

Member of the National Security Commission of Majlis Regarding the U.S. President Visit to the region And His Baseless Accusations About Iran, said: "This Visit Was a Show and a Way to Advance the U.S. Internal Needs."

IRAN NEWS

Iranian-Produced Film "Drowning In Holy Water", Directed by Navid Mahmudi, Was Selected as The Best Film at the 5th Malaysia International Film Festival That Ran From July 10 to 15


VOL. XXVIII, No. 7544 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

TUESDAY JULY 19, 2022 - TIR 28, 1401

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UK Urged to Release Jailed Iranian National

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of High Council for Human Rights, Kazem Gharibabadi, has criticized the British Government for rejecting the return of a Christian Iranian national, Richard John, and called for his immediate release from jail.

The Iranian national has been in prison for two decades due to some accusations, Gharibabadi said while censuring the move for not giving him even a day-long furlough or not letting him be dispatched to a protected hospital for treatment.

Gharibabadi, who is also the deputy chief of the Judiciary for international affairs, said the Iranian national is not in a good condition in the jail, and he is even deprived of medical services.

Despite the Iranian Foreign Ministry's effort to follow up on his case to return him home, the British side did not take the due measure, the official noted.

While he was hopeful of being deported to Iran, Mr. John gave up his British citizenship years ago; meanwhile, the UK did not agree to free him under the pretext that he could be a danger to British nationals, Gharibabadi underlined.

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FM Updates Blacklist of U.S. Officials

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Foreign Ministry has updated its sanction list of former and current American officials and individuals who deliberately support the anti-Iran terrorist Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) group.

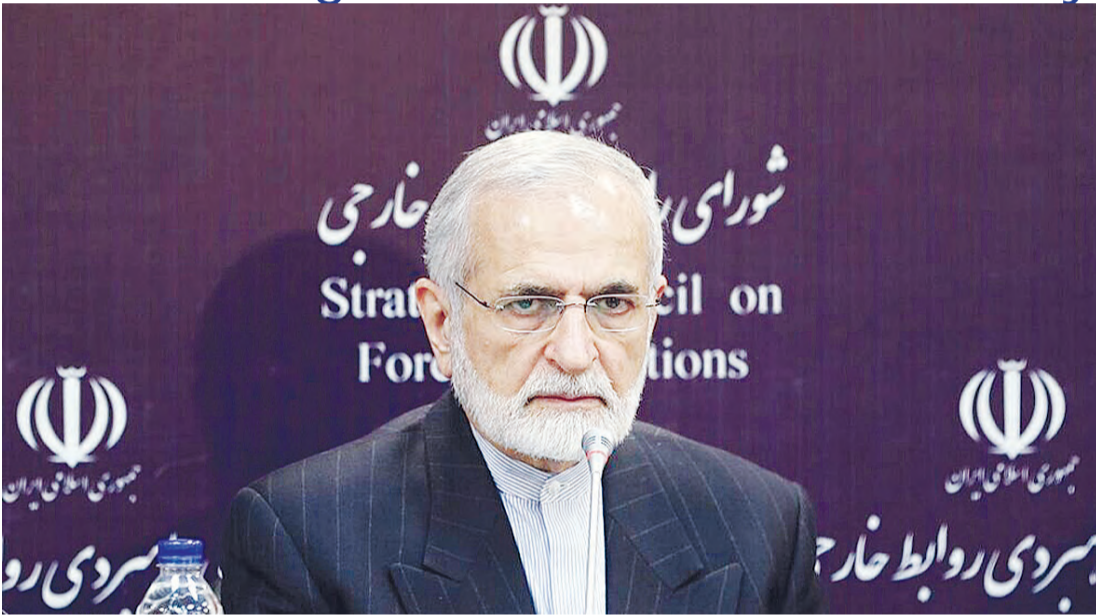
In a statement issued, the ministry said 61 U.S. individuals were designated in accordance with an Iranian law titled "Countering Violations of Human Rights and Adventurist and Terrorist Actions of the United States of America in the Region," particularly Article 4, passed by Iran's Parliament in August 2017.

The blacklisted individuals include former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former White House National Security advisor John Bolton, who have attended the terror group's meetings. Senator Ted Cruz and Senator Bob Menendez are also among the designated other persons.

The ministry said the U.S. officials have supported the MKO terrorist group through participation in its gathering, acknowledging their terrorist acts and objectives as well as providing political and propaganda support to it.

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Iran to Respond in Kind to Any Measure Against Its National Security



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian diplomat says the Islamic Republic will respond in kind to any measure against its national security from any neighboring country, in a veiled reference to the countries that have normalized their relations with the Israeli regime.

Kamal Kharrazi, the head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, made the remarks in an interview with the Al Jazeera news network published on Sunday.

"Targeting our security from neighboring countries will be met with a response to those countries and a direct response to Israel," he warned.

Tehran has emphasized that it pursues a policy of improving relations with neighboring countries, while at the same time making it clear that the countries, which are normalizing their relations with Israel and allowing the occupying regime to establish a foothold in the region, are betraying the Palestinian cause and bringing instability to the region.

Kharrazi, however, said Israel is in a phase of weakness and US President Joe Biden's support for the regime would fail to bring it back to the fore.

Kharrazi said Iran has carried out extensive military drills to demonstrate its capability to hit targets deep inside Israel in the event "our vital and sensitive facilities are targeted."

During the interview, Kharrazi, a former foreign minister, also said Tehran calls for launching regional talks to be attended by important countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Qatar, and other states.

He noted that Qatar has made important proposals on holding dialog among regional countries and that Tehran has expressed its full readiness in this regard.

The sole solution to regional crises, according to the senior diplomat, is the formation of a regional dialog forum in order to find settlements to political and security disputes among regional countries.

Kharrazi also welcomed recent remarks by Saudi officials about extending a hand of friendship to Iran, saying Tehran is ready to enter into dialog with Riyadh in order to restore bilateral relations to normalcy.

He said Iran and Saudi Arabia are two important countries in the region and resolving their differences would lead to major changes in West Asia.

Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian protesters, enraged by the Saudi execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, stormed its embassy in Tehran.

Riyadh did not change its overt confrontational foreign policy towards Tehran until 2020 when it began to show an inclination to fix bilateral ties. Since April 2021, Iraq has hosted several rounds of talks between the two powerful regional states.

Kharrazi also rejected allegations that Iran has intentions to make nuclear weapons, saying this is while the Islamic Republic possesses the technical capabilities, such as increasing the level of uranium enrichment from 20 percent to 60 percent.

Kharrazi dismissed any possibility of talks about "our missile program and our regional policies," saying any negotiation on the two subjects would mean submission to the enemy.

Regarding the indirect negotiations with the United States to revive the 2015 Iran deal, he said it is difficult to conduct a direct dialog with Washington in light of a thick wall of mistrust due to hostile US policies toward the Islamic Republic.

He added that there are no guarantees that the US would continue to honor the Iran deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), if the deal is restored, and "this prevents any possible agreement."

Israel to Be Sole Loser of Any New Aggression Against Gaza

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The Gaza-based resistance movement of the Islamic Jihad warns the Israeli regime against attempting any new round of aggression against the Palestinian enclave.

"The threats issued by the rulers of the occupying regime are hollow. They know this well that any new aggression against the Gaza Strip will not be easy [for them]," Islamic Jihad official Ahmad al-Mudallal said.

"Israel is going to be the sole loser of such offensive because it cannot take the resistance's [counter]attacks," he added.

The remarks came after the Israeli regime's caretaker Prime Minister Yair Lapid alleged that Tel Aviv would "respond swiftly and forcefully" to any projectile or incendiary balloon that could be fired or sent towards the occupied territories from the direction of Gaza.

Mudallal said the Israeli premier was issuing such threats in line with his electoral hopes. Lapid, he said, was trying to endear himself to the "extremist and Zionist" voters ahead of the elections in November.

The Palestinian official hailed the resistance's performance during the last Israeli war on Gaza as a "new stage in the annals of confrontation against the Zionist enemy."

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Iran Exports Proceeds Top \$13.5b in 4 Month

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Central Bank of Iran (CBI) figures show foreign exchange revenues driven from the country's non-oil exports have increased by more than 82% in the nearly four months to July 17 compared with the same period in 2021.

The CBI said in a Sunday statement that exports proceeds supplied to a government-run foreign exchange system known as NIMA had exceeded \$13.5 billion since the start of the calendar year in late March.

It said exporters had sold more than \$167 million worth of their proceeds to importers on the NIMA system on Sunday.

Facing a tight supply of foreign currency in 2018 because of US sanctions, Iran introduced regulations requiring exporters to sell their forex proceeds to importers on NIMA where the exchange rate is normally lower than the market.

However, the amount of foreign currency supplied to NIMA can have a major impact on rates in the unofficial market in the Iranian capital Tehran.

One US dollar sold for 321,000 Iranian rials at the close of trade in the market in Tehran on Sunday, slightly down against figures reported on Saturday.

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President Urges Poets to Promote Culture of Ghadir

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - On the occasion of Eid al-Ghadir, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi met with the religious poets of the country and listened to their poems.

