

IRAN NEWS Felicitates All Shiites
Over the Auspicious Eid al-Ghadir,
The Day Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
Appointed Imam Ali (AS) as His
Successor. The Next Issue Will Hit
The News-Stands on Monday

IRAN NEWS

**Turkey's President Recep Tayyip
Erdogan Will Make a Visit to Iran
On Monday for Bilateral and
Trilateral Summits With Iran's
President Ebrahim Raisi and
Russia's President Vladimir Putin**

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7543 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY JULY 17, 2022 - TIR 26, 1401

2 **DOMESTIC**

Iran Respects Cultural,
Artistic Diversity



> SEE PAGE 2

Iran Calls for Punishment of Sardasht Chemical Attack Perpetrators

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's envoy to the UN office in Geneva has called for identifying and punishing the perpetrators of a 1987 chemical attack on the Iranian city of Sardasht in West Azerbaijan Province by Western-backed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Speaking in a meeting held to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the chemical bombing, Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh called for investigation, prosecution and punishment of natural and legal persons involved in the transfer of chemical equipment to Saddam's regime.

The U.S. and several other European countries, including Germany and the Netherlands, played an irrefutable role in the attack as they supplied Saddam's regime with chemical weapons, he said at the meeting also aimed to discuss the human rights dimensions of the use of chemical weapons in the Iraqi imposed war on Iran in the 1980s.

He decried the inhumane U.S. sanctions in the field of medicine as "double injustice" against the victims of the Sardasht bombing.

See Page 7

Tehran Slams UN Rapporteur for Hailing Verdict Against Nouri



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's top rights official has lambasted the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran for hailing the conviction of an Iranian citizen by a Swedish court.

In a statement, Kazem Gharibabadi, the deputy chief of the Iranian judiciary and secretary of the High Council for Human Rights, termed Javid Rehman's remarks "extremely disappointing".

"It is extremely disappointing that Javid Rehman has chosen to publicly support arbitrary detention and sham trial of an Iranian citizen instead of calling out the Swedish authorities and holding them to account for the gross violations of fundamental human rights of the victim," he said.

In his statement earlier on Friday, Rehman hailed the conviction of Hamid Nouri, a former Iranian judiciary official who was sentenced to life by a Swedish court on Thursday over charges of participating in the execution of jailed dissidents in the late 1980s.

Nouri, who was arrested upon arrival at the Stockholm Airport in November 2019, has been held in solitary confinement for over two years.

He has vehemently rejected allegations leveled against him at the behest of the MEK terrorist group.

"The process and verdict in Sweden constitute a landmark and important leap forward in the pursuit of truth and justice for a dark chapter in Iranian history. It is also a clear signal that denial, despite substantive evidence, and impunity can no longer be tolerated," Rehman said.

"I urge other States to take on similar investigation and prosecution of serious human rights violations in Iran using principles of universal jurisdiction. There is a serious accountability gap for past and present gross violations of human rights law, and national courts in other States play a fundamental role in filling that gap," he hastened to add.

Gharibabadi, who previously served as Iran's permanent envoy to the UN nuclear agency in Vienna, said Rehman's press statement "in support of a grave injustice" was "yet another indication of his inherent inclination to use his UK-sponsored mandate for a self-aggrandizing campaign to please Iran's adversaries at the cost of sacrificing the basic principles of human rights."

In a letter to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights last week, Gharibabadi had expressed his "deep concern" about gross human rights violations committed by the Swedish authorities against Nouri.

"I request you to take all necessary measures to hold Sweden accountable and to prevent further violations and to secure the release of Mr. Nouri," he said in the letter addressed to Michelle Bachelet.

On Thursday, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kan'ani rejected the Swedish court's verdict as "unacceptable", which he said was based on unfounded allegations made by the MEK terrorist group.

3 **DOMESTIC**

Iran May
Import Gasoline



> SEE PAGE 3

ViewPoint By: Hamid Reza Naghashian A Laughingstock Named Biden

It seems U.S. President Joe Biden is gradually becoming a laughingstock and his acts and words make people inside and outside the U.S. laugh and have a good time with his nonsense remarks as it even makes his allies cast doubt on his health and mind.

Biden in recent days has started his visit to Middle East as his first visit to the region after taking helm of the White House and his visit amid media hype has not been warmly welcomed even in Israel but during his visit to Israel he once again repeated his cliché words on all options on the table against the Islamic Republic of Iran but he used force and military action instead of all options as the last move because he knows it well that the U.S. is not in a position to resort to force against Tehran as Americans are struggling with the highest inflation rate in more than four decades and also because of Iran's military power which can shock the U.S. forces with their stark reactions.

Reacting to Biden's remarks, a senior Iranian general said that Biden's threat to use force against the Islamic Republic stems from his occasional "drowsiness," and the general recounts a history of desperate defeats by Washington and its allies against Tehran.

In an interview with Israel's Channel 12 aired on Wednesday, Biden was asked whether he was willing to use military force against Iran, to which he responded, "If that was the last resort, yes."

The U.S. president made the remarks ahead of a visit to the Israeli-occupied territories, where he also pledged that the U.S. would work with its allies, including Israel, to confront what he called Iran's "destabilizing activities."

Reacting to those comments, Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi, the spokesman of the Iranian Armed Forces, said on Friday that the US and Israel should take a look at the history of their failures against the Islamic Republic and its regional allies.

"We consider the using of the expression 'resorting to force' by the pathetic US president and the desperate prime minister of the fake Israeli regime [Yair Lapid] as part of their psychological warfare, delusions, and their recorded history of drowsiness," Shekarchi said.

He further elaborated that the U.S. was humiliated when its "den of espionage" was overtaken in Tehran; when its troops were "buried" in Tabas desert; when it was defeated in former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's eight-year war on Iran; and when Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) launched a volley of ballistic missiles toward US-run Ain al-Asad airbase in Iraq after the U.S. military assassinated Iran's top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani.

The Iranian general also pointed to disgraceful defeats and failures of the U.S. and the Israeli regime in the face of the resistance forces in occupied Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon.

See Page 7

Still on Road of Success and Development:

Presence of Farabi Petrochemical Company Among Top 20 Subsidiary Companies of SHASTA

According to the public relations report of Farabi Petrochemical Company, during the national conference of the Social Security Investment Company (known as SHASTA) with the slogan of "SHASTA; Second Step, Popular Economy, Strong Iran", this company was selected as one of the top twenty companies in the rankings of SHASTA's subsidiaries in terms of performance. In this ceremony, which was held in the international conference hall of IRIB with the presence of Dr. Zahedi Wafa, the honorable Acting Minister of Labor Cooperation and Social Welfare, Dr. Mir Hashem Mousavi, CEO of Social Security Organization, Dr. Bazian, CEO of Social Security Investment Company (SHASTA), Dr. Esme Khani, CEO of Oil, Gas and Tamin Petrochemicals (Tapico), another group of senior managers of the Ministry of Welfare and CEOs of subsidiaries, the top award and statue was awarded to Mahmoud Fakhraei, the CEO of Farabi Petrochemical Company for growth and profitability and proper performance in the implementation of the project. It should be noted that Farabi Petrochemical Company is one of the subsidiaries of Tamin Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Company (Tapico) and a subsidiary of SHASTA which after a period of severe recession, in January 2018 and with the presence of a new management team and the support of the major shareholder (Fanavaran Petrochemicals) started a remarkable progress that led to the registration of several production and sales records in the last two years.



Farabi Petrochemical
Public Relations

UAE Will Oppose Anti-Iran Coalition in Region

DUBAI (Dispatches) - An Emirati official has dismissed the idea of forming a NATO-like military alliance in the region, saying the United Arab Emirates does not intend to form a regional coalition against any country, in particular Iran.

Speaking to reporters, the UAE president's diplomatic adviser said a Middle East NATO was merely a "theoretical" concept and that confrontation was not an option for Abu Dhabi.

"We are open to cooperation, but not cooperation targeting any other country in the region and I specifically mention Iran," Anwar Gargash said. "The UAE is not going to be a party to any group of countries that sees confrontation as a direction."

He also said that the UAE was in the process of sending an ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran. "Our conversation is ongoing ... we are in the process of sending an ambassador to Tehran. All these areas of rebuilding bridges are ongoing," Gargash maintained. "We have an open eye. We are very clear if something is defending the UAE and its civilians, of course we are open to these ideas, but not to the idea of creating any axes against this or that country," he added.

In recent months, Iran and the UAE have intensified their efforts to rebuild relations affected by the years-long war in Yemen and other regional issues. Last August, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said that the Islamic Republic is determined and open to the expansion of relations with the UAE, stressing that Tehran sees no boundaries to the promotion of such ties, particularly trade and economic ones. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said after a May visit to the UAE that warm relations among neighbors disappoint the enemies.

"A new page was opened in the relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the UAE," the top Iranian diplomat tweeted after meeting Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the newly-appointed president of the UAE, in Abu Dhabi on May 16.

Iran Envoy, Putin Special Representative Meet

TEHRAN, Jul. 16 (MNA) – Iran’s Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali met and held talks with the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Affairs Bakhtier Hakimov.

During the meeting that took place on Friday in the Russian capital of Moscow, the two sides discussed the bilateral ties between the two countries, as well as the latest regional development.

Referring to the friendly and growing relations between Tehran and Moscow, Jalali and Hakimov emphasized the need to increase political consultations between Iran and Russia.

Iran Respects Cultural, Artistic Diversity

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance says that the country respects the cultural and artistic diversity.

Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili, representatives of the Islamic Council, members of the cultural, social, and industrial factions, the clothing industry, and the country’s clothing fashion stylists, and people from all walks of life were present at the event.

