to the nearby hill, he says grimly: "Look, Russian soldiers are already over there, eight kilometres" as the crow flies.

For his wheat, time is pressing.

"We can wait until August 10 at the latest, but after that, the grains are going to dry out and fall to the ground," he says.

He presses an ear of wheat in his hand so that the grains drop, by way of demonstrating what happens if it is not harvested in time.

For fellow farmer Anatoliy Moiseyenko from the same village, things are equally uncertain.

Although he has enough diesel to harvest his wheat, he's worried about the encroaching combat.

"The problem is the war. Is it going to be possible or are rockets again going to fall?" he asks, watching as Ukrainian soldiers pick up a rocket warhead that recently fell in his field.

Harvesting "is a bit like playing poker", he says, smiling.

In the neighboring village of Riznikivka, Yaroslav Kokhan knows that his



40 hectares of wheat are already lost.

Normally, he says, his son does the harvest because the retired 61-year-old doesn't use the tractor or combine harvester anymore.

His son went to live in Krasnodar in southern Russia in 2014, the year Moscow annexed Crimean peninsula from Ukraine following a popular uprising in Kyiv.

He used to come back by car several times a year, to sow the wheat, weed it and then harvest it, Kokhan says.

This year though, "he was due to come back to Ukraine on February 25, his birthday, but the war broke out the day before", he adds.

Now he won't come -- if he did, he'd face not being able to return home to his family in Russia again since Ukrainian men aged between 18 and 60 are unable to leave the country due to military conscription.

So what will become of his wheat?

"I think a match will do," Kokhan says sadly, looking at the field behind his home.

A little more optimistic, Lyubarsky still hopes he'll be able to harvest his wheat and is already thinking about his sunflowers due for harvest in September.

"By then, I hope, we'll be living in peace!"

Iranians Mark 34th Anniversary of U.S. Downing of Passenger Plane

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranians commemorate the downing of an Iranian passenger plane by a United States Navy guided-missile cruiser, 34 years after the devastating incident killed all passengers and crew members on board the airliner, which was flying over Iranian territorial waters in the Persian Gulf.

During a memorial ceremony on Sunday, officials from Iran's southern province of Hormozgan and families of the victims tossed flowers into the waters near the Strait of Hormuz and Hengam Island from aboard a vessel.

Chanting slogans such as "Down with the US" and "Down with Israel," they condemned the inhumane US war crime and called for the punishment of the perpetrators through international legal channels.

On July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes fired missiles at the Iran Air Airbus A300B2, which was flying over the Hormuz Strait from the port city of Bandar Abbas to Dubai while carrying 274 passengers and 16 crew members.

Following the attack, the plane disintegrated and crashed into the Persian Gulf, killing all 290 on board, among them 66 children.

U.S. officials claimed that the USS Vincennes had mistaken Iran Air Flight 655 for a warplane. This is while the warship was equipped with highly sophisticated radar systems and electronic battle gear at the time of the attack.

In 1990, the captain of the cruiser, William C. Rogers, was cleared of any wrongdoing and was even awarded America's Legion of Merit medal by then U.S. president George Bush for his "outstanding service" during operations in the Persian Gulf.

U.S. Offered...

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Colonna, for her part, underscored that the available opportunity for dialog should be taken up in order to reach an agreement satisfactory to all parties.

"We believe that the window for diplomacy is still open and we must seize it in the best possible way to conclude an agreement. A deal is better than no agreement at all," the French foreign minister said.

The European Union was tasked with coordinating indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States during the fresh round of negotiations in Qatar last week.

Iran does not sit down with the US as Washington is no longer a party to the landmark deal, which was unilaterally abandoned by former US president Donald Trump in May 2018.

The talks in Doha followed seven rounds of inconclusive negotiations in the Austrian capital of Vienna since April last year.

Cairo's Floating Heritage Risks Being Towed Away by Grand Projects

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Dozens of vibrantly colored floating homes have for decades dotted the banks of the River Nile, rare havens of leafy seclusion in the Egyptian capital's hustle and bustle — but maybe not for much longer.

Residents of the 30 or so houseboats that remain moored on the banks of the Nile last week received eviction orders, giving them less than two weeks before their homes are taken away to be demolished.