In a meeting with a group of poets from all over the country on Sunday evening and on the night of Eid al-Ghadir, while congratulating on this Eid, President Raisi described the transmission of Ghadir culture from generation to generation and the explanation of Imam Ali's (AS) teachings as one of the missions of poets and those involved in literature, and said, "Your poets and people who are interested in Ahl al-Bayt play a great role in transferring the Ghadir culture to future generations because of your constant effort to explain Islamic teachings".

The President called the Ghadir event as one of the historical facts in Islam and while emphasizing the high importance of this event in Shia beliefs and culture, he said, "As an event in which Imam Ali (AS) was introduced as the guardian of the Muslims and the Islamic community and the successor of the Prophet, Ghadir is literally one of the great blessings of God".

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Iraq PM Vows to Push for Iran-Saudi Rapprochement

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi says his country will keep pushing for a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in line with efforts to ease regional tensions.

Kadhimi told The Associated Press that Baghdad would keep up its role in hosting talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, adding that it is in his country's interest to keep pushing for a rapprochement between Tehran and Riyadh.

"Iraq contributed to the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement, and several sessions held were successful and fruitful, and a great rapprochement took place," the Iraqi premier said.

He emphasized that Iraq would continue to encourage dialogue between the two sides.

"We have seen positive reactions to the role played by Iraq by the Iranian and Saudi sides and also at the level of regional and international leaders," Kadhimi pointed out.

Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian protesters, enraged by the Saudi execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, stormed its embassy in Tehran.

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Leader Pardons Large Number of Convicts

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has pardoned or commuted the sentences of convicts on the occasions of Islamic Eids Al-Adha and Al-Ghadir.

On the occasions of Eid Al-Adha and Eid al-Ghadir, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution has agreed to pardon or commute the sentences of as many as 2272 of those convicted by the public and Revolutionary courts, the judicial organization of the Armed Forces as well as the courts related to government's personnel.

The list of the convicts had been sent to the Leader by the Judiciary head Mohseni Ejei and the Leader agreed with pardoning or reducing their sentences in accordance with the constitution.

U.S. Continues to Resort To Iranophobia to Foment Crisis in Region

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Ministry spokesman says the United States is trying to foment tension and crisis in the West Asia region by resorting to its policy of Iranophobia.

Nasser Kan'ani made the remarks in reaction to the latest remarks by US President Joe Biden, who accused Iran of destabilizing activities in the West Asia region during an address to a summit of regional Arab states in the Saudi city of Jeddah on Saturday.

"Around the world, we're seeing efforts to undermine the rules-based order: with China's increasingly coercive actions in the Indo-Pacific and beyond; with Russia's brutal and unprovoked war against its neighboring Ukraine; and with Iran's destabilizing activities," Biden claimed.

Responding to Biden's remarks, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman described the US president's remarks as baseless and unacceptable, saying, "Such groundless allegations are in line with Washington's policy to incite sedition and create tension in the region."

Kan'ani said the United States is the sole country that has used nuclear weapons and in addition, its track records are marked with continued interference in the internal affairs of regional countries, occupation and military aggression as well as massive weapons sales and promoting militarism in West Asia.

"Once more, the United States is trying to create tension and crisis in the region by resorting to its failed policy of Iranophobia," he said.

He said Iran's strategic policy is to avail itself of peaceful nuclear technology within framework of international rules and regulations while, at the same time, continue



negotiations for the removal of sanctions imposed on the country.

He said, "False accusations that the United States levels against Iran's peaceful nuclear program while turning a blind eye to several decades of the Zionist regime's deception as a regime that is not a member of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) while possessing the biggest nuclear arsenal in the region, are a major sign of hypocrisy of the US government."

Citing the United States' decades-long blind and unrestrained support for the usurping Zionist regime, the Iranian spokesman said, "Without a doubt, the US government is the main supporter of the continued occupation of Palestine and al-Quds and a culprit to daily crimes of this regime against Palestinians as well as systematic violation of human rights of the oppressed and resistant nation of Palestine."

Kan'ani concluded his statement by reiterating that Iran pursues the principled and constructive policy of dialogue with neighbors and intra-regional initiatives.

"Regional governments are expected to answer the Islamic Republic of Iran's call and initiatives for [the promotion of] dialogue and regional cooperation by taking constructive steps in favor of collective security, peace, stability and joint development," he said.

Iran Vows to Pursue Athletes' Visa Denial Via Int'l Bodies

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Ministry of Sport and Youth announced on Saturday that it will pursue through international channels a move by the US, Canada and Britain to deny Iranian athletes visas to take part in world championships.

The announcement was made by Mohammad Hassan Taghizadeh, in charge of international affairs at the ministry on Saturday.

He called the move political, hostile and unwise, which violates sports regulations.

Taghizadeh said that the case will be seriously pursued offering evidence that the rights of the Iranian athletes have been violated.

The ministry official said that the visa denial has prevented Iranian sportsmen to take part in matches in different fields such as tennis, football and karate.

In May, Canada's national men's football team also withdrew from a friendly match with Iran, citing what it called the untenable geopolitical situation of Iran.

Taghizadeh said that the Canadian move was a political decision too, adding that the Ministry of Sport and Youth is following up that case as well and results will be announced soon.

Tehran, Caracas Discuss Scientific Cooperation



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian and Venezuelan ministers of science and technology on Sunday discussed ways how to boost scientific cooperation between the two countries.

Iran's Mohammad Ali Zolfi and Venezuela's Gabriela Jiménez-Ramírez held their talks virtually.

Referring to sanctions imposed by the United States against the two countries, Zolfi said that Tehran and Caracas should turn the sanctions into opportunities for growth.

He briefed his Venezuelan counterpart on the scientific development of Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution victory.

The Iranian minister said that the number of university students was 170,000 before the revolution; currently 3.2 million Iranians are studying at universities across the country.

He also said that more than 80,000 academic board members are involved in research and training, while nearly 50 science and technology parks are hosting researchers.

Although Iran accounts for one percent of the world's population, the country makes up two percent of the whole scientific production across the globe, Zolfi noted.

Therefore, he added, sanctions can be turned into opportunities and Venezuela can take the same path as well.

Jiménez-Ramírez, on her part, proposed that an exhibition showcasing Iran's scientific capabilities is held in Venezuela for the Latin American country's universities and researchers to get familiar with those capabilities.

She said that her country is willing to use Iran's experience in fields such as health and pharmacology as well as energy and petrochemicals, adding that the ground will be laid for the presence of Iranian knowledge-based companies in Venezuela.

She referred to her previous visits to Iranian universities and said that the Islamic Republic has a high scientific and research capacity.

That is why Caracas welcomes the development of scientific relations with Tehran, the Venezuelan official added.

President Urges Efforts to Streamline Border Trade

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Ebrahim Raisi has called for authorities to make efforts to improve the livelihoods of people living in border areas.

Speaking at the coordination session of the three branches of government, President Raisi also said border trade must be streamlined.

The president, the parliament speaker and the Judiciary chief then proposed and approved the formation of a taskforce to fight good and foreign currency smuggling. The proposal is aimed at streamlining good smuggling by human porters and fighting its social, human and economic harms.

At the meeting, President Raisi called for making border trade healthy and for supporting legal activities and fighting the social and economic impact of illicit transportation of goods.

President Raisi, Parliament Speaker Mohamad Bagher Ghalibaf and Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ezhei also put on agenda the issue of improving the situation at the Haft Tappeh sugarcane factory in southern Iran.

Workers at the factory have repeatedly complained about working conditions there.

Arts, Culture Appropriate Field for Deepening Tehran-Tokyo Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of culture and Islamic guidance in a meeting with Japan ambassador said that expansion of bilateral cultural and artistic relations is an appropriate pretext for deepening and expansion of comprehensive ties.

Mohammad-Mahdi Esmaili said that for instance different kinds of arts and culture weeks can be held for deepening the two nations' cultural relations.

He also referred to a public book reading movement titled "Migrant of Sun Land", whose subject was a narrative book written by a Japanese lady, Konico Yamakura, who changed her name into Saba after marrying an Iranian man, Mr. Babaie, whose son was martyred during the Iraqi imposed war.

Esmaili also condoled with Japanese ambassador on assassination of the former Japanese prime minister, telling him that the Iranian nation have always had kind feelings for the Japanese nation, knowing that the Japanese are hardworking people, with strong will and very successful.



He said that the development of political ties and comprehensive cooperation among countries is the first condition for strengthening the friendship bonds among nations, and fortunately all those factors are present in relations between the Iranian and Japanese nations.

The Japanese ambassador, for his part, in the meeting appreciated the culture minister for his condolence message on the occasion of the late Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, telling him that late politician had played a decisive role in expansion of Iran-Japan bilateral ties.

He also expressed delight that today the two countries' relations are deep and strong.

Ambassador Ikawa Kazutoshi focusing on the Japanese mother of martyr Babaie, said that she was a very prominent personality, and her loss is quite sad, as she has presented very precious translations from Persian to Japanese language, arguing that her popularity among the Iranian people is exemplary.