Attending the closing ceremony of the 11th Fajr International Fashion and Clothing Festival, Esmaili said: “The history of Iran’s culture and art in clothing is very bright and radiant, so we are proud of seven thousand years of history.

He added: “The magnificent Iranian Islamic civilization is associated with the characteristics of clothing and art.”

Esmaili said: “Iranians have artistically chosen clothing throughout history, and the Iranian Islamic cultural aspect has been preserved in all clothing, while this cultural and artistic view is not found in some civilizations, the ones whose title is nudity.”

The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance continued: “Dressing is part of the Iranian Islamic identity.”



Esmaili went on to say: “In recent years, Iranian women have been strongly present in all spheres, especially in scientific, industrial and important cultural and artistic sections, maintaining their hijab.

The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance reiterated: “We respect the cultural and artistic diversity of Iran, and we do not seek to impose a certain type of fashion, and clothing against Iranians in the society, and we recognize all differences.”

At the ceremony, best fashion designers and producers have been awarded Golden Peacock.

The festival was held until July 15 in Milad Tower.

Navy Unveils 1st Naval Drone Carriers Division

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Navy has upgraded its force by incorporating a special division tasked with transporting and operating various drones, days after Washington threatened to use force against the Islamic Republic.

The first drone carrier division of Iran’s Navy, which is comprised of different surface and subsurface units, was unveiled in a ceremony in the international waters of the Indian Ocean, the Navy announced on Friday.

The division is capable of carrying various combat, surveillance, and suicide drones and has joined the country’s southern fleet.

The new naval upgrade comes just days after US President Joe Biden boasted that Washington may use force to counter Iran’s nuclear energy program as a “last resort.”

The threat was repeated in another form on Thursday after the United States signed a joint security declaration in which the US pointed to the “unshakeable US commitment to Israel’s security, and especially to the maintenance of its qualitative military edge,” also pledging to continue strengthening the regime’s military capabilities.

In the unveiling ceremony of the new drone division, which was held with high-ranking Iranian commanders in attendance, a number of drones produced by the Army, Defense Ministry, and knowledge-based firms showcased their capabilities. Home-made UAVs such as Pelican, Homa, Arash, Chamroosh, Jubin, Ababil-4, and Bavar-5 performed successfully in the military exercise in the Indian Ocean.

Other than drones that use vertical takeoff systems that were launched from surface vessels, combat drones have been launched from submarines including homegrown Fateh and Tareq submarines.

This makes Iran the only country in the region with the ability to launch UAVs from subsurface units.

The chief commander of Iran’s Army Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi lauded the successful military exercise, pointing to the necessity of boosting the country’s defense in the face of threats. He said considering the “aggressive behavior” of the enemies, “it is necessary to add to our defense power by the day.”

Emerging fields such as the field of drones are of great importance and have a decisive role when it comes to strengthening defense power, he added. “Surveillance drones increase the intelligence power of our vessels hundreds of kilometers beyond the borders.”

Combat and suicide drones, the commander said, act as the upper hand of the Islamic Republic of Iran in international waters, “both creating deterrence against threats and also, if required, giving enemies a response that will make them regret in case they commit a mistake.”

Meanwhile, the Navy’s Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said the upgrade enables the naval force to have operational and air superiority in the depth of oceans while also boosting intelligence hundreds of kilometers away from surface and subsurface units.

Iran, Switzerland Ready for Broader Cooperation In Health Field



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The new ambassador of Switzerland and the minister of health, remedy and medical training to Iran in a meeting here on Friday were agreed on the need for broadening comprehensive cooperation, particularly in health field.

Iranian Health Minister Bahram Einollahi in the meeting referred to the background of Iran-Switzerland cooperation and friendship, and asked the new Swiss ambassador to Iran to focus her attention on expansion of mutual cooperation, especially in health field.

Einollahi who is also the Iranian head of Iran-Switzerland Joint Commission also announced his readiness for broadening comprehensive mutual cooperation in all fields of mutual interest, especially in health and academic training fields.

The new Swiss ambassador, too, in the meeting announced her country’s readiness for broadening comprehensive cooperation with Iran and appreciated the health minister for facilitating cooperation in health field.

Ambassador Nadine Olivieri Lozano also referred to her meeting with Deputy Health Minister for International Cooperation Mohammad-Ali Niknam and her consultations with him.

She said that Niknam had in the meeting referred to the signing of a shared communique for bilateral health cooperation, and another one in academic training cooperation, on behalf of the Swiss health minister during the past couple of years for expansion of bilateral cooperation, and announced readiness for hosting the 3rd meeting in upcoming months during the next few months.

Iran Opposes War Everywhere

TEHRAN - Iranian foreign minister said the United States is pursuing specific political goals by claiming that Tehran plans to supply hundreds of drones with combat weapon capabilities to Russia.

In a Friday phone call with his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian dismissed recent accusations leveled by the U.S. national security adviser against Tehran. The Iranian minister said such claims – coinciding with U.S. President Joe Biden’s visit to the occupied Palestinian territories – are in line with certain specific political objectives the White House is after.

On July 11, Jake Sullivan claimed Washington had received “information” indicating that Iran was preparing to provide Russia with “up to several hundred UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), including weapons-capable UAVs on an expedited timeline” for use in the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Elsewhere in the conversation, the Iranian foreign minister told his Ukrainian counterpart that Tehran’s principled stance is based on opposition to war everywhere

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



in the world. He said Iran would continue working to help end the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

“As we have announced since the beginning of the crisis [in Ukraine], we are against the war in Afghanistan, Yemen, Palestine and Ukraine,” Amirabdollahian said. “The principled and explicit stance of the Islamic Republic in opposition to war and support for an end to the war is not similar to the dual approach of certain Western countries, which is based on double standards.”

The top Iranian diplomat said the country was ready to expand in all fields, particularly in the economic and agricultural sectors.

The Ukrainian foreign minister hailed Iran’s anti-war position and its efforts to help establish a ceasefire or find a political solution to the ongoing crisis.

Kuleba said Ukraine was willing to open a new chapter in ties with Tehran. He said Iran and Ukraine should not allow others to disrupt their relations through accusations.

The top Ukrainian diplomat invited his Iranian counterpart to travel to Kyiv.

No Limits Can Hinder Enhanced Tehran-Baku Ties

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani says no limits can hinder the expansion of relations with Azerbaijan in all fields.

In a meeting with Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev in Baku on Friday, Shamkhani said the promotion of ties with the neighboring countries is among the main priorities of the Iranian government. Iran is resolute on enhanced cordial relations with Azerbaijan, as a Muslim neighboring state, in all areas, he said.

Pointing to “very good” ties between the two countries over the past 30 years, the top Iranian security official said Tehran and Baku currently enjoy an appropriate level of relations, which would be further improved given firm determination from both sides.

Shamkhani reiterated Iran’s resolve to counter those who seek to undermine Tehran-Baku ties.

The Azeri president, for his part, said senior officials from both sides are determined to improve relations and are making serious efforts in this regard. They would not be affected by pressure from those countries that are not interested in friendly ties between the two neighboring states, he said.

Aliyev said civilizational, cultural, and religious bonds between the Iranian and Azeri nations contribute to overcoming obstacles in the way of expansion of relations. He said that after the second Nagorno-Karabakh war and the return of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, very appropriate conditions have been made for making use of common capacities in the fields of transit, oil, trade, and energy.

The Azerbaijani president invited his Iranian counterpart to visit Baku, saying he would also travel to Tehran to pursue and accelerate the implementation of agreements signed between the two countries.

In a meeting with Secretary of the Security Council of Azerbaijan Ramil Usubov, Iran’s top security official said constant support for peace and stability in the region is among the main strategies of the Islamic Republic.

“Today, all regional countries believe that imported security cannot serve their long-term interests and that the only way to achieve sustainable peace and stability is responsible cooperation among regional countries,” Shamkhani said. He emphasized that the arrogant system and ill-wishers should not be allowed to disturb friendly relations between the two countries.

Shamkhani pointed to Israeli plots to infiltrate the region’s security mechanisms, saying, “The Zionist regime, as the main source of malice and insecurity in the region, is now facing political crises and internal economic and social challenges and is trying to reduce internal pressure by transferring internal crises to the region.”

He underscored the importance of respecting the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of regional countries. “We oppose and will counter any move that will create insecurity and alter the region’s geopolitics.”

The Azerbaijani official, Usubov, reiterated his country’s firm determination to cooperate with regional countries in an effort to protect regional peace. He called for strengthening cooperation with Iran in the fight against terrorism, organized crimes, and smuggling of illicit drugs, emphasizing that common border areas must be safe and turn into the symbol of friendship between the two countries.

Iran, Russia to Create Joint Free Zone

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – It was late in the spring that Russian President’s special representative, the CEO of Lotus Special Economic Zone of Russia’s Astrakhan Mr. Sergey Milushkin, Deputy Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Mr. Oleg Savchenko and their entourage had different meetings with Vice-President and Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones Mr. Saeed Mohammad and during the meetings both sides called for broadening bilateral and multilateral cooperation with reliance on capacities in Iran’s free zones.

According to reports, after those meetings Russian President Vladimir Putin ratified the law for the additional protocol to the free zone agreement between Eurasian Union and Iran.

This agreement includes essential trade laws between Eurasian Economic Union and Iran and it is very close to the WTO laws. In the agreement both sides are committed to reduce or even remove custom tariffs and other non-custom problems for some goods in line with encouraging economic cooperation between the two sides.