"Buying this houseboat was my dream," celebrated British-Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif told AFP. "I furnished it to accommodate my grandchildren and spend my last days here."

The boats have long occupied a special place in the Egyptian collective consciousness, having been the centerpiece of conversations in Nobel Prize laureate Naguib Mahfouz's Chitchat on the Nile, as well as various classics from the golden age of Egyptian cinema.

But while many have campaigned to protect the houseboats for their historic value, the authorities have argued they are an eyesore standing in the way of the state's grand development plans.

Residents have been offered no alternative accommodation or compensation, unlike others who previously faced evictions, and many have nowhere else to go.

For Manar, a 35-year-old engineer who poured everything into buying her houseboat four years ago, it's a devastating blow.

"I sold my apartment, my father sold his car, and we used my two retired parents' severance pay," said Manar, who did not wish to give her full name.



"People from the slums have been rehoused, the state even moved graves when it built a road through a cemetery, but for us, nothing."

Barely a week after the eviction order, some boats have already been towed off and impounded in a state marina, despite petitions and campaigning, even by pro-government television pundits.

Soon, the sight of these houses, perched on metal caissons along the banks of the working-class neighborhood of Imbaba opposite the upscale island of Zamalek, will only remain a memory.

The first warning came in 2020, when the governor of Cairo "suspended new houseboat parking authorizations".

Residents had since received no news, until the eviction order came on June 20, leaving them "with no time to file an appeal", according to one resident.

Adding to the pressures, authorities have been demanding parking and registration fees amounting to between 400,000 and one million pounds per residence — about 20 times more than previous annual fees.

Ayman Anwar, head of the state-affiliated Central Administration for the Protection of the Nile River in Cairo, said residents were given ample warning.

"In 2020, the state banned the use of barges as dwellings, because they are an uncivilised sight and pollute the Nile," he said on a talk show this week.

The process echoes previous forced evictions and demolitions in Cairo's central neighbourhoods, such as Bulaq and Maspero.

But while it may have started in poor informal settlements, the steamroller of development has now made its way into more affluent neighbourhoods and homes.

U.S. Not Qualified to...

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Addressing the conference, the Iranian Foreign Ministry's Deputy for Political Affairs, Ali Baqeri-Kani said trampling on independent peoples' human rights was a "part and parcel" of the United States' foreign policy.

"One can confidently claim that there is no nation in today's world that has not tasted the bitter taste" of the American version of human rights, he said.

The biggest violation that can be committed against human rights is to "politicize" the issue, he said, adding, "Today, human rights are turned into a pretext and a tool for expansion and institutionalization of the predominance of American unilateralism."

Baqeri-Kani considered "sanctions and terrorism" to be the main pillars of the American version of human rights, adding, "If they are robbed of these two pillars, they may not be able to continue their dominance and plots."

The official defined the US's unilateral sanctions as a means of collective targeting and punishment of all people without any exception or reason.

The United States returned its sanctions against Iran in 2018 after leaving a historic accord between the Islamic Republic and others.

"Based on all international principles and regulations, humanitarian items are not subject to sanctions, but based on the American human rights, sanctioning of foodstuffs and medicine does not face any bans," the official noted.

Tehran-Baku...

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Stressing that his country aims to normalize relations with Armenia, the top Azeri diplomat said, "We announced our readiness to reopen transportation and international communication between Azerbaijan and Armenia."

"Azerbaijan has taken steps in this regard, and we presented Armenia with the five main articles that will help to sign the peace document between the two countries," he added.

"We also announced our readiness to reopen road transport and inter-regional communication in Azerbaijan and made suggestions about the delimitation of the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan," he continued.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Bayramov referred to his meeting with the Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf.

Noting that he has discussed regional issues and Tehran-Baku bilateral relations during his meetings with Iranian officials today, the Azerbaijani foreign minister continued, "Despite the fact that we had a 30% increase in trade exchanges between the two countries in 2021 and also an 18% increase in the volume of trade between the two countries in the first 8 months of 2022 compared to the same period last year, the commercial and economic capacities of the two countries could be higher than those figures."

"We also agreed to follow up on the completion and exploitation of half-finished joint projects and to define and implement new projects," Bayramov added.

Turning to the project of connecting Zangezur to Nakhchivan via Iran, the Azeri top diplomat announced that in the near future, the construction of the first bridge in that area will begin and the necessary coordinators will be introduced.