Superpowers Behaved Like Hitler Under Pandemic

TEHRAN (MNA) –Health Minister Bahram Einollahi on Sunday said that "the superpowers behaved like Hitler towards Iran during under the Coronavirus pandemic."

Iran's minister said that "the superpowers treated us like Hitler because they sanctioned medicine and vaccines for the Iranians."

During the Coronavirus pandemic, Iranian scientists achieved medical success and were able to produce six very advanced vaccines, he underlined.

Covid-19 era showed that the health staff is with the people, he said, noting that the sacrifice of the medical community was obvious during this period.

On July 16, The Health Ministry announced that 64,704,093 Iranians have received the first dose and 58,064,477 people have so far received the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Furthermore, 28,340,424 people have also received the third shot as the booster jab.

Despite the high Covid-19 death toll in other countries, the rate in Iran has sharply declined. The reason lies in the 13th government's reliance on domestic capacity and its admirable efforts for public vaccination.

Thanks to the trust and reliance on domestic capacity and the unremitting sacrifices of the medical staff and public vaccination, the country has achieved great success in this area, President has earlier said, noting that according to the World Health Organization and international organizations, Iran is among the countries that have been able to prevent and treat Covid-19.

The first cargo of Iran's domestically-made COVID-19 vaccine (COV-Iran Barakat) arrived in Nicaragua on Tuesday, June 21.

Tehran Welcomes Meeting of FMs of Azerbaijan and Armenia

BAKU (Dispatches) - Iran welcomes the meeting of the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia, Iranian ambassador to Azerbaijan Seyed Abbas Mousavi wrote on his Twitter page, Trend reports.

"The I.R. of Iran supports any process/initiative that leads to lasting peace, stability and security in the region. Bilateral talks and intra-regional dialogues (3+3 Mechanism / Iran-Russia-Turkey+Azerbaijan-Armenia-Georgia) are the best for a long-term stability and cooperation in the South Caucasus", the ambassador noted.

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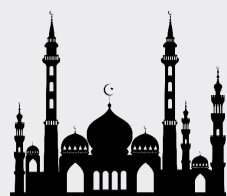


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■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:03

34. We have already sent down to you verses making things clear, an illustration from (the story of) people who passed away before you, and an admonition for those who fear (Allah).

Surah 24, Light (34)

Iran Exports to EU Up 45% y/y in May

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian exports to EU countries rose by nearly a half year on year in May to reach €102 million.

Figures by the European Union's statistics agency (Eurostat) show Iran's exports to EU countries rose significantly in May.

Eurostat figures covered in a Sunday report by the official IRNA news agency showed that Iranian exports to the EU countries had risen by 45% year on year in May to reach €102 million (nearly \$103 million).

The figures showed that Iran's imports from the EU had reached €300 million, down 8% from May last year.

Trade between Iran and the 27-member EU had reached a total value of €2.075 billion in the five months to May, up more than 12% compared to the same period in 2021.

Iranian exports to the EU rose 39% year on year in January-May to top €465 million, while imports from the EU rose 6% over the same period to



reach €1.61 billion, showed the Eurostat figure.

Germany was Iran's largest trade partner in the EU in the five months to May as trade between the two countries rose 6% year on year to stand at €779 million with Iranian exports accounting for €131 million of the shipments.

Iranian trade with the EU has rebounded from historic lows reported in recent years as the country has managed to overcome the economic difficulties caused by a series of American sanctions imposed in 2018.

Iran has sought to capitalize on the opportunities created by the US sanctions by encouraging more activity in the non-oil sector of its economy and by supporting increased trade ties with the rest of the world.

Iranian customs office figures show foreign trade reached a milestone of more than \$100 billion in the calendar year to late March.

Exports to Turkey Up 192% in Q1



TEHRAN (MNA) - The Spokesman for Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said that 3,070,000 tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$1.737 billion, were exported to neighboring Turkey in the first three months of current year.

Seyyed Rouhollah Latifi made the remarks on Sunday and stated that Iran's export of products to Turkey from March 21 to June 22 registered a 363 and 192 percent hike in weight and value respectively as compared to the same period of last year.

At the threshold of Turkish President's visit to Iran, he said that Iran's export of non-oil products to neighboring Turkey increased considerably last year (ended March 20, 2022) and this growth in export has still continued.

About 19,500,000 tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$11.4 billion, were exchanged between Iran and Turkey last year in 1400, showing a 73 and 64 percent growth in weight and value respectively as compared to the last year's corresponding period, Latifi emphasized.

Of total goods exchanged between the two countries last year, Iran exported 15.7 million tons, valued at \$6.1 billion, to Turkey while it imported 3.7 million tons, valued at \$5.3 billion, into the country from Turkey.

Elsewhere in his remarks, IRICA spokesman said that Turkey has always been ranked among Iran's first four trade partner in terms of imports and exports in a way that 12 and 11 percent of country's total weight and value of trade done with the world related to Turkey.

Livestock products, fisheries, dairy products, plants and flowers, fresh fruits and vegetable, dried nuts, saffron, food products, tobacco, cigarettes, construction materials, minerals, petro-refinery products, home appliances, cosmetics, industrial products and footwear were of the main products exported from Iran to the neighboring Turkey.

Transit Through Iran 43% Ups

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran is boosting rail and road transit through its territory beating the record of 43 percent increase in freight transit within three months.

Rail and road transit are steadily increasing through Iran's territory as transited freight recorded 2.8 million tons in the last three months showing a 43 percent increase compared to the same period in the last year, according to Mohammadreza Hedayati, the director-general of Transit and International Transportation Bureau at Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (RMTO).

Hedayati, speaking to IRIB, pointed to the increasing demands for road transit due to the change in the logistics system and increased costs for [maritime] freight transit.

Iran targets 20 million tons of transit a year in the road sector which necessitates good connections to the railway networks and border terminals, he informed.

Relevantly, the inauguration of the Razi Border terminal is expected by the next month that is joint Iran-Turkey Border Terminal.

Quite recently, transit through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) was unprecedentedly put into effect following the official launch of the eastern section of the Corridor by the arrival of the first Russian rail freight transit to India through Iran on 12 July.

The train leaving Russia from Chekhov on July 6 is heading to India's Nhava Sheva Port. It has entered Iran through Sarakhs Border after traveling 3800 kilometers through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

The train carrying 39 containers, is transporting a 1600 km rail route in Iran southwards to Bandar Abbas Port.

International North-South Transport Corridor is a corridor to increase trade between India and Russia. This multi-modal trade route is 7200 Km long and aims at reducing the costs between India and Russia by about 30 percent and the transit time from 40 days by more than half.

Iran Exports Witnessing Good Growth

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Mehdi Safari, Deputy Iranian Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy said that exports, including those to Europe, Central Asia and Caucasus, as well as Russia have grown well.

Safari did not mention during which period the growth has taken place, but added that the mentioned regions and countries buy Iranian oil products and import goods to Iran.

For example, he noted, sunflower oil, wheat and barley were imported from a European country in the

past week, while Iran exported three types of oil and petrochemical products to it.

The official made the remarks at a national seminar on economic diplomacy.

Safari also said that Iran ranks among the world's top ten countries in science and technology and has already begun exporting technological services to other nations.

As an instance, he added, Iran has dispatched a robot to Indonesia, which is equipped with surgical technology.

World Cup 2022; Opportunity for Iran Tourism Boom

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Secretary of High Council for Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones termed World Cup 2022 as a chance for tourism development in Iran.

Like other Persian Gulf countries, Iran is planning to attract World Cup spectators traveling to Qatar to visit Iran's tourist attractions in the remaining months of the 2022 World Cup, Saeed Mohammad said.

With proper planning, the tourist needs of the fans of the teams to visit the tourism centers of Iran have been provided, he added. Five cruise ships have been supplied, two of which are based in Kish, he said, adding that three more will be joined them.

Earlier, Iran's Minister of Heritage, Culture, Tourism and Handicrafts, Sayyid Ezzatollah Zarghami warned that the enemies have intensified their psychological campaign against Iran known as Iranophobia for fear of a tourism boom in Iran ahead of the World Cup in Qatar later this year.

The minister already predicted that lots of tourists and football fans could visit Iran because of its proximity to Qatar and other elements such as its favorable weather condition and eye-catching historical and cultural sites.

The FIFA World Cup will take place in Qatar from 21 November to 18 December 2022.

Iran to Start Free Installation of Smart Electricity Meters at Homes

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran will start to install smart electricity meters for households without charging them based on a mandate issued by the Iranian parliament.

Members of the parliament allowed the Energy Ministry to use funds generated from electricity price hikes for heavy consumers to install millions of smart meters at homes across Iran.

A senior Energy Ministry official said the new parliament law would accelerate the installation of smart meters for households.

Mostafa Rajabi, who serves as CEO Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC), said Iran has already installed more than one million smart meters for heavy consumers

of electricity, including 350,000 meters for households and around 650,000 for customers in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors.

Rajabi said at least 250,000 smart meters will be installed at Iranian houses in the calendar year to late March.