Mohammad termed creation of a joint free zone between Iran and Russia as one of the future goals of the council and emphasized that according to the plans, this will materialize in near future.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

13:10

20:40

04:20

06:02

33. Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace. And if any of your slaves ask for a deed in writing (to enable them to earn their freedom for a certain sum), give them such a deed if ye know any good in them: yea, give them something yourselves out of the means which Allah has given to you. But force not your maids to prostitution when they desire chastity, in order that ye may make a gain in the goods of this life. But if anyone compels them, yet, after such compulsion, is Allah, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (to them),

Surah 24, Light (33)

Iran May Import Gasoline

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of the board of directors of the Union of Exporters of Petroleum, Gas and Petrochemical Products Seyed Hamid Husseini says Iran may become gasoline importer because of high consumption in the summer.

Speaking to ILNA, Hosseini said that there is this possibility of facing gasoline shortage in the summer because of the consumption, adding that the country should reactivate refining activities with identifying the weak points or else the country may be forced to import oil products.

On the possibility of exporting gasoline by Iran,he said that due to rise in the daily gasoline which has reached 120m liters per day, the refineries are unable to export gasoline and therefore nobody expects gasoline exports from those refineries but some refineries like Shazand, Bouali and Nouri which have petrochemical units and some mini-refineries which produce gasoline or light hydrocarbon continue exports, and major gasoline demands of Afghanistan market which is some 100,000 to 150,000 liters per month are provided by these refineries and some is exported to Iraq market. He added that some good quality gasoline product of mini-refineries is also exported to the UAE.

He reiterated that all refineries now are working with full speed and capacities but it is possible due to the rise in consumption in the summer and the country could



face gasoline and it may force the country to import gasoline or the country will have to reactivate some refineries.


Hosseini went on to say that of course refineries are now in a better condition and in case they can sell more gasoline and gas oil, they will do it because they will earn more. He noted that no refinery prefers to produce naphtha and sell it at \$700 or \$800 per ton while it can earn some \$1150 for gas oil and \$150 for gasoline per barrel.

Hosseini admitted that Iran's oil products have faced a new rival which has entered the market and it is Russian oil products which are becoming major rival of Iranian products.

He went on to say that by the way now India buys crude oil from Russia with cheaper price and it has made Iran face trouble in exporting its bitumen to India which has been the major exporting destination for Iranian products, noting that in the past three months Iran's bitumen exports to India have declined by 100,000 tons per month and it has dropped from 430,000 tons to 330,000 tons.

Hosseini reiterated that on the whole, the value of Iran's oil exporting products has increased because of the rise in the international prices.

Farhadi to Get “Maestri del Cinema” Award in Fiesole



TEHRAN (IFP) - The Roman Theater of Fiesole in Florence, Italy, will be granting its 2022 Fiesole Maestri del Cinema (Masters of Cinema) Award to the Oscar-winning Iranian director Asghar Farhadi, who will become the first Middle Eastern filmmaker to receive the title.

The honor will be presented to Farhadi during a ceremony at the Teatro Romano di Fiesole on Saturday evening, followed by a screening of the director's Oscar-winning drama “A Separation.”

Meanwhile, a book written by Italian scholar Simone Emiliani about the renowned director, titled “Le Verità Nascoste: Il Cinema di Asghar Farhadi” (“The Hidden Truths: Asghar Farhadi's cinema”), will be introduced during the ceremony.

“I am happy to present the 2022 edition of the Fiesole Prize to the Masters of Cinema, which represents a milestone in the history of our event,” said Anna Ravoni, the mayor of Fiesole, in June, when the winner was first announced.

“In fact, with the exception of Akira Kurosawa in 1986, the Masters who have been on the stage of the Roman Theater of Fiesole up until now have all been either European or American. This year the Prize wanted to broaden its gaze, opening up to the Middle East and we can only be proud of this,” she added.

Over the past days, Florence has been paying tribute to the great Iranian filmmaker with a retrospective of his work in the Piazzale degli Uffizi, a historical square in the center of the city, where some of his works are screened for the public

Expanding Iran-Russia Banking Cooperation to Neutralize Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Vice Chairman of Plan and Budget Commission of Iranian Parliament said that the expansion of economic, monetary and banking ties between Iran and Russia is an important measure to neutralize economic and banking sanctions.

Seyyed Mohammad-Reza Mir-Tajeddini said that the development of economic and trade relations between Iran and neighboring states especially Russia can neutralize sanctions imposed against the country.

Giant steps have been taken in the 13th government under President Raeisi in the field of expansion of relations with neighbors, so that “We are witnessing the expansion of relations with eastern bloc countries including China and Russia.”

Development of trade and transit ties between Iran and Russia as well as other regional countries, contracts of which have been inked, can create good opportunities for the country in boosting trade and economic cooperation, he noted.

He went on to say that transit contracts between Iran and Russia can create a giant development in increasing the transit of goods and revenues obtained in this field.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the imminent visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Iran and stated that this visit can strengthen and stabilize economic relations between the two countries.

Upon signing bilateral monetary pacts, Iran can remove a major part of the problems in the banking and monetary fields caused by sanctions.

Mir-Tajeddini went on to say that the expansion of economic, monetary and banking ties between Iran and Russia is one of the important measures for neutralizing banking and economic sanctions imposed against the country.

Tehran, Zagreb to Cooperate in Producing Medicines

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Iranian and Croatian science-based companies will cooperate in production of medicinal and organic products.

The ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Croatia said on Thursday that the ground is now paved for economic, tourism, and cultural cooperation between Vector city of Croatia and Iran.

Parviz Esmaili during his visit to Vector city had a meeting with some of the heads of that city's companies and the Mayor of Vector City Ivan Penava.

In the meeting the appropriate potential for cooperation between the two countries' companies, including in leather, wood, and agricultural industries were surveyed, and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for cooperation, research, production and distribution of medicines, and organic products between the private sectors of the two countries, too, was signed.

Esmaili and Penova, meanwhile, agreed to pursue the MOU on sisterhood of Iran's Khorramshahr and Croatia's Vector cities.

The Iranian ambassador to Croatia also elaborated in the results of his day-long visit of Vector city in an interview with the Croatian TV and the local media.



TCCIMA Chairman Highlights Challenges Facing National Economy

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari has said that considering the current global economic situation, the Iranian economy is facing four major challenges namely inflation, water crisis and food supply, financial turmoil in the banking system, and lack of enough attention to non-oil exports.

“The world has been facing complex issues in the past few months. The conflict with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the increase in the price and shortage of food (especially basic goods such as wheat, corn, oil, etc.), the jump in energy prices, the acceleration of climate change, and the spread of droughts are among these challenges. In our country, however, in addition to the above-mentioned issues, sanctions and economic mismanagement have also been the cause,” Khansari wrote in an article published on the TCCIMA portal on Saturday.

According to Khansari, if serious attention is not paid to the mentioned challenges in the coming months and the governments do not make plans to solve them, they can become blind nodes to the point where, as the World Bank has stated in a report, there will be a risk of the world returning to 1970 and experience a widespread economic recession.

Mentioning inflation as one of the most important issues, Khansari noted that central banks across the world, including the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), should use other regulatory tools to control inflation instead of increasing interest rates.

He further underlined the water crisis in the country, saying that according to FAO Iran is facing a serious water crisis in the coming years which will increase the country's dependence on imports of agricultural products if not properly managed.

Regarding the unfavorable condition of the country's banking system, the TCCIMA head noted that amending the current state of the country's banking system and changing the direction of banks from banking to corporate management has been proposed for more than a decade, but it has not yet been realized.

He finally stressed the importance of non-oil exports considering the current situation of the global economy, saying: “We have not been able to use our full capacities in exporting goods and services.”

IMIDRO to Complete 12 Semi-Finished Mining Projects by Late March

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) Vajihollah Jafari said his organization is going to complete 12 semi-finished mining industry projects by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2023).

According to Jafari, the estimated amount of investment made in the mentioned projects is \$1.403 billion and they will provide direct employment for 2,887 people while indirect jobs will be created for more than 7,599 people, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The projects are in various fields including copper, steel, lead, zinc, ferrochrome, coal, hydrated lime, and phosphate, Jafari said.

The official noted that four of the mentioned projects are related to the copper chain, two will go operational in the steel chain, some mines will also be revived and several infrastructure projects will also be inaugurated.

As the major state-owned holding company active in the mining sector

in Iran, IMIDRO has been playing a significant role in developing the mining industry in the country.

In addition to new exploration and development projects, over the past few years, the organization has been pursuing a program for reviving idle small-scale mines across the country.

Having 81 different types of minerals, Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries across the globe. In this regard, the Iranian government has been seriously pursuing several programs for promoting the mining sector as a major contributor to the country's economic growth.

Iran's proven iron ore reserves are 2.7 billion tons, while the country's copper reserves are 2.6 billion tons. The country also has 11 million tons of zinc reserves.

The total proven reserves of Iran's mines are estimated at about 60 billion tons, which is expected to reach more than 100 billion tons with the implementation of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's exploration programs over 500,000 square kilometers of new mineral zones.

Weekly Commodities Trade Exceeds 2.1m Tons on IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,133,115 tons of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$459m on its physical market.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 1,768,000 tons of commodities valued at almost \$246m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,026,000 tons of cement, 187,747 tons of steel, 41,000 tons of sponge iron, 2,540 tons of zinc, 8,775 tons of aluminum, 5,423 tons of copper, 120 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 19 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 225,317 tons of commodities worth nearly \$205m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 75,254 tons of polymeric products, 139,600 tons of vacuum bottom, 46,000 tons of lube cut, 31,188 tons of chemicals, 1,160 tons of sulfur, 2,816 tons of base oil, 52,686 tons of bitumen and 200 tons of insulation.

The IME also traded within the same week 13,154 tons of commodities on its side market.



Direct Rasht-Oman Flight And Back Established

RASHT (IRNA) - Managing director of Gilan International Airport announced that direct Rasht-Muscat flight has been established.