"We welcome Iran's constructive stance in participation and cooperation in regional forums, including the 3+3 mechanism, and Iran will host a meeting of the 3+3 mechanism in the near future," the Azeri minister further asserted.

Monthly Non-Oil...

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Meanwhile, some 8.154 million tons of goods valued at \$12.464 billion were imported into the country in the said period to register an 18-percent rise in terms of value compared to the last year's same quarter.

In total, the Islamic Republic traded about 36 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$25.5 billion with its trade partners in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year, up 19.5 percent in terms of value, Moghadasi said.

According to the official, the country's trade balance was \$605 million positive in the mentioned time span.

Iran's top export destination during this period was China with \$4.214 billion worth of imports from the Islamic Republic, followed by Iraq with \$1.824 billion, Turkey with \$1.737 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over \$1.645 billion, and India with \$424 million.

Meanwhile, the country's top five sources of imports during these three months were the UAE with \$3.426 billion, China with \$3.131 billion, Turkey with \$1.273 billion, India with \$512 million, and Germany with \$456 million worth of imports.

As previously announced by the IRICA head, the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 38 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), as compared to its previous year.

Moqadasi put the country's non-oil trade at 162 million tons worth \$100 billion in the past year.

He said that Iran exported 122 million tons of non-oil products worth \$48 billion in the previous year, which was \$14 billion (41 percent) more than the figure for its preceding year.

Iran, EU...

FROM PAGE 1

At the end of the talks, Iran and the EU said they would keep in touch "about the continuation of the route and the next stage of the talks."

The talks in Doha follow seven rounds of inconclusive negotiations in the Austrian capital of Vienna, which began in April last year to revive the ailing multilateral agreement, which was unilaterally abandoned by former US president Donald Trump in May 2018.

In a tweet on Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said the talks can succeed if the United States acts realistically and provides Tehran with robust guarantees that it will be able to fully reap the economic benefits of the deal.

"A realistic [approach] by the US and attainment of a long-term guarantee over Iran's full economic benefits from the agreement can bring about a fruitful outcome at the negotiations," he wrote.

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax: (+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com
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Hoki-Kobayashi Claim Maiden Malaysia Open Title

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Reigning world champions Takuro Hoki-Yugo Kobayashi survived a rubber game battle against Indonesia's Fajar Alfian-Muhammad Rian Ardianto to claim their first Malaysia Open title here. Both pairs produced a sublime performance in a tightly contested first game which kept the fans in Axiata Arena on the edge of their seats, before Hoki-Kobayashi edged the young Indonesians 24-22. Fajar-Muhammad Rian then raised their play to power past their opponents 21-16 in the second game.

Groenewegen Takes Tour De France Stage Three

COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Dutch sprinter Dylan Groenewegen snatched victory in the third stage of the Tour de France, edging Wout van Aert on the line although the Belgian retained the overall race leader's yellow jersey. Bike Exchange rider Groenewegen ensured Jumbo's van Aert finished second for the third time after the 182km stage, the last in Denmark before the race returns to France, with large crowds lining the route in the Jutland region.

Sainz Takes His First F1 Win In Silverstone Thriller

SILVERSTONE (Dispatches) - Ferrari's Carlos Sainz claimed his first Formula One victory in a thrilling British Grand Prix halted by a first-lap crash and with the added mayhem of a track invasion by protesters.

Red Bull's Mexican Sergio Perez was runner-up, 3.779 seconds behind the Spaniard, with seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton third for Mercedes in his home race and taking fastest lap for a bonus point.

"Yes! We did it! Vamos!" exclaimed a delighted Sainz over the radio after a win that had looked unlikely at one point despite him lining up on pole position for the first time, in his 150th race start. "I don't know what to say, it's amazing."

"First race win, 150 races later, with Ferrari in Silverstone. I cannot ask for more. It's a very special day, a day that I will never forget, a very special weekend in general."

The last nine laps were frantic, full of overtaking as the safety car came in and Perez, Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Hamilton battled for second.

At one point, eight-times British GP winner Hamilton passed both his rivals in one move and then went from second to fourth and back to third.

Championship leader Max Verstappen finished seventh for Red Bull with a damaged car, his lead over Perez cut from 46 to 34 points after 10 of 22 races.