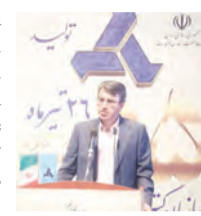
Energy experts say installing smart meters could lead to a major reduction in the overall electricity consumption in Iran.

They say the smart meters will also enable households to save money by controlling their energy bills as they become aware of how much it is costing them to use electric devices in real time.

IDRO Unveils "Strategic Document 1406"

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Concurrent with July 17 and 55th foundation anniversary of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO), the organization in a ceremony unveiled the edited version of its first strategic document 1406.



The ceremony was held in the presence of head of IDRO and managers of IDRO's subsidiary companies, head of industries and mines commission of Majlis and deputy of Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade on legal and Majlis affairs.

Addressing the ceremony deputy industry minister and head of IDRO Mr. Ali Nabavi pointed to the special coordinates of national economy and said the new IDRO strategic document is based on development-centered expansion and added that the IDRO outlook in the strategic document will be a leading body in industrial development and broadening platforms of renovation and industrial innovation in the 1406 (Iranian year) outlook.

Nabavi pointed to four macro strategies of IDRO which are focused on this new document: empowering and renovation of industries, developing innovative platforms, developing platforms, targeted development of investment and developing management, and elevating merits.

He then explained ways for implementing those macro strategies and highlighted other major properties of this strategic document 1406 (Iranian year).

Nabavi also reiterated that observing laws and management of the human resources infrastructure are important issues in the subsidiary companies of IDRO.

Golden Performance of Shiraz Petrochemical Co. in Q1

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Shiraz Petrochemical Company in the first quarter of the current Iranian year has performed significantly in the field of sales of products as it sold products worth of 49,000b rials in the first quarter which shows 187% growth in sales of its products in the similar period in the preceding year.



According to reports, the sales of Shiraz Petrochemical Company have increased by 187% in the first quarter of the current calendar year, which began on March 21, compared to the same period last year. The company sold rials. 49,000 billion worth of products during the first quarter of the year, setting a new record in its sales.

The growth came despite rising concerns about the low season in the global markets for the items produced in the facility.

Meanwhile, the plant's sales rose 12% in terms of volume during the first quarter year-on-year.

Meanwhile in the first quarter of the current year, the company with production of 968,000 tons of different products has registered a new record and it shows 10% growth comparing to the same period last year.

By the way the company's production comparing to its nominal capacity has increased 19% and with inclusion of the budget of the first quarter, the company has experienced 22% growth in production.

Iran Tries to Get Its Water Share From Hirmand River

TEHRAN (IP) - The Director-General of the Energy Ministry's water information and data office says that efforts are underway to pay Iran's share of water from Helmand (Hirmand) River this year.

Firouz Ghasemzadeh stated that Iran held a meeting with the Taliban government in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday, adding that ruling government in Afghanistan is ready to settle the problem of water right.

Referring to Iran's efforts to solve technical issues for releasing water, Ghasemzadeh expressed hope that this year Iran will reach its water share of Helmand (Hirmand) River.

In his further remarks, Firouz Ghasemzadeh added: "Global drought has affected the whole world, and part of it has impacted Iran, and the highest temperature increase is experienced in the northwest of the country."

The Director-General of the Energy Ministry's water information and data office said: We have been experiencing drought for the last two years, so that last year the country has a 37% decrease in rainfall and this year it had a 27% decrease.

Ghasemzadeh emphasized: "Currently, 49% of the reservoirs of the dams are full, but the volume of the reservoirs this year has decreased by 4% compared to last year, so all of us are obliged to manage the water crisis together."

All Eight Crew Killed in Cargo Plane Crash in Greece

KAVALA (Dispatches) - All eight crew members of a cargo plane that crashed near the Greek city of Kavala died in the accident, Serbia's defense minister said.

The Ukrainian-operated Antonov An-12 was carrying around 11 tons of weapons, including mines, to Bangladesh when it crashed on Saturday night, minister Nebojsa Stefanovic said.

Videos shared by eyewitnesses on social media showed the plane engulfed by a giant fireball as it hit the ground.



India's Covid Vaccinations Hit 2b New Cases

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The Indian government's Covid-19 vaccinations hit 2 billion today, with booster doses underway for all adults, as daily infections hit four-month high, official data showed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extolled the vaccination milestone, celebrating the world's largest and longest-running inoculation campaign, which began last year.

"India creates history again!" Modi said in a tweet. The prime minister has faced allegations from the opposition of mishandling the pandemic that experts claim killed millions. The government rejects the claims.



Russia Prepares for Next Ukraine Offensive



KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia is preparing for the next stage of its offensive in Ukraine, a Ukrainian military official said, after Moscow said its forces would step up military operations in "all operational areas".

As Western deliveries of long-range arms begin to help Ukraine on the battlefield, Russian rockets and missiles have pounded cities in strikes that Kyiv says have killed dozens in recent days.

"It is not only missile strikes from the air and sea," Vadym Skibitskyi, a spokesman for Ukrainian military intelligence, said late on Saturday. "We can see shelling along the entire line of contact, along the entire front line. There is an active use of tactical aviation and attack helicopters."

"Clearly preparations are now underway for the next stage of the offensive."

The Ukrainian military said Russia appeared to be regrouping units for an offensive toward Sloviansk, a symbolically important city held by Ukraine in the eastern region of Donetsk.

The British defense ministry said on Sunday that Russia was also reinforcing defenses across areas it occupies in southern Ukraine after pressure from Ukrainian forces and pledges from Ukrainian leaders to drive Russia out.

Ukraine says at least 40 people have been killed in Russian shelling of urban areas since Thursday as the war launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin on Feb. 24 intensifies.

Dozens of relatives and local residents attended the funeral of 4-year-old Liza Dmytrieva in the central Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia on Sunday. The girl was killed in a missile strike on central Vinnytsia on Thursday that killed 24 people, according to Ukrainian authorities.

Rockets hit the northeastern town of Chuhuiv in Kharkiv region on Friday night, killing three people including a 70-year-old woman and wounding three others, said regional Governor Oleh Synehubov.

"Three people lost their lives, why? What for? Because Putin went mad?" said Raisa Shapoval, 83, a distraught resident sitting in the ruins of her home.

To the south, more than 50 Russian Grad rockets pounded the city of Nikopol on the Dnipro River, killing two people who were found in the rubble, Governor Valentyn Reznichenko said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia was continuing to sow grief and death on Ukrainian soil eight years on from the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014. International investigators have said the plane was downed by a Russian surface-to-air missile likely fired by Russian-backed militia in the region.

Zelenskyy said his thoughts were with relatives of the dead and that nothing would go unpunished. "Every criminal will be brought to justice!" he wrote on Twitter.

Moscow, which calls the invasion a "special military operation" to demilitarise its neighbour and root out nationalists, says it uses high-precision weapons to degrade Ukraine's military infrastructure and protect its own security. Russia has repeatedly denied targeting civilians.

Kyiv and the West say the conflict is an unprovoked attempt to reconquer a country that broke free of Moscow's rule with the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Spain, Portugal Battle Wildfires as Heatwaves Scorch Southern Europe

LISBON (Dispatches) - Authorities across southern Europe battled to control wildfires burning across thousands of hectares of land in countries including Spain, Greece and France, where thousands of people have been evacuated in soaring temperatures.

In Spain, helicopters dropped water on the flames as searing heat and often mountainous terrain made the job harder for firefighters.

National weather agency AEMET issued high temperature warnings for today, with highs of 42 degrees Celsius forecast in Aragon, Navarra and La Rioja, in the north. It said the heatwave would end tomorrow, but warned temperatures would remain "abnormally high".

Spain has been experiencing a nearly week-long heatwave, with highs of 45.7C.

In Malaga province, wildfires raged into the night, affecting local residents near Mijas, a town popular with northern European tourists. British pensioners William and Ellen McCurdy had to make a quick escape from their home yesterday. They were taken to a local sports centre with other evacuated people.



Biden Disputes Saudi Account of Khashoggi Murder Discussion

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden differed with Saudi Arabia in their account of discussions at a bilateral summit about the 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a major point of contention between the two countries.

U.S. intelligence agencies believe Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the killing in 2018 of Khashoggi, a Saudi insider-turned-critic who had been living in self-imposed exile in Virginia. The de facto Saudi ruler denies it.

Answering reporters as he arrived at the White House from his first Middle East trip as president, Biden disputed the Saudi foreign minister's account that he did not hear Biden blame Mohammed bin Salman for the killing of the Washington Post columnist, a harsh critic of his native Saudi Arabia.

Asked whether the minister of state for foreign affairs, Adel al-Jubeir, was telling the truth in recounting the exchange between Biden and the crown prince, the president said "No".

Jubeir said the crown prince, known as MbS, had told Biden the kingdom had acted to prevent a repeat of mistakes like Khashoggi's killing and that the United States had also made mistakes.

The minister told Fox News on Saturday that he "didn't hear that particular phrase" from Biden blaming the crown prince.