Mohsen Mir-Hosseini told IRNA that the flight became possible based on a proposal made by Pars Airline after the issuance of the required licenses.

The managing director of Gilan International Airport said that the maiden flight of this new service will depart the Rasht Sardar Jangal International Airport and this is a weekly flight.

Mir-Hosseini said that Flight No. 4512 departs every Thursday morning weekly from Rasht Airport for Muscat, and will return to that airport at 12:45 pm.

The Gilan aviation official also referred to the increased flights of that airport, adding that during the course of the past month the Rasht-Mashhad flights by Chabahar Airlines and the Sepehran Airlines, too, have been added, including which 67 sorties of flight to Tehran, Mashad, Assalouyeh, Bandar Abbas, Shiraz, Ahvaz, Kish, Najaf, and Muscat departed from Rasht Airport.

One Dead as Morocco Forest Fires Rage

LARACHE (Dispatches) - Fires ravaging remote mountain forests in northern Morocco have killed at least one person and forced the evacuation of more than 1,000 families, officials said on Friday.

Fanned by strong winds, the fires that broke out on Wednesday have destroyed 1,600 hectares (nearly 4,000 acres) of woodland in the provinces of Larache, Ouezzane, Taza and Tetouan, the authorities said.

“The body of a person suffering from multiple burns has been found” amid one of the blazes in the Larache region, the authorities said in a statement.



Russia Sanctions 384 Japanese Lawmakers

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia imposed sanctions against 384 members of Japan’s parliament, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Moscow said the measures were taken against those who had “taken an unfriendly, anti-Russian position.”

Tokyo has hit Russia with harsh sanctions, joining the G7 in freezing the central bank’s assets, since Moscow sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24.



Sadr Supporters Mass In Iraq Prayer Rally



BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Hundreds of thousands of Muslim worshippers loyal to Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr attended a Friday prayer service in Iraq’s capital, in a display of political might to revive stalled talks on government formation.

The enormous turnout came despite scorching heat and the Shiite cleric not being there in person -- an indication of his status as a political heavyweight, as well as a key religious authority.

The midday prayer, on Al-Falah Avenue in Sadr City, was instead led by a Sadr ally who took aim at rivals from other Shiite factions, including a powerful ex-paramilitary network.

“We are at a difficult... crossroads in the formation of the government, entrusted to some we do not trust,” said Sheikh Mahmud al-Jayashi, reading Sadr’s sermon.

Some factions have shown themselves to “not be up to the task”, he contended.

Sadr’s bloc won 73 seats in the October 2021 election, making it the largest faction in the 329-seat parliament.

But since the vote, talks to form a new government have stalled and the oil-rich country remains mired in a political and socioeconomic crisis, despite elevated global oil prices.

The various Shiite political factions, representing Iraq’s largest demographic, remain unable to agree on a new prime minister.

Sadr initially supported the idea of a “majority government” which would have sent his Shiite adversaries from the pro-Iran Coordination Framework into opposition.

The former militia leader then surprised many by compelling his deputies to resign from parliament in June, a move seen as seeking to pressure his rivals to fast-track the formation of a new government.

But a month later, the process has not advanced.

Sadr’s sermon took particular aim at the Hashed al-Shaabi, a Shiite former paramilitary force that has been integrated into the army, but is seen by many Iraqis as a proxy.

The Hashed “must be reorganised and undisciplined elements must be removed”, the preacher said, lamenting “foreign interventions” but without naming any country.

He also called for the Hashed -- whose political wing is part of the Coordination Framework -- to be kept at “a distance from politics and business”.

Before the prayer began, Sadr loyalists expressed support for the cleric with cries of “Yes, yes to reform! Yes, yes to the reformer!”

Some held prayer mats in hand or waved Iraqi flags.

“We obey Moqtada Sadr, as we obey God and his prophets,” Sheikh Kadhim Hafez Mohammed al-Tai told AFP at the rally in Sadr city.

After the 2003 US invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein, the district of the capital was named after Mohammad Sadr, Moqtada’s father, a cleric who was assassinated in 1999 under Saddam’s rule.

The Friday prayers were ostensibly organized as a tribute to Sadr’s father.

Biden Claims U.S. Will Achieve Accountability for Abu Akleh Killing

RAMALLAH (Dispatches) - United States President Joe Biden has claimed that his government is insisting on accountability for the May killing of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh by the Israeli army.

“The United States will continue to insist on a full and transparent accounting of her death and will continue to stand up for media freedom everywhere in the world,”

Biden said on Friday in a joint press conference with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas.

The U.S. president made no mention of Israel’s responsibility for the killing of the 51-year-old veteran Palestinian-American journalist on May 11 while she was reporting in the occupied West Bank.

“She was an American citizen and a proud Palestinian,” said Biden. “I hope that her legacy will inspire more young people to carry on her work of reporting the truth and telling the stories that are too often overlooked,” he added.

The conference was held at the PA’s presidential compound in Bethlehem in the southern occupied West Bank, during Biden’s four-day tour of the Middle East region between July 13-16.

Critics have accused Biden of failing to take steps towards accountability for Abu Akleh’s killing.



Activists, volunteers and journalists put up billboards and large banners of Abu Akleh across Bethlehem ahead of Biden’s visit. Dozens of Palestinians protested about a kilometer away from the PA’s presidential compound.

No questions were permitted from the press after the conference, but about a dozen journalists wore a black t-shirt with Abu Akleh’s face on it in a sign of protest.

A United Nations investigation concluded that the bullet that killed the veteran journalist was fired by Israeli forces.

The Biden administration, however, angered Palestinians when it said earlier this month that State Department had found Israeli military gunfire was “likely responsible” for Abu Akleh’s death but that it was “inconclusive,” and that forensic analysis showed no reason to believe that the shooting was intentional.

Palestinian politician Hanan Ashrawi said Biden’s “statement of intent” on Abu Akleh are part and parcel of favorable U.S. policy towards Israel.

Rajapaksa Ousted, Ally Nominated as Successor

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka’s parliament accepted the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa after he fled the country, paving the way for lawmakers to start repairing the island’s shattered politics and resume efforts to ease its economic crisis.

After suffering from crippling shortages of petrol and diesel and runaway prices of basic items like vegetables and bread for months under the rule of Rajapaksa and his brothers, Sri Lankans are now waiting for lawmakers to elect a new president on July 20.

Until then, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe will be the interim president although protesters want him gone too. His private residence was set ablaze by demonstrators last weekend and his office stormed this week.

Nevertheless, the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party on Friday nominated Wickremesinghe to take up the top job full-time.

“Ranil Wickremesinghe is not the change we have fought so hard for,” said Wimal Jayasuriya, 43, a martial arts specialist who is on a hunger strike opposite the prime minister’s official residence that was also sacked by protesters.

“We will not allow him to be president. The SLPP parliamentarians should stand with the people and not allow Ranil Wickremesinghe to become president.”

The speaker of parliament, Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, said lawmakers would “constitutionally appoint a new president”.

“It will happen quickly and successfully. I request everyone to support this process,” said Abeywardena, who received Rajapaksa’s resignation the previous night.

Rajapaksa landed in Singapore on Thursday, having fled to the Maldives early on Wednesday on a military jet along with his wife and two security guards. Protesters occupied his home and office last weekend after surging past armed guards.

Ukrainian City Cleans Up and Grieves After Russian Missile Attack

VINNYTSIA (Dispatches) - A Ukrainian city far from the frontline grieved for its dead and cleared its streets on Friday, a day after a Russian missile attack killed at least 23 people and wounded scores.

Ukraine said Thursday’s strike on an office building in Vinnytsia, a city of 370,000 people about 200 km (125 miles) southwest of Kyiv, had been carried out with Kalibr cruise missiles launched from a Russian submarine in the Black Sea.

The attack was the latest in a series of Russian strikes in recent weeks using long-range missiles on crowded buildings in cities far from the front, each killing dozens of people.

Residents placed teddy bears and flowers at a makeshift memorial near the site of the strike.

Among the dead was Lisa, a 4-year-old girl with Down’s Syndrome, found in the debris next to a pram. Images of her pushing the same pram, posted by her mother on a blog less than two hours before the attack, quickly went viral.

Her severely injured mother, Iryna Dmitrieva, was being kept in an information blackout at a hospital for fear that finding out about her daughter would kill her, doctors said.

“She is suffering from burns, chest injuries, abdominal injuries, liver and spleen injuries. We have stitched the organs together, the bones were crushed as if she went through a meat grinder,” Oleksandr

Fomin, chief doctor at the Vinnytsia Emergency Hospital, said. Were she told of her daughter’s death, “we would lose her”.

President Volodymyr Zelenskii’s wife, Olena, tweeted that she recognised the girl, who had once been among a group of disabled children who painted Christmas ornaments with the first lady in a holiday video.

“Look at her, alive, please,” Olena Zelenska wrote.

The building housed an officers’ club, which Russia’s defence ministry said was being used for a meeting between military officials and foreign arms suppliers. It added: “The attack resulted in the elimination of the participants.”

Ukraine said the club functioned as a cultural centre. The building also housed shops, commercial offices and a concert hall, where musicians were rehearsing for a pop concert planned for that night. A nearby medical centre was also destroyed.

Zelenskii called Russia a terrorist state, urged more sanctions against the Kremlin and said the death toll in Vinnytsia could rise.

“Unfortunately, this is not the final number. Debris clearance continues. Dozens of people are reported missing. There are seriously injured (people) among those hospitalised,” he said in a video address to an international conference aimed at prosecuting war crimes in Ukraine.



Khan Faces

Popularity Test in Provincial By-Election



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Former Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan faces a popularity test this weekend in a by-election for 20 assembly seats in the country’s most populous province.