Leclerc, who had led with 12 laps to go, finished an unhappy fourth after a strategy call that cost him victory.

The Monegasque stayed out during a late safety car deployment and then had to defend against rivals with fresher tyres.

Spain's double world champion Fernando Alonso was fifth for Alpine with McLaren's Lando Norris sixth.

Germany's Mick Schumacher, son of Ferrari great and seven-times world champion Michael, scored his first points in F1 with eighth for Haas who also had Kevin Magnussen finish 10th.

Four-times world champion Sebastian Vettel went from 18th to ninth for Aston Martin on his 35th birthday in a race full of action and suspense but with only 14 finishers.



The race was red-flagged and halted for an hour after Chinese driver Guanyu Zhou's Alfa Romeo became wedged on its side between the tyre wall and catch fence on lap one. He was later given the medical all-clear.

The car skidded at speed upside down along the track before being catapulted over the barrier following a multi-car collision.

Williams's Alex Albon and Mercedes's George Russell, who had previously finished every race in the top five, were also caught in the first-lap mayhem and played no further part in the afternoon.

Albon was later flown to hospital for checks. While the red flags were still being waved, and cars slowed and returned to the pits, a group of protesters ran on to the track to boos from the crowd before being wrestled away.

British police had said earlier they had credible intelligence a group of protesters were planning to disrupt the Grand Prix.

While the race had been red-flagged cars were still on the track slowly making their way to the pit lane as marshals and police wrestled with protesters, dragging them from the circuit as the crowd could be heard booing.

It was not immediately clear what the track invaders were protesting. "We can confirm that after the red flag, several people attempted to enter the track," Formula One said in a statement. "These people were immediately removed and the matter is now being dealt with by the local authorities."



Federer Hints at Wimbledon Comeback

LONDON (Dispatches) - A gaping hole was left at Wimbledon this week when Roger Federer's name was missing from the men's draw for the first time since 1998 but the Swiss great hinted he could be back at his favorite hunting ground when he made a surprise appearance at the All England Club. "This court has given me my biggest wins and my biggest losses. I hope I can come back one more time," a beaming Federer told the 15,000 capacity crowd who hollered in approval.

Wimbledon's favorite son swapped his usual tennis whites for a dark suit and tie and was given a rousing standing ovation as he joined a number of Wimbledon champions dating back to the 1960s for Centre Court's centenary celebrations.

The eight-times champion was the last to stride into an arena that had already welcomed the great and good of tennis, including Billie Jean King, Bjorn Borg, Chris Evert, Stefan Edberg, Venus Williams as well as the Swiss's Big Four rivals Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray.

While loud cheers could be heard as the champions paraded into Centre Court one-by-one, a deafening roar resounded around the vast grounds of the All England Club when the man considered as Wimbledon royalty made an appearance to greet his grateful subjects.

Watson, Unbowed by Fourth-Round Loss, Looks to Doubles

LONDON (Dispatches) - Heather Watson broke a personal barrier by playing in the fourth round of a Grand Slam for the first time and, at 30, believes she has a lot more tennis in her. After losing 6-2 6-4 to big-hitting German Jule Niemeier, the Briton said she would now put all her efforts into the doubles with compatriot Harriet Dart.

Watson, who is playing at her 42nd Grand Slam tournament, appeared disappointed but not downhearted as she smiled and joked through a post-match news conference.

"I think in the women's game, often people are breaking through later," Watson said. "I think experience counts for a lot. Everybody's journey is different. This is mine. I broke a barrier this week. So I am definitely hungry for more."

The Guernsey-born player, who was out-powered by Niemeier, said she was still happy out on the tennis court.

"I believe in my tennis and my game. I still really enjoy it. I think that's really important. So I'll keep plugging away, as I always do. I've been around a long time now, and I hope to be around at least a bit longer."

Watson, who won the Wimbledon mixed doubles title with Henri Kontinen in 2016, pulled out of the mixed this year after injuring her knees falling on the grass but is keen to keep the women's doubles challenge going. "I love playing doubles, especially with Harriet," she said.

"Yesterday when we stepped on court, I just had so much self-belief in us, even when we lost a break or went down in the score. I just think we're such a good pair. We complement each other."