A Saudi official who was present at the meeting said the exchange was not as President Biden described and discussion over Khashoggi occurred before the official meeting in "an informal way".

The official said he did not hear the president telling the crown Prince that he held him responsible for Khashoggi's killing.

Biden, asked whether he regretted exchanging a first bump with MbS on Friday, replied: "Why don't you guys talk about something that matters? I'm happy to answer a question that matters."

Taiwan President Launches Local Election Campaign

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen launched her party's campaign for November local elections on Sunday, touting the island's economic resilience in the face of global challenges like the war in Ukraine and inflation.

While Tsai and her ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) swept the 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections, the main opposition party the Kuomintang (KMT) made strong gains in 2018 elections for mayors and councillors.

Introduced as "Captain Taiwan" at the DPP's annual congress, Tsai told the party the post-pandemic era was full of challenges and opportunities, pointing to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and soaring global inflation.

"But we can remain confident in ourselves. Taiwan's economic fundamentals are good, and many industries have also grasped a key strategic position in the process of global supply-chain restructuring," she said.

While Taiwan has downgraded its 2022 economic growth forecast below 4% and may cut it again, policymakers have repeatedly pointed to continued strong exports as a positive sign, particularly of semiconductors.

Tsai, the party chairwoman, said what happened in 2018 was a "profound lesson".

"But we all know very well that the people taught us a lesson because they want us to be better."

Asked by reporters whether she was confident about the election, Tsai gave a thumbs-up.

The Nov. 26 poll will be a test for both parties ahead of the presidential and parliamentary vote in early 2024, and will be held against the backdrop of rising military pressure from China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory.

Taiwan's mayoral and councillor elections are traditionally more about local matters like pollution and social issues than about Taiwan's international position or ties with China. Tsai did not mention China.

However, Premier Su Tseng-chang, who spoke before her, criticized China's "rude and unreasonable pressure", quoting Tsai as saying Taiwan's people will be unbowed.

The KMT, which ruled China before fleeing to Taiwan at the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949, traditionally favours close relations with Beijing, which has left it open to DPP attacks it will sell out the island's freedom and democracy.

The opposition party denies this but could not shake the accusations ahead of the 2020 elections, leading to the DPP landslide.



North Macedonia Votes to End Dispute With Bulgaria

SKOPJE (Dispatches) - Lawmakers in North Macedonia passed a French-brokered deal aimed at settling a dispute with Bulgaria and clearing the way to long-due European Union membership talks.

With 68 votes, the 120-seat parliament voted in favour of the agreement. Opposition lawmakers did not participate in the vote and left the room.

"Today we are opening a new perspective for our country...from today we are moving with accelerated steps to join the EU family," Prime Minister Dimitar Kovacevski said in a press conference after his cabinet approved parliament's conclusions. Kovacevski said the first meeting between his government and the EU would be held on Tuesday.

The deal proposes that North Macedonia's constitution be amended to recognize a Bulgarian minority. The proposal does not require Bulgaria to recognize the Macedonian language. In exchange, Bulgaria will allow its West Balkan neighbor to start membership talks with the EU. After the agreement was adopted, governing party deputies rolled out EU and North Macedonian flags.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who travelled to Skopje and urged lawmakers on Thursday to vote the deal, said the vote "paves the way for opening the accession negotiations rapidly."

Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama, whose country has been held back because the EU has linked its progress to that of North Macedonia, said an Albanian delegation would travel to Brussels on Monday to start membership talks.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken welcomed the vote, saying Washington recognized "the difficult tradeoffs considered in this compromise, which acknowledges and respects North Macedonia's cultural identity and the Macedonian language."

The leader of the biggest opposition party VMRO-DPMNE, Hristijan Mickoski, whose party protested against the deal since the beginning of July, said "nothing was over". He added his party would not back constitutional changes which require two-thirds of the vote. Bulgaria's parliament lifted its veto on Macedonia-EU talks last month. This also triggered protests in Bulgaria and contributed to a no-confidence vote that toppled the government.



U.S. Tourists Outpace Paris Stores as Euro Drops



PARIS (Dispatches) – U.S. tourist Shauna Wilson said she wore four dresses at LVMH’s La Samaritaine department store in Paris, seduced by prices as the euro hit par with the U.S. dollar.

The euro fell below \$1 on Wednesday for the first time in two decades amid fears that soaring energy prices caused by the conflict in Ukraine could push the European Union into a protracted economic crisis. Read more

“It looks like it’s for sale here,” said Wilson, 49, of Colorado, whose purchases included two dresses for her daughter. “Because the euro and the dollar are almost the same, that definitely encourages us to spend.”

The weaker euro is a big draw for tourists, especially Americans – who were marked as a major growth driver for the European luxury goods sector in the second quarter, according to analysts from Barclays.

The strong dollar against the euro contributed to a fourfold increase in tourism spending in Europe in June compared to last year, with spending from Americans accelerating, UBS analysts said, citing data from value-added tax refund company Planet.

The luxury sector has recovered quickly from the pandemic as people scrambled to spend the money saved during the lockdowns – and buy food for themselves as social contact resumes.

But sales in China, the world’s largest market for luxury goods, have fallen this year as a new wave of strict coronavirus lockdowns shuttered stores, slashed demand and reduced the number of high-spending Chinese tourists in Europe. Read more

So, as Americans fill up on transatlantic flights, their enthusiasm to take advantage of the weak euro is helping to make up for lost business as a result of the lack of Chinese visitors, who were the main source of luxury sales growth in Europe before the pandemic.

Luxury Goods Companies, Burberry reported higher sales in Europe, which helped offset a more than 30% drop in China. Read more

It was France that benefited the most from the tourists’ boast.

UBS analysts said sales to tourists in France jumped in June to just 11.3% below 2019 levels, a positive sign for French luxury brands that have significant exposure to their home market.

American tourists have been thronging the Rue Montaigne in Paris this week, wandering the luxury boutiques, which feature designer names like Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Gucci.

Cheryl Penn, 70, a realtor from Delray Beach, Florida, has already bought herself a skirt and stocked up on baby clothes for her granddaughter.

“We just hit the street, so we just started our shopping trip,” Ben said.

“I like that the euro and the dollar are the same, so I know exactly what I’m spending,” she said.

TikTok influencer Jennifer Groner took part in a shopping spree in Paris in April when the euro was under pressure against the dollar.

“I’ve never seen anything like this in terms of price savings,” she told Reuters, estimating that she bought a Birkin bag from Hermès in Paris for \$4,000 less than it would have cost in the United States, and paid just over \$9,000, thanks to a VAT refund.

“You can travel to Europe and enjoy the culture but at the same time you can buy a bag,” said Groner, who also bought handbags and accessories from Prada, Dior, Louis Vuitton and Chanel. U.S. prices, based on their calculations.

Monica Arora, founder of pursebop.com, a news and information site for luxury brands, said she believes brands will eventually “coordinate” pricing.

Digital Tool Helps Shield Journalists From Online Violence



LONDON (Dispatches) - With rates of online violence on the rise, a media foundation has developed a free tool to help shield journalists from harassment.

Created by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the TRFilter identifies harmful or abusive comments made in English on a Twitter account, blurs the comments, and provides “toxicity scores” to help a user decide whether to view the posts.

It works “to protect your mental well-being, to protect or minimize your exposure to this barrage of toxicity,” Heba Kandil, a senior manager for media freedom at the Thomson Reuters Foundation, told VOA.

Research shows large percentages of female journalists experience online violence, and often struggle to find help in dealing with it.

The Reuters app offers features to address that, including the ability to create reports of harassment that can be shared with third parties such as newsroom editors or authorities.

It was developed with female journalists in mind, said Kandil, noting that they are affected by online violence at disproportionate rates.

A report released by UNESCO and the International Center for Journalists in 2021 found nearly 75% of the female journalists who responded to a survey had experienced digital harassment.

Media rights organizations say the attacks result in some women switching beats, refraining from covering certain stories, or even leaving the profession.

Lucy Westcott, emergencies director at the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, said she felt unprepared for online harassment directed at her while working as a reporter at a news outlet in 2016.

Shortly after one of her stories was published, Westcott started to receive “very nasty language” in her Twitter mentions, as well as messages with photos of violent imagery.

Westcott told her editor and a senior colleague about the situation, and was advised to “lock [her] account.” She deactivated it for about two months, during which the harassment finally died down.

Westcott called the harassment “emotionally devastating” and said it made her feel “extremely scared and very unprepared.”

“It made me want to completely disconnect with any kind of social media platform,” Westcott said. “To this day, I try to not spend much time on [social media] at all.”

The experience is one of the reasons she decided to work for the CPJ. The media rights group offers training and security advice on digital and physical attacks.

Beyond gender-based harassment, journalists of racial, sexual and religious minorities also face higher rates of online violence, research shows.

The joint UNESCO-ICFJ report found that over half of respondents who identify as Arab were victims of offline attacks associated with online violence, compared with 20% of all women respondents.

Social media can be a dangerous space for journalists because it makes them “more visible than they were previously, pre-internet,” said Jennifer Henrichsen. The assistant professor at the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University is an expert in digital and physical threats to journalists.