Sunday’s vote in Punjab is seen as a possible bellwether for national elections that must be held by October next year, although Khan has campaigned across the country for an earlier poll since being dismissed by a no-confidence vote in April.

Twenty Punjab seats fell vacant after the election commission disqualified members of Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party at his request when they switched loyalties.

The machinations led to a change of government in the province, which is now headed by Hamza Sharif, son of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Analysts say the election gives Khan the chance to gauge how well his campaign to raise popular support is going.

“If he wins, he will say ‘people are with me’ and increase pressure for fresh elections,” political commentator Hasan Askari told AFP.

If he loses, “Khan will definitely call it a rigged election”, he added.

Khan has drawn thousands to rallies across the country since being deposed, giving lengthy speeches claiming the government was imposed on Pakistan by a US-led conspiracy.

He also blames the current government for soaring inflation, although most analysts agree Sharif inherited the country’s economic woes -- which were given some relief this week by an agreement with the International Monetary Fund to resume a rescue package.

Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League-N party needs to win at least half the 20 seats up for grabs in Punjab or else they will likely cede control of the assembly to the PTI and its allies.

“Stakes are high on both sides,” Askari said.

“The future political direction will remain uncertain in Pakistan even in the post-election period.”

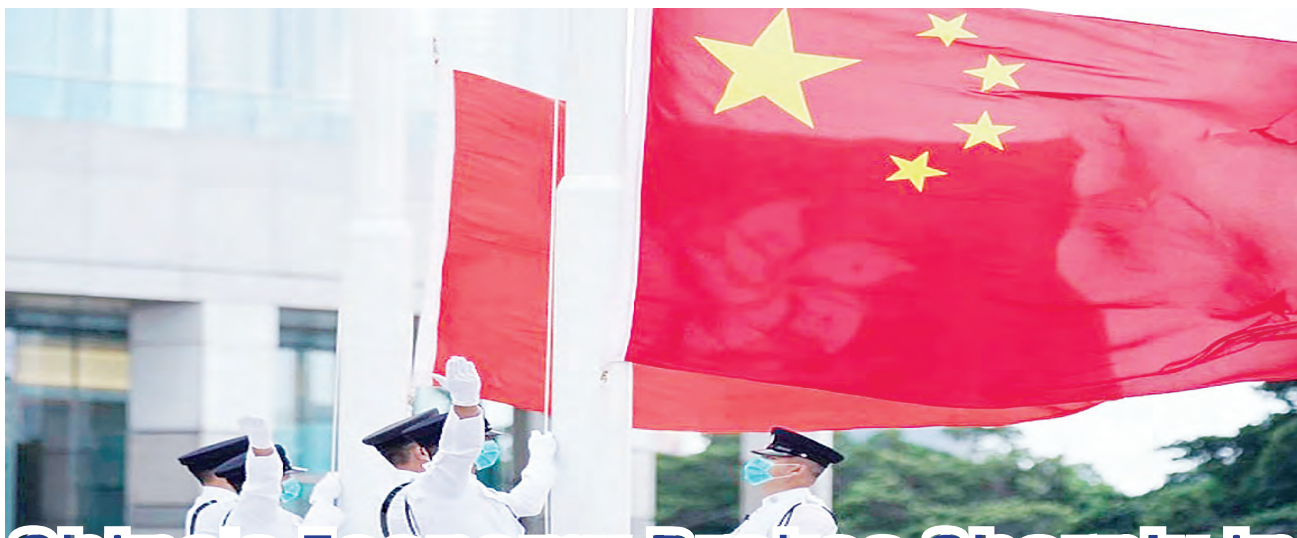
European Car Sales Slump 14% in First Half

PARIS (Dispatches) - EU auto sales slumped by 14 per cent in the first half of this year, data showed today, as supply shortages continued to plague manufacturers.

With the lack of computer chips still hobbling production, new auto sales slumped to 4.6 million in the European Union, data from the European Automobile Manufacturers Association showed.

Sales in Italy tumbled by 22.7 per cent, by 16.3 per cent in France, 11 per cent in Germany and 10.7 per cent in Spain. Sales in non-EU Britain fell by 11.9 per cent.

Sales also fell by 15.4 per cent in June compared to the same month last year, the eleventh consecutive monthly drop.



China's Economy Brakes Sharply in Q2, Global Risks Darken Outlook

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's economic growth slowed sharply in the second quarter, highlighting the colossal toll on activity from widespread Covid lockdowns and pointing to persistent pressure over coming months from a darkening global outlook.

Friday's frail data adds to fears of a global recession as policymakers jack up interest rates to curb soaring inflation, heaping more hardship on consumers and businesses worldwide as they grapple with challenges from the Ukraine war and supply chain disruptions.

Gross domestic product in the April-June quarter grew a tepid 0.4 per cent from a year earlier, official data showed on Friday. That was the worst showing for the world's second-biggest economy since the data series began in 1992, excluding a 6.9 per cent contraction in the first quarter of 2020 due to the initial Covid shock. It also missed forecast of a 1.0 per cent gain in a Reuters poll of analysts and marked a sharp slowdown from 4.8 per cent growth in the first quarter.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, GDP fell 2.6 per cent in the second quarter from the previous quarter, compared with expectations for a 1.5 per cent decline and a revised 1.4 per cent gain in the previous quarter.

"China's economy has stood on the edge of falling into stagflation, although the worst is over as of the May-June period. You can rule out the possibility of a recession, or two straight quarters of contraction," said Toru Nishihama, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute in Tokyo.

"Given the tame growth, China's government is likely to deploy economic stimulus measures from now on to rev up its flagging growth, but hurdles are high for PBOC to cut interest rates further as it would fan inflation which has been kept relatively low at present." Full or partial lockdowns were imposed in major centres across the country in March and April, including the commercial capital Shanghai, which saw a year-on-year contraction of 13.7 per cent in GDP in the second quarter. Output in the capital Beijing shrank 2.9 per cent year-on-year in the same quarter.

While many of those curbs have since been lifted, and June data offered signs of improvement, analysts do not expect a rapid economic recovery. China is sticking to its tough zero-Covid policy amid fresh flare-ups, the country's property market is in a deep slump and the global outlook is darkening.

The imposition of new lockdowns in some cities and the arrival of the highly-contagious BA.5 variant have heightened concerns among businesses and consumers about a prolonged period of uncertainty.

For the first half of the year, GDP grew 2.5 per cent from a year earlier. Chinese stocks .CSI300 rose briefly before turning down, while the yuan fell to a 2-month low on the weak GDP report.

China has been ramping up policy support for the economy, although analysts say the official growth target of around 5.5 per cent for this year will be hard to achieve without doing away with its strict zero-Covid strategy. A Reuters poll forecast 2022 growth to slow to 4 per cent.

Many believe room for the central bank to ease policy further could be limited by worries about capital outflows, as the U.S. Federal Reserve, and other economies, aggressively raise interest rates to fight soaring inflation.

UK Economy Rebounds 0.5% in May

LONDON (Dispatches) - , July 13 — Britain's economy rebounded in May, official data showed today, dampening fears of a slowdown despite surging inflation and rising interest rates.

Gross domestic product expanded by 0.5 per cent, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement, beating expectations of no growth. "The economy rebounded in May with growth across all main sectors," said Darren Morgan, ONS director for economic statistics. The broad rebound was driven by a bounceback in construction, manufacturing and services.

That followed a 0.2-per cent decline in April, which was revised up from a 0.3-per cent contraction.

"Health was the biggest driver, with many more people seeing GPs, despite test and trace and the vaccination programmes winding down," added Morgan.

"Road hauliers also had a busy month while travel agencies fared well with pent-up demand for summer holidays.

"There was widespread growth across manufacturing after several tough months while construction also fared well with housebuilding and office refurbishment driving growth."

The Bank of England has hiked interest rates five times since December in a bid to tame runaway inflation, which has sparked a cost-of-living crisis in Britain.

UK inflation spiked in May to a 40-year peak of 9.1 per cent, a level set to hit double figures this year on soaring energy and food prices according to the BoE. Capital Economics analyst Paul Dales said the economy was "resilient" but warned over the ongoing risk of recession due to rampant consumer prices.



Supply Risks Still Haunt Market Despite High Oil Prices

PARIS (Dispatches) - High oil prices have yet to dampen demand which is set to continue rising and may soon outstrip supply, the International Energy Agency warned.

It cautioned that the global economic recovery could be derailed unless governments take measures to reduce consumption and fuel prices that pose a threat to stability in some nations.

"Without strong policy intervention on energy use, risks remain high that the world economy falls off-track for recovery," the Paris-based agency that advises industrialised nations on energy policy said in its latest monthly report on oil markets.

Oil prices have surged from around US\$80 per barrel earlier this year to over US\$120 at times as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sparked supply concerns and the reopening of China's economy from Covid lockdowns has boosted demand.

If high petrol prices have started to dent demand in industrialised nations, the IEA said this has been counterbalanced by larger-than-expected rebounds in demand by China and some emerging and developing nations.

The IEA now expects oil demand to rise this year to 99.2 million barrels per day (mbd) and to 101.3 mbd next year. Meanwhile, supply climbs to 100.1 mbd this year. But even if it hits an expected record of 101.1 mbd next year, it will fall below demand.

The IEA noted that the world has little spare capacity to increase production, with the combined buffer of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates set to fall to just 2.2 mbd in August.

IMF Agrees to Resume Pakistan Loan After Fuel, Tax Hikes

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said today it had agreed with Pakistan to resume a suspended loan program that will inject \$1.17 billion (RM5.2 billion) into the struggling economy.

A statement from the IMF said a "staff level agreement" — which is still subject to board approval — will bring to US\$4.2 billion the amount dispersed under an extended fund facility (EFF) that could increase to \$7 billion and stretch until June next year.