UEFA Steps Up Fight Against Online Racist Abuse of Players

PARIS (Dispatches) - UEFA is to launch a program to combat online racist abuse of footballers by working with social media companies to remove harmful content from platforms and raising awareness, it said.

Europe's soccer governing body added that the program, which will start at the July 6-31 Women's European Championship, will work to "actively monitor, report and remedy" cases of online abuse.



Ronaldo Wants to Leave Man United

LONDON (dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo wants to leave Manchester United this summer if the Premier League club receive an appropriate offer, according to multiple reports.

The 37-year-old Portugal forward returned to Old Trafford from Juventus last summer but despite being United's top scorer last season, and third in the Premier League, the campaign was overall disappointing.

United finished sixth in the Premier League, missing out on Champions League qualification, leaving the five-time Ballon d'Or winner, who has a year left on his contract plus an optional year, facing the prospect of playing in the Europa League for the first time.

Manchester United are adamant Ronaldo, who scored 24 goals in all competitions, is not for sale, according to reports, with new manager Erik ten Hag keen to work with him.

Ronaldo won three Premier League titles and the Champions League during six trophy-laden years with United before leaving for Real Madrid in 2009 and Juventus in 2018, collecting more trophies at both clubs.

United's international players are due to report for training in the coming days ahead of flying to Thailand on Friday for the start of their pre-season tour.

Tsitsipas Slams Bully Kyrgios, Australian Hits Back

LONDON (Dispatches) - Greek fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas labelled Nick Kyrgios a "bully" with "an evil side" to his character after losing a bad-tempered Wimbledon third-round clash.

Kyrgios came out on top 6-7(2) 6-4 6-3 7-6(7) after more than three incident-packed hours but the feuding continued in the post-match media conferences.

Kyrgios had kept up a running dialogue with the umpire at times during the match, was warned for swearing and upset his opponent to such an extent that Tsitsipas tried to hit him with a smash after coming close to being defaulted for whacking a ball in frustration into the crowd.

The 23-year-old Tsitsipas was booed by the crowd at one stage after losing his composure in what he described as a Kyrgios circus. After his loss on Court One, Tsitsipas made his feelings known in no uncertain terms.

"Yeah, it's constant bullying, that's what he does. He bullies opponents. He was probably a bully at school himself. I don't like bullies," Tsitsipas said.

"I don't like people that put other people down. He has some good traits in his character, as well. But he also has a very evil side to him, which if it's exposed, it can really do a lot of harm and bad to the people around him."

Kyrgios, fined \$10,000 after his first-round match for spitting towards a fan, was warned for swearing on Saturday and then called for Tsitsipas to be defaulted after the Greek hit a ball close to a spectator's head after losing the second set.

Afterwards he laughed off Tsitsipas's remarks about bullying and said the Greek had "serious issues". "I don't know what to say. I'm not sure how I bullied him. He was the one hitting balls at me, he was the one that hit a spectator, he was the one that smacked it out of the stadium," said Kyrgios, who is in the last 16 for the fourth time.



Nadal Apologizes to Wimbledon Opponent

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal apologised to defeated Wimbledon opponent Lorenzo Sonego after a testy exchange in the closing stages of their third-round clash.

Second seed Nadal, the champion in 2008 and 2010, reached the fourth round for the 10th time with a 6-1, 6-2, 6-4 win.

The 36-year-old had required back-to-back four-setters to make the third round and was expected to be tested by Sonego, who made the fourth round last year.

However, Nadal did not face a break point until he dropped serve in the eighth game of the third set, his focus possibly affected by a stoppage to close the Centre Court roof.

He quickly broke back and sealed the victory. Nadal, however, appeared upset by the noise the Italian was making on court.

He even summoned Sonego to the net to discuss his displeasure while the two then had another lengthy exchange as they shook hands.

"I have to say that I was wrong. I should not call him on the net. So apologise for that. My mistake in that. No problem. I recognise that," said Nadal.

"It's something that I spoke with him in the locker room and it stays there. Only thing I can say is I saw him personally."

"My intention was never to bother him at all. Just to tell one thing that was bothering me that I think he was doing in that moment, but that's it."

"We had some issues there, but that's it." Nadal has already won the Australian Open and French Open in 2022 and is halfway to the first men's calendar Grand Slam since Rod Laver achieved the feat in 1969.