Henrichsen pointed to a range of possible perpetrators, from everyday citizens to grass-roots collectives to state-sponsored actors.

“Maybe they are trying to discredit the journalist because they don’t like what that journalist happens to write about,” Henrichsen said. “Maybe they’re even just trying to slow down the journalist’s work or prevent the progress of their beat.”



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OPEC+ to Assess Oil Market

JEDDAH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said a U.S.-Arab summit did not discuss oil and that OPEC+ would continue to assess market conditions and do what is necessary. "There was no oil discussion at the summit," Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud told a news conference, adding there were discussions with the United States and consumer nations about crude all the time.

U.S. officials said President Joe Biden would discuss energy security with leaders of Gulf oil producers during his visit and hoped to see more action by OPEC+ to boost output, but there was unlikely to be any bilateral announcements from the talks. The United States is eager to see Saudi Arabia and its OPEC partners pump more oil to help tame crude prices. OPEC+, which also includes Russia, meets next on Aug. 3.



G20 Finance Talks Overshadowed by Ukraine End Without Joint Communiqué

LONDON (Dispatches) - A two-day meeting of finance ministers from the Group of 20 major economies ended Saturday in Indonesia without a joint communiqué after Russia's war in Ukraine divided the global forum.

During talks on the Indonesian resort island Bali, the finance chiefs looked for solutions to food and energy crises, while accusing Russian technocrats of exacerbating the problems.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers and Canadian Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland blamed the invasion of Ukraine for sending a shockwave through the global economy.

In place of a formal communiqué would be a 14-paragraph statement issued by Indonesia, the G20 chair's Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said in closing remarks.

She said there was consensus on most of the document but two paragraphs would focus on members' differences regarding the war's impacts and how to respond.

"I think this is the best result," she said.

At the beginning of the second day of talks, Indonesian central bank governor Perry Warjiyo called on ministers and global finance leaders to concentrate on recovery in a world economy reeling from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The meeting took place after the International Monetary Fund slashed its global growth forecast, with another downgrade expected this month as U.S. inflation stokes fears of a recession.

But the talks have been overshadowed by the Ukraine war after it roiled global markets, caused rising food prices and added to breakeven inflation. The Kremlin calls the war a "special military operation" and blames retaliatory Western sanctions for blocking food shipments and rising energy prices.

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov and Ukrainian Finance Minister Serhiy Marchenko participated virtually in the meeting.

Russian Deputy Finance Minister Timur Maksimov attended the talks in person a week after Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov walked out of a G20 meeting over Western criticism of the invasion.

Maksimov was in the room as Western officials expressed their condemnation, according to a source present. Marchenko called for "more severe targeted sanctions" against Moscow.

Indonesia has refrained from uninviting Russia from G20 meetings, including a leaders' summit in November, even as Western nations repeated their calls for Moscow to be frozen out of the group.

Both Yellen and Freeland, who has Ukrainian heritage, said representatives of Russian President Vladimir Putin's government had no place at talks.

Observers said the failure to agree on a joint communiqué would hinder coordinated efforts to solve rising inflation and food shortages.

"The lack of a G20 finance ministers' communiqué means it will be more difficult for the G20 to forge a consensus on vital issues in the fall," said Eric LeCompte, executive director of Jubilee USA Network, an NGO that lobbies for developing nation debt relief. "Internal divisions hinder the G20's ability to act decisively and leaves the world in uncharted waters."

Yellen held bilateral meetings with counterparts from Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Australia, Singapore and Turkey, the Treasury said, lobbying their support for a price cap on Russian oil to cut off Putin's war chest.

Italy Raises Growth Forecast for 2022

ROME (Dispatches) - The Bank of Italy has raised its economic growth estimates for this year, but warned that the estimates could still be reduced dramatically if natural gas imports from Russia were cut off.

The bank on Friday predicted the economy would grow 3.2 percent this year, up from an estimate of 3 percent in its previous estimate from April. The new estimate was a dose of good news in Italy in a context of surging inflation.

On the same day, the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) confirmed earlier estimates showing that prices in June increased by 8 percent year-on-year, a new record high, and by 1.2 percent on a monthly basis.

Higher energy prices stemming from the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine were major factors impacting both the growth and inflation data.

ISTAT said energy prices were 48.7 percent higher in June than a year ago, a bigger increase than in any other sector in the latest period. Economists have noted that high energy prices have a knock-on effect across the economy, raising prices for industrial production, agriculture, transportation and in other areas.

In its economic note, the bank said that while the crisis in Ukraine is already having an impact on the country's growth prospects, the implications would be dire if Russia decided to cut off gas supply to Italy entirely. Earlier this week, Italian energy giant Eni said Russia's Gazprom cut its gas delivery to Italy by a third.



The Bank of Italy said Friday that if the supply was cut off entirely, economic growth this year would increase by less than 1 percent, and such a move would also have a big impact on inflation.

Another factor weighing on the Italian economy, according to news reports, is political uncertainty. Olli Rehn, governor of the Bank of Finland, said that European Central Bank (ECB) was taking Italy's political woes into consideration as it prepares for next week's ECB policy meeting.

Rehn also said the energy crisis could hit Italy particularly hard due to the political situation.

Canada Sees Highest Interest Rate Hike in Decade

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - The Bank of Canada raised its interest rate by a full percentage point for the first time to fight soaring inflation.

The central bank raised its key lending rate by 100 basis points - four times the usual increase - to 2.5% to fight skyrocketing inflation.

The Bank of Canada raised the overnight rate to 2.5% the biggest increase since 1998 and the highest level since 2008.

The bank said inflation is higher and more persistent than had been projected and the bank expects it will likely remain around 8% in the next few months. It blamed the war in Ukraine, ongoing supply disruptions and excess demand in Canada.

The bank warned that if elevated inflation becomes entrenched, the economic cost of restoring price stability will be higher.

"Inflation is too high. And more people are getting more worried that high inflation is here to stay. We cannot let that happen," Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem said.

"The Canadian economy is overheated. There are shortages of workers and of many goods and services. Demand needs to slow so supply can catch up and price pressures ease."

He said the bank decided to front-load the path to higher interest rates and said more rate hikes are expected.

The Consumer Price Index in Canada rose by 7.7%, the highest yearly increase in almost 40 years. The bank said more than 50% of price categories have risen by more than 5%.

Most economists had forecasted a rate hike of three-quarters of a percentage point.

"After being overtaken by the Fed in June, the Bank of Canada reclaimed its top-gun status, with the highest policy rate among G7 countries and the biggest step in this tightening cycle, as it seeks to calm inflation fears," Karyne Charbonneau, a senior economist at CIBC Capital Markets, said in a note.

It is the fourth consecutive interest rate increase for the Bank of Canada since March. The bank was slow to start tightening monetary policy even as inflation took hold last year.

"By front-loading increases now we are trying to avoid even higher rates down the road," Macklem said.

India on Course to Become World's Fastest-Growing Economy

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India's economy has remained resilient in the face of global headwinds and with inflation coming off its recent peak is expected to stay on course to become the world's fastest-growing economy, the Reserve Bank of India said.

The recent revival of the southwest monsoon and renewed planting raised expectations that rural demand will soon catch up with urban spending and consolidate a recovery, the RBI said in a bulletin. "Knock-on effects of geopolitical spillovers are visible in several sectors, tapering the pace of recovery," the central bank said.

"In spite of this overwhelming shock, there are sparks in the wind that ignite the innate strength of the economy and set it on course to becoming the fastest growing economy in the world, though besieged it might be by fears of recession."

It did not give a time frame.

RBI said if the commodity price moderation witnessed in recent weeks endures alongside the easing of supply chain pressures, the worst of the recent surge in inflation will be over.

India's annual consumer inflation remained painfully above the 7% mark and beyond the central bank's tolerance band for the sixth month in a row, data last week showed. "There is some evidence now that supply-chain pressures are peaking globally and in India, so that a major source of upward inflation pressures may be ebbing," the bank said.

Referring to the impact of high global crude prices on India's current account deficit (CAD), RBI said the CAD could widen to 2.3% of GDP in 2022/23 if oil prices average \$105 per barrel. It would widen to 2.8% if oil averages \$120 per barrel but still remain "within the sustainable limit of 3%".

World Bank's \$500m Financing for Bangladesh's Disaster Preparedness

DHAKA (Dispatches) - The World Bank has approved a \$500 million credit to help Bangladesh improve disaster preparedness against inland flooding in 14 flood-prone districts benefiting over 1.25 million people.

The Resilient Infrastructure for Adaptation and Vulnerability Reduction (RIVER) project will help Bangladesh reduce vulnerability to riverine and flash floods by constructing over 500 multipurpose flood shelters, access roads, and climate-resilient community infrastructure.

In normal times, the flood shelters will operate as primary schools and they will be equipped with solar energy systems, water,

sanitation, and hygiene facilities that cater to the needs of women and vulnerable populations.

The project will also help strengthen the capacity of communities and government agencies to prepare and respond to floods and undertake behavioral change interventions.