An original US\$6 billion bailout package was signed by former Prime Minister Imran Khan in 2019, but repeatedly stalled when his government reneged on subsidy agreements and failed to significantly improve tax collection.

The new agreement follows months of deeply unpopular belt-tightening by the government of Shehbaz Sharif, which took power in April and has effectively eliminated fuel subsidies and introduced new measures to broaden the tax base. "Pakistan is at a challenging economic juncture," Nathan Porter, who headed the IMF team, said in a statement, adding external factors and domestic policies were to blame.

Pakistan is desperate for international support for its economy, which suffers from poor revenue collection and dwindling foreign reserves to pay its crippling debt.

The new government has slashed a raft of subsidies to meet the demands of global financial institutions but risks the wrath of an electorate already struggling under the weight of double-digit inflation.

A new coalition government — which came to power after Khan was ousted by a parliamentary no-confidence vote — has said it will make the tough decisions needed to turn the economy around.

Successive administrations blame their predecessors for the country's economic woes, but analysts say the malaise stems from decades of poor management and a failure to tackle endemic corruption and widespread tax avoidance.

In a bid to secure the IMF loan, Prime Minister Sharif has imposed three fuel price hikes — cumulatively totalling 50 per cent — and raised the cost of electricity to effectively end the subsidies introduced by Khan.

Islamabad has so far received \$3 billion from the program, but with the facility due to end later this year, officials sought an extension until June 2023.

"It became essential to resume the IMF program to save the country from default," finance minister Miftah Ismail told the national assembly last month.

U.S. Consumer Prices Surge to New 40-Year High of 9.1%

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) — U.S. inflation surged to a fresh peak of 9.1 per cent in June, further squeezing American families and heaping pressure on President Joe Biden, whose approval ratings have taken a battering from the relentless rise in prices.

Government data released today showed a sharp, faster-than-expected increase in the consumer price index compared to May driven by significant increases in gasoline prices.

The 9.1 per cent CPI spike over the past 12 months to June was the fastest increase since November 1981, the Labor Department reported.

Energy contributed half of the monthly increase, as gasoline jumped 11.2 per cent last month and a staggering 59.9 per cent over the past year. Overall energy prices posted their biggest annual increase since April 1980.

While acknowledging the inflation rate was "unacceptably high," Biden argued that it was also "out of date" as it did not reflect a clear drop in energy prices since mid-June.

The recent price drop had provided "important breathing room for American families. And, other commodities like wheat have fallen sharply since this report," the president said in a statement.

Insisting that tackling inflation was the top priority, Biden admitted his administration needed "to make more progress, more quickly, in getting price increases under control."

The war in Ukraine has pushed global energy and food prices higher, and US gas prices at the pump last month hit a record of more than US\$5 a gallon.

However, energy prices have eased in recent weeks, which could start to relieve some of the pressure on consumers.

But the Federal Reserve is likely to continue its aggressive interest rate increases as it tries to tamp down the price surge by cooling demand before inflation becomes entrenched.

The U.S. central bank last month implemented the biggest rate hike in nearly 30 years, and economists say another three-quarter-point increase is likely later this month.

Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics summed up the data in one word: "Ouch."

"This report will make for very uncomfortable reading at the Fed," he said. "It rules out the chance of the Fed hiking by only 50bp this month." Driven by record-high gasoline prices, the consumer price index jumped 1.3 per cent in June.

But Shepherdson noted some signs of cooling prices in the data and predicted "this will be the last big increase."

When volatile food and energy prices are stripped out of the calculation, "core" CPI increased 5.9 per cent over the past year — still a rapid pace but slowing from the pace in May, according to the data.

EU Cuts Growth Forecasts as War-Stoked Inflation Surges



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Commission today slashed growth forecasts for the eurozone, saying the consequences from the war in Ukraine were continuing to destabilize the economy because of record high inflation.

The EU executive, which tracks the economy for the 27 countries in the European Union, said GDP growth in the eurozone would reach 2.6 per cent in 2022 and a sharply lowered 1.4 per cent in 2023.

Inflation would end the year at 7.6 per cent, much higher than previously forecast, and 4.0 per cent in 2023. This is still well above the EU's target level of 2.0 per cent and up from a previous prediction of 2.7 per cent.

"The evolution of the war and the reliability of gas supplies are unknown, so this forecast is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and downside risks," EU Economy Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni told a press conference.

In its forecast, the commission said the Russian invasion of Ukraine had put "additional upward pressure" on energy and food prices, which were eroding the purchasing power of households.

Other factors negatively affecting growth include the "faster than expected" tightening of monetary policy by the European Central Bank, which it says is needed to curb inflation.

Added to this is the "continued deceleration of growth in the US" and the impact of Beijing's anti-Covid lockdowns, which have led to factory closures and depressed demand.

On the inflation front, the commission estimates the peak should be reached in the third quarter of this year and will then fall gradually to below 3.0 per cent by the end of 2023.

Consumer price inflation hit a new record high in the eurozone in June, at 8.6 per cent year-on-year.

The growth and inflation forecasts "depend heavily on the evolution of the war and in particular its implications for Europe's gas supply", the commission said.

"Further increases in gas prices could further raise inflation and stifle growth."

Iran Opens Business Center in Russia

TEHRA (IRNA) - Bank Meli Iran (BMI) Managing Director Mohammad Reza Farzin said on Saturday that ‘Mir Business Trade Center was opened in Russia to facilitate Iranian and Russian businessmen’s activities.

Bank Meli Iran (BMI) managing director pointed out that he was the guest of the Russians during a trip invited by the CEO of

Sberbank as the Russian majority state-owned bank in Russia.

“During this trip, the Mir Business Trade Center was opened with the presence of Iranian and Russian businessmen,” he added.

Farzin further explained that this center will facilitate Iranian and Russian businessmen’s activities.



Security Fears for Bolsonaro, Lula in Tense Election Campaign

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Brazil’s far-right President Jair Bolsonaro and leftist rival Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva have both taken to wearing bullet-proof vests to campaign rallies ahead of the October elections, with the candidates’ security a major concern in an atmosphere of deep political polarization.

The assassination last Friday of Japan’s ex-prime minister Shinzo Abe at an election campaign rally sparked a flurry of concern on social media in Brazil that conditions at home were ripe for a similar crime.

Then on Sunday, a Lula partisan was shot dead at a political party event by a policeman shouting pro-Bolsonaro slogans.

Lula blamed the death on “hate speech encouraged by an irresponsible president,” while Bolsonaro retorted that violent people should join “the left, which has an undeniable past of violent episodes.”

The president himself was stabbed in the abdomen during his previous presidential campaign in 2018, by a man later declared mentally unfit to stand trial.

“Political violence in Brazil has a long history,” political analyst Oliver Stuenkel of the Getulio Vargas Foundation in Sao Paolo told AFP.

“It has mostly been limited to the municipal level, (but) we now see, in part due to the radical, extreme polarization, that it is reaching the federal level” of politics.

Historically, dozens of candidates get shot with every municipal election in Brazil.

Bolsonaro is trailing behind Lula in opinion polls ahead of the first round of presidential elections on October 2.

There will be a runoff on October 30 if no candidate gets 50 percent of first-round votes.

Bolsonaro, 67, has had his presidential protection upgraded, but does not avoided crowds on the campaign trail.

Lula, 76, has employed a team of private security guards to reinforce the team of 35 police that political commentator Lauro Jardim told CBN radio already take care of him.

The former president has taken a more cautious stance with his public engagements.

From the official opening of the campaign on August 16, he and all other rival candidates to Bolsonaro will have access to a pool of some 300 federal police members dedicated to election protection.

This “unprecedented” deployment, according to the federal police, could be increased as the risk calculus changes.

Lula and Bolsonaro, leading the rest of the candidate pack, “can both be targeted by extremist individuals, so it is good to see them taking their safety more seriously,” said Silvio Cascione, Brazil director for the Eurasia Group consultancy.

“Lula’s staff is clearly worried about the risk... Lula will prioritize indoor events with strict security protocols” with open-air events “much less frequent than in previous campaigns,” he added.

Last week, at a Lula campaign event on a massive public square in Rio de Janeiro, a man hurled a small explosive device into the crowd.



No one was hurt, but the attack sparked concern as it happened despite restricted access to the event and the use of metal detectors to screen attendees.

According to the University of Rio de Janeiro’s Observatory of Political and Electoral Violence, 214 cases of violence ranging from threats to murders have been recorded against politicians since January this year.

About 40 were homicides -- many of the victims candidates or ex-candidates for mayoral office or municipal councils.

The total represented a rise of 32 percent over the first half of 2020, when the country held municipal elections.

Observers say the political climate in Brazil has become deeply polarized since Bolsonaro took office in 2019.

The left and right have both accused each other of inflaming violence.

Stuenkel points to the use of “violent language, especially in pro-Bolsonaro groups, or by the candidate himself.”

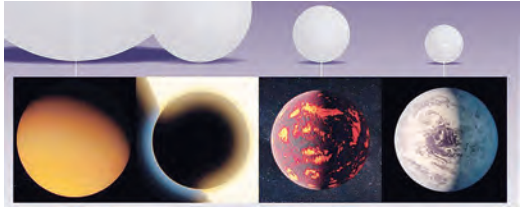
Bolsonaro has repeatedly sought to cast doubt on the credibility of the election system, and there are fears he may reject the outcome if he loses and even foment violence similar to what happened in the United States.

“They are trying to transform the campaign into a war, to instill fear in Brazilian society,” Lula charged on Tuesday.

Experts have also pointed with concern to an explosion of 474 percent of private firearm ownership under the Bolsonaro government.