"The heart-wrenching flood situation in Sylhet region is a stark reminder of the increasing risks of climate change to development - more frequent, unpredictable and intense natural disasters," said Mercy Tembon, World Bank's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

"Building on our five-decade long partnership of improving disaster risk management in the coastal region, this project will help Bangladesh improve disaster preparedness in the non-coastal flood-prone areas."

It will also support the country's transition from a disaster response to a disaster risk management approach, she said.

Bangladesh, a low-lying Delta, is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change-related natural disasters, including floods and cyclones.

With climate change, the magnitude and intensity of floods are increasing.

Every year, floods and riverbank erosion affect about one million people but in some years, the numbers can be substantially higher, the World Bank said in a statement yesterday.

The project will help save lives and properties in the highly flood-prone districts in the Teesta-Brahmaputra-Jamuna, Padma, and Surma-Meghna river basins, which are: Nilpamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Bogura, Pabna, Sirajganj, Rajbari, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Madaripur, and Sunamganj, Habiganj.

"Inadequate evacuation facilities for people and their livestock in highly flood-prone areas not only leads to the loss of lives and livelihoods, but it also hampers the ability to provide adequate relief," said Ignacio Urrutia, World Bank's team leader for the project.

Pakistan to Get \$4b From Friendly Countries to Shore Up Reserves



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan is likely to get \$4 billion from friendly countries this month to bridge a gap in foreign reserves highlighted by the International Monetary Fund, the country's finance minister said, two days after sealing a deal with the lender.

The IMF has reached a staff level agreement with Pakistan that would pave the way for a disbursement of \$1.17 billion. The board is also considering adding \$1 billion to a \$6 billion program agreed in 2019.

"As per the IMF, there is a \$4 billion gap," the minister, Miftah Ismail, told a news conference in Islamabad, referring to the shortfall in foreign reserves.

"We will, God willing, fill this gap in the month of July," he said. "We think that we will get \$1.2 billion in deferred oil payment from a friendly country. We think that a foreign country will invest between \$1.5 to \$2 billion in stocks on a G2G (government-to-government) basis, and another friendly country will perhaps give us gas on deferred payment and another friendly country will make some deposits."

Depleting reserves, a widening current account deficit and the depreciation of the Pakistani rupee against the U.S. dollar have left the South Asian nation facing a balance of payment crisis.

Without the IMF deal, which should open up other avenues for external finance, Ismail said the country could have headed towards default.

He said the country will also get around \$6 billion from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in FY2022-2023.

Pakistan secured a \$6 billion IMF program in 2019, but less than half of that amount has been disbursed to date.

Pakistan's central bank has hiked its key interest rate to 15% to curb inflation, which hit 21.3% in June.

Iranian Students Win Annual Int'l Biology Olympiad

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian National Biology Olympiad team won 4 gold medals in the 33rd International Biology Olympiad to win the first place in the world. Mehdi Afshari, Amirreza Zinali, Mohammad Amin Kayani and Mohammad Mehdi Rahimpour are all members of the Iranian Olympiad team, who all won gold medals.

The 2022 World Biology Olympiad was held at Yerevan State University in Yerevan from 10-18 July. The head of Iran's Scientific Committee of the Biology Olympiad was elected as the main member of the International Committee of the Biology Olympiad for the first time.



Germany's Gas Crisis Generates Nuclear Dilemma for Ruling Greens

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German conservative politicians have revived debate on extending the life of the country's three remaining nuclear power plants, and polls show a rise in public support for the energy source in the face of a possible cut-off of Russian gas. But an extension is highly sensitive for Germany's ruling Greens party, which grew out of the 1970s anti-nuclear movement.

Germany's three remaining nuclear power plants are scheduled to be shut down by the end of the year after former chancellor Angela Merkel pledged to halt the use of nuclear electricity after the Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011.

The plants accounted for 6% of Germany's electricity production in the first quarter of 2022.

Debate over keeping the plants running began after Russia's invasion of Ukraine started on Feb. 24 and prompted Germany to decide to end its heavy reliance on Russian fossil fuel.

Experts from Germany's environment and economy ministries said in March they did not recommend extending the plants' lifetime, citing legal, licensing and insurance challenges, the need for extensive and possibly costly safety checks and a lack of fuel rods to keep the plants running.

An extension would not help the country's electricity output in the coming winter, they found, and the necessary investment and effort would only be justified if the plants' operations were extended for at least five more years until 2028.

But falling Russian gas supplies to Germany through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which prompted the government to reconnect on-reserve coal power plants to the grid, and the possibility of an extended outage of the pipeline following routine maintenance that is meant to be completed by July 21 have emboldened pro-nuclear voices in Germany and Europe.

The European Union will next week publish recommendations on how countries can cut gas demand to prepare for winter.

A draft of the recommendations, seen by Reuters, said one option would be to postpone the shutdown of nuclear power plants or switch from gas generation to nuclear where possible.

Last month, a poll by RTL/ntv broadcasters showed some 68% of Germans were in favour of reconsidering the country's nuclear exit. Before the start of the war in Ukraine, a ZDF poll had found only 40% of Germans supported extending the lifetime of nuclear power plants.

But Germany's environment and economy ministries, both run by the Greens, this week said their assessment from March was still valid and that they had not reconsidered their position in light of concerns over gas supply security.

Politicians of the conservative CDU/CSU opposition blame the Greens for the government's resistance to changing its position on the issue, saying it was purely ideological, citing the Greens' roots in the 1970s anti-nuclear movement.

"The Greens prefer to rely on climate-damaging coal-fired power plants ... Inside, they are an anti-nuclear-power party," CDU General Secretary Mario Czaja said.

Czaja said the government could obtain fuel rods from Australia and Canada to keep the plants running, adding he expected Economy Minister Robert Habeck to "move away from ideology".



Responding to the government's nuclear safety concerns, TUEV, a major provider of industrial testing and certification, said it was possible to continue operating the three remaining nuclear power plants from a safety point of view.

"The plants are in a technically excellent condition," Joachim Buehler, managing director at TUEV, told Reuters, adding that an extensive check, which is usually done every 10 years, was necessary but could be done within a few months.

Calls for examining all energy options, including nuclear, are also rising within the ruling coalition of the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens, and the Free Democrat (FDP) liberals.

Michael Kruse, the FDP parliamentary group's energy policy spokesperson said reduced supplies of gas for heating in winter could make consumers use more electric heating, in turn creating power shortages.

"This topic is very sensitive for some parties but the Russian aggression against Ukraine must convince all politicians to consider this issue without ideology and in a new way," Kruse told Reuters.

The Greens still see nuclear power as a risky technology, the party's deputy parliamentary group leader Julia Verlinden said, citing the Chernobyl and Fukushima nuclear disasters.

"Nuclear power is expensive, inflexible and causes radioactive waste for which there is still no repository," Verlinden told Reuters.

Timon Gremmels, energy policy coordinator for the SPD, does not expect the government to change its position on the issue if the Nord Stream 1 pipeline starts up after maintenance but said nothing could be ruled out in the current situation.

Given the Greens' history, crossing the nuclear red line will be difficult, Gremmels told Reuters.

"Habeck is demanding a lot from his party with fracking gas, a longer term for coal. If he now also brings nuclear power, the patience of large parts of the Greens will run out."

UK Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

He further expressed wonder at how John could be a threat to the British nationals when he returns to Iran.

Now, this is the UK that has put the life of the Iranian national in danger, Gharibabadi stressed.

Referring to the improper and inhuman conditions Mr. John faces in jail, Gharibabadi urged the UK to release him and be faithful to its human rights commitments as Tehran had goodwill in two recent cases imprisoned in Iran.

FM Updates...

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According to the statement, the MKO has organized and perpetrated countless terrorist acts over the past decades and killed thousands of innocent civilians, in particular women and children.

Despite the MKO's terrorist nature and atrocious acts of terrorism as well as its violent terrorist and military activities, the ministry said, the United States continues to support this group and has maintained its double standards and hypocrisy in this regard.

Reaffirming Iran's international obligations in desisting and refraining from, among others, facilitating and encouraging terrorist acts, the ministry stressed that the U.S. policy on supporting the MKO terrorist group is "in violation of the abovementioned obligation and constitutes internationally wrongful acts entailing the international responsibility" of the United States, it added.

It emphasized that all relevant Iranian authorities will take appropriate measures for effective implementation of the sanctions stipulated in the parliament's law.

After it was founded more than 50 years ago, the MKO launched a campaign of bombings and assassinations in Iran. Out of the nearly 17,000 Iranians killed in terrorist attacks over the past four decades, about 12,000 have fallen victim to the group's acts of terror.

The ill-famed terror group is currently based in Albania, where it enjoys freedom of activity after being delisted by the European Union and the United States in 2009 and 2012 respectively.

Regardless of its disrepute around the world, the MKO has in recent years held numerous big events, attended by senior American, Israeli and Saudi officials, including former U.S. Senator John McCain, former mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani, John Bolton, former U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman, and former director of Saudi Arabia's intelligence agency Turki bin Faisal Al Saud.