Despite the growing nervousness, observers doubt the candidates will significantly limit their public outreach. “It is tremendously important (to them) to promote a narrative of broad, popular support for their candidacy,” said Stuenkel.

Webb Begins Hunt For the First Stars and Habitable Worlds



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The first stunning images from the James Webb Space Telescope were revealed this week, but its journey of cosmic discovery has only just begun.

Here is a look at two early projects that will take advantage of the orbiting observatory’s powerful instruments.

- The first stars and galaxies -

One of the great promises of the telescope is its ability to study the earliest phase of cosmic history, shortly after the Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago.

The more distant objects are from us, the longer it takes for their light to reach us, and so to gaze back into the distant universe is to look back in the deep past.

“We’re going to look back into that earliest time to see the first galaxies that formed in the history of the universe,” explained Space Telescope Science Institute astronomer Dan Coe, who specializes in the early universe.

Astronomers have so far gone back 97 percent of the way back to the Big Bang, but “we just see these tiny red specks when we look at these galaxies that are so far away.”

“With Webb, we’ll finally be able to see inside these galaxies and see what they’re made of.”

While today’s galaxies are shaped like spirals or ellipticals, the earliest building blocks were “clumpy and irregular,” and Webb should reveal older redder stars in them, more like our Sun, that were invisible to the Hubble Space Telescope.

Coe has two Webb projects coming up -- observing one of the most distant galaxies known, MACS0647-JD, which he found in 2013, and Earendel, the most distant star ever detected, which was found in March of this year.

While the public has been enticed by Webb’s stunning pictures, which are shot in infrared because light from the far cosmos has stretched into these wavelengths as the universe expanded, scientists are equally keen on spectroscopy.

Analyzing the light spectrum of an object reveals its properties, including temperature, mass, and chemical composition -- effectively, forensic science for astronomy.

Science doesn’t yet know what the earliest stars, which probably started forming 100 million years after the Big Bang, will look like.

“We might see things that are very different,” said Coe -- so-called “Population III” stars that are theorized to have been much more massive than our own Sun, and “pristine,” meaning they were made up solely of hydrogen and helium.

Himars Precision Rockets Shift the Balance in Ukraine



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S.-made precision rockets have given Ukraine forces a major battlefield boost since they were introduced in June, tilting the balance against the Russians and possibly forcing Moscow to pause its offensive, experts said.

Since mid-June, using the Himars missile systems, Ukraine has destroyed more than 20 major Russian ammunition depots and command posts that were previously too far behind the front lines to be reached by traditional artillery.

Videos posted on social media have shown spectacular prolonged eruptions at ammo dumps in Russian-controlled Lugansk, Nova Kakhovka, and elsewhere, attesting to the power and precision of the US missiles.

“The occupiers have already felt very well what modern artillery is. They will not have a safe rear anywhere on our land,” Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

But experts also caution that the new weapons are no panacea, and that the country needs more weapons and radars systems to use in combination to defeat the Russians.

Christopher Dougherty, a defense analyst at the Center for New American Security in Washington, said the Himars success is as good as could have been hoped.

Still, he said, “The thing by itself, it’s not a game changer.”

The M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System is an agile wheel-mounted launcher of 227 mm GPS-guided missiles with a range of around 80 kilometers (50 miles).

Unlike other multiple launch rocket systems that both sides have used in the war, Himars missiles can be directed precisely on targets, meaning they can be used sparingly and reliably.

The first four launchers, which can carry 6 rockets at a time, were delivered in June; now the Ukrainians have 12, with hundreds of rockets to use between them.

They have more advantages than precision. The rockets fly low enough and fast enough that Russian air defenses can’t intercept them easily. Because the vehicles are so mobile, it is hard for the Russians to find and target them.

“Himars is changing the character of the fight in Ukraine. It is allowing the Ukrainians to target the Russians at greater distance and in areas that have been denied to them because of Russian air defense systems,” Mick Ryan, a retired Australian general and military analyst, wrote this week on Twitter.

It’s not only Himars; since June Ukraine has had powerful high-precision artillery from other allies, like France’s Caesar

howitzer, and last week the US announced it would be providing 1,000 new precision-guided artillery rounds.

Ryan said Ukraine is using them against Russian weak points: the tendency to store munitions close to railway depots and in towns relatively near the front.

While that raises the risk for Ukrainians of hitting population centers, the precision targeting helps to reduce civilian casualties.

Dougherty said he was surprised that the Russians didn’t plan for the Himars.

“It’s not like a secret that these things were going to show up,” he said. “It’s another instance in which the Russians have been really slow to adapt to what are, frankly, rather obvious battlefield issues.”

Eventually the Russians will adapt and disperse their supply depots, and move some much further away from the front lines, analysts said.

But that will make their battlefield logistics tougher.

“Each time you distribute anything, it takes more trucks to get to the same amount of stuff to the people who need it,” said Dougherty.

On top of that, he said, the Russian military’s truck fleet has been significantly diminished by the war.

Phillips O’Brien, professor of strategic studies at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, said the Himars are not an end to themselves, but part of broader strategy to damage Russian logistics and push back its air defenses.

Doing so would leave the frontline artillery that is the mainstay of the Russian offensive less protected from Ukraine air and ground forces.

Kyiv is meanwhile pressuring Washington for ATACMS missiles which can be launched by the Himars and have a 300-kilometer range.

“At all levels, our authorities are negotiating with US representatives regarding the need to provide us with longer-range Himars missiles,” Fedir Venislavskiy, a senior Ukrainian lawmaker, said on Wednesday.

So far the White House has refused, worried such weapons would be used by Ukraine against targets on Russian territory.

That, the administration of President Joe Biden fears, risks drawing the US and NATO directly into war with Russia.

Dougherty said the US really does not have many ATACMS in stock and production stopped years ago.

O’Brien said that, in addition to the Himars, Ukraine really needs more protection from Russia attacks from the air.

“Getting Ukraine more and better anti-air capabilities should be as high priority as getting it better-ranged weapons,” O’Brien wrote on Twitter.

A Laughingstock...

FROM PAGE 1

The U.S. military forces, he went on, “were [almost] wetting their pants in the Persian Gulf” where they were detained by the IRGC forces in 2016.

Shekarchi also vowed that Biden’s verbal threat will not be left unanswered.

“They are well aware that they will have to pay for using the word ‘force’ against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, it would be better for them to observe the condition of the region and the world and review the history so that they can analyze the future correctly,” added the spokesman.

As the general said it seems Biden is suffering from the political and historical Alzheimer’s and every now and then he says something to please the Zionists and entertain the world people.

General Shekari was not the first who reacted to the funny remarks of Biden because a U.S.-based analyst also derided President Biden’s threat of using “force” against Iran during his visit to the occupied Palestinian territories, saying Americans and Israelis are aware of the “catastrophic” consequences of such threats.

“Not bombing Iran despite the constant threats has been for good reason mindful of how catastrophic the outcome could be for Israel,” Giorgio Cafiero, the chief executive officer of Washington-based Persian Gulf State Analytics, said.

He said since the 1990s, the Israeli regime “has been threatening to bomb Iran’s nuclear facilities” but hasn’t mustered the courage to walk the talk.

Meanwhile Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said the Islamic Republic is now more determined to defend its “inalienable” rights after a recent anti-Iran “puppet show” featuring U.S. President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid in the Israeli-occupied territories.

In a tweet on Friday, Amirabdollahian said that Iran will continue to progress on the path of “sustainable economic development” and that of removing the sanctions, a day after Biden and Lapid signed a joint security declaration in a gesture against Iran.

“We will never give up the inalienable rights of the great Iranian nation,” said Amirabdollahian, adding, “Achieving a good, strong, lasting agreement is our objective.”

“Without a doubt, the puppet show of the White House and the Zionist regime in the region will make us more determined,” he said.

Tehran does not like any war and it has not been ever the beginner of any war but when it comes to defend its sovereignty and rights, it does not spare any effort to stop the invaders and if the U.S. wants once again to test Iran’s power, it can try it but this time the damage will be heavy for the U.S. and its allies and Americans can add another defeat to the list of their failures against Tehran.

So Biden is recommended to stop acting like a clown with funny remarks and to act like a mature politician especially when it comes to Iran because Tehran will not let any attack or hostile act to escape unpunished.

Iran Calls for...

FROM PAGE 1

Hamaneh said it was a moral and legal responsibility for all governments to cooperate to compensate the victims and survivors of the attack, adding that the criminal prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators of war crimes and those aiding such crimes is a common duty.

He emphasized that legal divisions and formats should not prevent the use of human rights foundations and mechanisms to appeal to national and international authorities to pursue the legitimate demands of chemical weapons victims and to assert their rights.

Also in the meeting, several video clips containing interviews with the injured and survivors of the Sardasht chemical attack were played, which showed the continuous suffering and pain of the victims, as well as the limitations and problems of access to medicine due to the illegal sanctions of the United States.

The chemical bombardment of Sardasht was conducted on June 28, 1987, almost seven years after the regime of Saddam Hussein waged a war on Iran.

During the war, which lasted eight years, the Iraqi army continuously employed chemical weapons against Iranian combatants and civilians, leaving tens of thousands dead on the spot and many more suffering for years to come.

Over 100 people were killed in the Sardasht attack and thousands more were exposed to chemical agents.

After three decades, many of the survivors of the chemical attack still have to live with the long-term respiratory and even psychological effects of inhaling mustard gas used in the attack.

Woods Struggles Badly On St Andrews Return

ST ANDREWS (Dispatches) - Tiger Woods made a dismal start to his British Open bid as he carded two early double-bogeys on the way to a six-over-par 78 that left him 14 shots behind the leader.

The American 15-times major champion, who has won the Open twice at St Andrews, looked out of sorts from the moment he found the water on the par-four first hole and started with a six on his card.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

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

ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Williams Set to Play Toronto Event in August

TORONTO (Dispatches) - Serena Williams has decided to compete next month in Toronto, having returned to action two weeks ago at Wimbledon after a year away from competition, tournament organizers said.

Williams, who suffered a second straight Wimbledon first-round exit this year, elected to use her protected ranking to enter the main draw of the Aug. 6-15 National Bank Open for the first time since her run to the 2019 final.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SUNDAY JULY 17, 2022

Cressy, Isner Reach Newport Semis

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Maxime Cressy and John Isner earned victories to set up a meeting in the semifinals of the Infosys Hall of Fame Open at Newport, R.I.

Isner, the No. 2 seed, pushed through with a 7-6 (2), 6-7 (6), 7-6 (5) victory over No. 5 seed Benjamin Bonzi of France. Isner had 29 aces and put 65 percent of his first serves in play during a match that lasted just shy of three hours.

Cressy, the No. 4 seed, got past fellow American Steve Johnson with a 6-7 (3), 6-4, 6-4 victory. He overcame 12 double faults by logging 27 aces while winning 90 percent of first-serve points (55 of 61).

In the opposite side of the bracket, No. 1 seed Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada fell 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (4) to Jason Kubler of Australia in a second-round match. Kubler's victory was the resumption of a match from Wednesday that was suspended due to darkness.

No. 2 seed Andrey Rublev of Russia advanced to the quarterfinals at Bastad, Sweden, with a 7-5, 6-4, 7-6 (2) victory over Federico Coria of Argentina.

Rublev will move on to face Laslo Djere of Serbia, who was a 7-5, 6-2 winner over Swiss qualifier Marc-Andrea Huesler.

No. 8 seed Sebastian Baez of Argentina also advanced to the quarterfinals with an easy 6-2, 6-3 victory over Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain. Baez next will face Dominic Thiem of Austria, who was a 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-4 winner over No. 4 seed Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain.

Winning breeds confidence. Just ask Dominic Thiem.

Meanwhile Dominic Thiem backed up his first tour-level win in 14 months with an impressive 7-6(5), 3-6, 6-4 victory against Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut to reach the quarter-finals at the Nordea Open.

Thiem, who defeated Emil Ruusuvuori on debut in Bastad earlier this week, played with great intensity and power throughout his two-hour and 41-minute clash against the fourth seed to earn another crucial win.

"It is great to play here," Thiem said in his on-court interview. "It is an amazing atmosphere and I am so happy that I won today so I can have at least another match tomorrow. It was really good.



"The win against Emil gave me confidence that I can compete against the best players in the world and today against Roberto. He is always such a tough opponent. I was expecting and hoping it would be a close match. Then when I won the first set in the tie-break I said 'Hey, I can win today.' I had the belief until the end of the match and the third set was really good."

The 28-year-old missed the second half of last year due to a wrist injury and arrived at the ATP 250 clay-court event in Bastad holding a 0-6 tour-level record in 2022. However, he has shown signs of promise on the clay in Sweden to reach his first tour-level quarter-final since Madrid in May 2021.

Thiem will next play Sebastian Baez after the Argentine defeated Spaniard Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-2, 6-3. Baez clinched his maiden tour-level title in Estoril in April.

"It is a process. I beat Ruusuvuori and today I beat Bautista Agut. Two really top opponents, so if I can beat them I am definitely back," Thiem added. "I am into the quarters of a really strong tournament, so I am happy. It is a process, but I am going the right way."

In a tight match, Thiem rallied from a break down in the first set and then played with more freedom in the third set, opening his shoulders to hit through the court and improve to 2-4 in his ATP Head2Head series against the fourth seed Bautista Agut.

Djokovic Wants Olympic Gold Medal

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic has won every top tennis competition with one notable exception: the gold medal.

The Serbian sensation was the hot favorite to win the gold at the recent Olympic Games in Tokyo (2021). However, he didn't manage to conquer the elusive title, to his great disappointment.

Soon after winning Wimbledon, Djokovic comments:

"Somehow, it's been coming in cycles for 10 years, that gold medal for Serbia is missing. I dream about it, the reason I didn't get to it is maybe that I was stressing too much about it. That doesn't mean it won't happen in the future."

The next Olympic Games will be staged in Paris in 2024 and Novak will have another opportunity to have a go at the gold medal.

"The next Olympics is in Paris, it will be played on clay. I know well the club where it will be played, there is still a lot of time until then, two more years, I am old in the sports sense, now I need more time to take care of my body and stay healthy both mentally and physically, to have that longevity in my career. I don't have a limit and a limit when I would like to finish," he added.

Tokyo to Host 2025

World Championships

EUGENE (Dispatches) - Tokyo has been selected as host city for the 2025 World Athletics Championships, the sport's governing body announced a day before this year's event begins in Eugene, Oregon a year later than planned due to COVID-19.

The event will return to the site of last year's Olympic Games in the year that the Japanese Association of Athletics Federations (JAAF) celebrates its centenary. Nairobi, Silesia and Singapore had also bid for the championships, while Budapest will host the 2023 version.

"Within an extremely strong field of candidates Tokyo offered a compelling bid," World Athletics President Sebastian Coe said after the decision of WA's ruling Council.

"I hope this will be a shining light for Japan as they celebrate 100 years of the JAAF in 2025, by bringing world-class athletics back to the people in Tokyo."

Tokyo held the event in 1991, highlighted by the incredible world-record breaking long jump duel between gold medalist Mike Powell and Carl Lewis, while it was also held in Japan in 2007 with Osaka hosting.

The Council also confirmed that following next year's World Athletics Cross Country Championships in Bathurst, Australia, the next two editions will be held in Medulin and Pula, Croatia (2024) and Tallahassee, Florida (2026).

Hoffman, Hubbard Share

Barracuda Championship Lead

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Charley Hoffman piled up 13 points to share the first-round lead with fellow American Mark Hubbard in the US PGA Tour's Barracuda Championship in Truckee, California.

Both Hoffmann and Hubbard had seven birdies and a bogey to top the leaderboard in the event that uses the Modified Stableford scoring system.

"I got off to a good start," said Hoffman, who claimed the most recent of his four PGA Tour titles at the 2016 Texas Open.



Juventus Shift Sights to Arsenal's Gabriel

TURIN (Dispatches) - Juventus have approached Arsenal about the possibility of signing defender Gabriel, according to The Independent. The 24-year-old has come to the side's attention as their hopes of signing Kalidou Koulibaly or retaining Matthijs de Ligt virtually ended.

Newcastle have abandoned pursuit of two of their top transfer targets and are drawing up a new list due to disillusionment with

quoted fees and wage demands, according to the Telegraph. The paper reports that the club's hopes of signing 22-year-old Alexander Isak and 23-year-old Moussa Diaby from Real Sociedad and Bayer Leverkusen respectively have been dropped for a focus on younger and less established players.

The Times reports Tottenham are set to complete their signing of 21-year-old Middlesbrough player Djed Spence for £12million. Antonio Conte had been keen on Spence's flexibility as a defender.

And Chelsea have suffered a blow in their pursuit of AC Milan forward Rafael Leao, according to the Daily Mail. Milan are expected to offer the 23-year-old a new long-term contract and are reluctant to sell him for anything under £127m.

Rashford Looks Forward To New Season With Man United

LONDON (Dispatches) - Marcus Rashford is refreshed, refocused and relishing this "fresh start" under new Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag following a poor season.

It is a year and three days since the 24-year-old suffered the crushing disappointment of missing a penalty in England's shoot-out defeat to Italy in the European Championship final at Wembley.

Post-tournament shoulder surgery meant Rashford did not feature for United until mid-October, when an initial flurry of goals quickly dried up during the forward's poorest campaign to date.

It was a bad season for everyone connected with the Old Trafford giants but the appointment of Ten Hag has brought new optimism to both club and player.

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag and Marcus Rashford during a press conference at AAMI Park

"I think we can do a lot together," Rashford said. "For me, it's a fresh start and something I am looking forward to.

"The first two and a half weeks of training have been good. We've improved a lot, we're a lot fitter than we were last season. "And also we're making mistakes along the way, so we have a lot of room for improvement.

"I'm in a good place right now and I'm just looking forward to getting more games under my belt and get ready for the season."

Rashford looked sharp during his 45 minute cameo in Tuesday's 4-0 friendly win against Liverpool in Thailand, with further action to come over United's three matches in Australia.



Everton Not For Sale

LONDON (dispatches) - Everton majority shareholder Farhad Moshiri has insisted the Premier League club is not for sale after talks with a consortium looking to take over at Goodison Park.

Former Manchester United chief executive Peter Kenyon was the frontman of a group that entered into exclusive negotiations to purchase Everton.

The consortium, bankrolled by real estate tycoon Maciek Kaminski and mining magnate John Thornton, had reportedly hoped to complete a £500 million (RM2.6 billion) deal for Everton.

But, in a message on Everton's website on Thursday, Moshiri said that any new investment would only be a minority stake.

"There has been much talk of investment in our football club recently - even takeovers - but I want to clarify that there is no 'for sale' sign currently hanging outside Everton Football Club," Moshiri said.

"It will always be pragmatic to explore all potential investment opportunities and, as I have been transparent about, I am focused on completing the financing for our fantastic new stadium as well as strengthening the playing squad, and that might include a minority investment. That will continue.

"But I want to reassure all of you that Everton Football Club is not for sale." Everton have posted total losses of more than £370 million over the last three financial years following huge investment in the playing squad for little reward.

Moshiri has become the target of fierce criticism from Everton fans, with the club's narrow escape from relegation last season failing to save him from further abuse.