Iran Exports...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran has increasingly relied on non-oil exports in recent years to offset the impacts of US sanctions on its direct sales of oil.

A bulk of the forex proceeds supplied to NIMA are driven from Iran's exports of petrochemicals with figures by the CBI and the Iranian customs office showing that petchem shipments to China and neighboring countries have surged in recent months.

Exporters of minerals and agricultural products have also been among major suppliers of foreign currency to the CBI-controlled NIMA since the system was launched four years ago.

President Urges...

FROM PAGE 1

Raisi considered the development of Imam Ali's (AS) teachings and values as one of the important responsibilities of the people of poetry and literature, and added, "We strongly believe that in the light of Imam Ali's (AS) culture, it is possible to overcome all the current problems and dilemmas of the country, and the first step for this is to clarify the characteristics of his culture to the people and the society, and in this field, you poets bear a very important responsibility".

Continuing his speech, the President Raisi emphasized the importance of guardianship in Islamic beliefs, and noted, "In our beliefs, entering the strong pillar of guardianship is the guarantor of human protection against the troubles of the times. We thank God that today the Guardianship of the Jurists rules at the head of our system. The Guardianship of the Jurists is the greatest blessing of God to us, who guides the society with religious teachings and a justice-oriented view".

Raisi described the system of the Islamic Republic to be the result of the blood of thousands of martyrs, and emphasized, "These self-sacrifices have placed a great responsibility on us as servants of the system and the people, and on you as the religious artists of the country to maintain and continue this system".

In another part of his speech, the President addressed the requests made by poets to create a legal position to support poetry and poets, saying, "No other art has the capacity to elevate and convey authentic Islamic concepts and values like poetry, and therefore, for my part, I welcome and support creating a place to support poetry and poets".

Singapore, Philippines Tighten Monetary Policy On Inflation Fears



MANILA 9Dispatches) - Singapore and the Philippines' central banks have unveiled a surprise tightening of monetary policy in the latest sign of heightened inflation concerns in the Asia Pacific.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) lifted its benchmark interest rate by 0.75 percentage point in an unscheduled rate hike on Thursday, as the central bank signalled it was ready to take further action to tackle rising inflation.

The hike brings the overnight borrowing rate to 3.25 percent, following two back-to-back rate hikes of 0.25 percentage point in May and June.

The tightening came in the run-up to the BSP's regular policy meeting scheduled for August 18.

"In raising the policy interest rate anew, the Monetary Board recognized that a significant further tightening of monetary policy was warranted by signs of sustained and broadening price pressures amid the ongoing normalisation of monetary policy settings," BSP Governor Felipe Medalla said, adding that the central bank stood ready to take "further necessary actions to steer inflation towards a target-consistent path over the medium term".

"To say this is an unusual move by the BSP is an understatement, given that they have been amongst the most dovish and reluctant hikers in Asia," Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst for the Asia Pacific at OANDA, said in a note.

"The US Consumer Price Index and the MAS move today, along with the relentless pressure on the Philippines Peso have swayed BSP's hand, underling the pressures facing Asian central banks now."

Singapore's central bank also tightened monetary policy in an unscheduled move, sending the Singapore dollar 0.7 percent higher.

The move was the fourth tightening in nine months by the Monetary Authority of Singapore, which manages monetary policy through exchange rate settings instead of interest rates due to the city-state's heavy trade flows.

The moves by Philippine and Singapore authorities came a day after the central banks of South Korea and New Zealand hiked their benchmark interest rates by half a percentage point.

Aviation Sector Faces Hiring Headache as Mechanics Shortage Looms

MONTREAL (Dispatches) - Christophe Gagnon considered quitting his avionics studies as COVID-19 crippled aviation, but the 21-year-old stayed in class and now the industry is desperate for more like him to keep planes flying.



Two years after lockdowns nearly grounded the airline industry, repair shops and suppliers are scrambling for students like Gagnon, who received multiple job offers while still at the École nationale d'aérotechnique (ÉNA) in Canada's aerospace hub, Quebec.

The hiring rush is evidence of a sharper than expected recovery in air travel, but also signals a looming labor shortage that is raising costs and could push up repair times as the industry stages an awkward recovery from its worst crisis. Shortages are on the minds of executives at the Farnborough Airshow near London, this year's largest aerospace expo, which starts on July 18.

While a shortage of plane cabin staff has dominated headlines due to recent flight cancellations, finding mechanics also has executives sweating. Roughly \$84 billion is expected in spending this year on maintenance, repair and overhaul of aircraft, according to Naveo Consultancy.

in more affordable areas.

The high-margin services industry is attractive for planemakers like Boeing as air travel rebounds. In 2021, the U.S. planemaker forecast the global industry's need for 626,000 new maintenance technicians over the next two decades compared with 612,000 pilots.

A shortage of aviation maintenance engineers, who certify an aircraft's airworthiness, could lead to canceled flights, or delay appointments for repairs, executives said.

COVID-19 job cuts sped up a pre-pandemic trend of workers retiring or switching to other industries like automotive, and schools are not producing enough graduates to replace them.

"We are struggling in a big way. We can't get enough (workers)," said Abdol Moabery, chief executive of commercial aerospace company GA Telesis LLC.

Despite offering raises upward of 10%, Telesis is working harder to retain labor as soaring housing prices in the company's South Florida location lead some workers to eye offers

Iraq PM Vows to...

FROM PAGE 1

Riyadh did not change its confrontational foreign policy towards Tehran until 2021 when it apparently changed its tack, showing new inclination to fix bilateral ties.

Iraq undertook the role of hosting talks between the two powerful regional states. Baghdad has so far hosted five rounds of talks between Saudi and Iranian officials. Speaking at a press conference in the Iraqi capital last month, Kadhimi said talks in Baghdad between representatives from Iran and Saudi Arabia as part of a diplomatic process aimed at mending relations have made "remarkable progress" and entered advanced stages.

Kadhimi said his country has played an important role in bringing the views of the regional countries closer by hosting talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Iran and Saudi Arabia remain deeply divided over a set of regional issues, mainly the destructive Riyadh war on Yemen.

Israel to...

FROM PAGE 1

The Israeli regime launched its last war against the coastal sliver last May only to be faced with the resistance's intensified response, which saw it firing around 4,000 rockets towards the occupied territories.

The Operation Sword of al-Quds as the response was called, forced the occupying regime to revisit its battlefield strategy and plead with the resistance for a ceasefire agreement.

The operation, Mudallal said, proved that the resistance was "in possession of combat experience and competence, and can create serious concern for the regime."

"The resistance's forces are in a state of constant readiness to respond to any violation by the Zionists," he said, adding, "Previous battles have proven this well."

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

Kerley Wins World 100m Gold

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - American Fred Kerley led a U.S. cleansweep as he stormed to victory in the men's 100m at the World Championships in Oregon on Saturday. Kerley, in lane four, was down on Marvin Bracy for 95 meters of the tight race, but managed to outdip his teammate for victory in 9.86 seconds at Eugene's Hayward Field. Bracy took silver in 9.88sec, Trayvon Bromell claiming bronze in the same time for a third-ever 100m world championship cleansweep for the United States after 1983 and 1991.

Philipsen Wins Stage 15 of Tour de France

PARIS (Dispatches) - Belgian Jasper Philipsen claimed his maiden victory on the Tour de France when he won a bunch sprint in the 15th stage as overall leader Jonas Vingegaard suffered a bad day. Alpecin-Deceuninck rider Philipsen timed his effort to perfection to beat compatriot Wout van Aert and Dane Mads Pedersen, who were second and third respectively. Vingegaard retained the yellow jersey but hit the deck and lost two of his Jumbo-Visma team mates as Steven Kruijswijk crashed out and Primoz Roglic did not take the start of the 202.5-km ride from Rodez after failing to recover from injuries.

Murray Sees Signs of Progress Despite Loss

LONDON (Dispatches) - Andy Murray saw signs of progress during an up-and-down grasscourt season which came to an end with a 7-5 6-4 quarter-final defeat to Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik at Newport, Rhode Island.

The 35-year-old three-times Grand Slam winner had reached the semi-finals of the challenger event on grass in Surbiton before defeating Bublik, Stefanos Tsitsipas and Nick Kyrgios en route to finishing runner-up at the ATP 250 event in Stuttgart.

However, he bowed out in the second round of Wimbledon, where he won titles in 2013 and 2016, after a four-set defeat to John Isner.

"The grasscourt season as a whole there were some good moments, but also some tough ones," Murray said.

"Today's match and the loss at Wimbledon were disappointing and frustrating for me, but then I also had my best wins in a while in Stuttgart.

"So a bit up and down, but a little bit of progress overall and I'll try and keep that going through the hard-court summer."

Former world number one Murray has struggled with a string of injuries in the past few years and is currently ranked 52nd.

The Briton is aiming to get back among the seeds at the Grand Slams as he tries to return to the top echelons of the sport.

"It was disappointing," Murray said of his latest defeat. "(The) first set came down to a couple of points and then I had a few opportunities in the second. But I thought he played a pretty solid match.

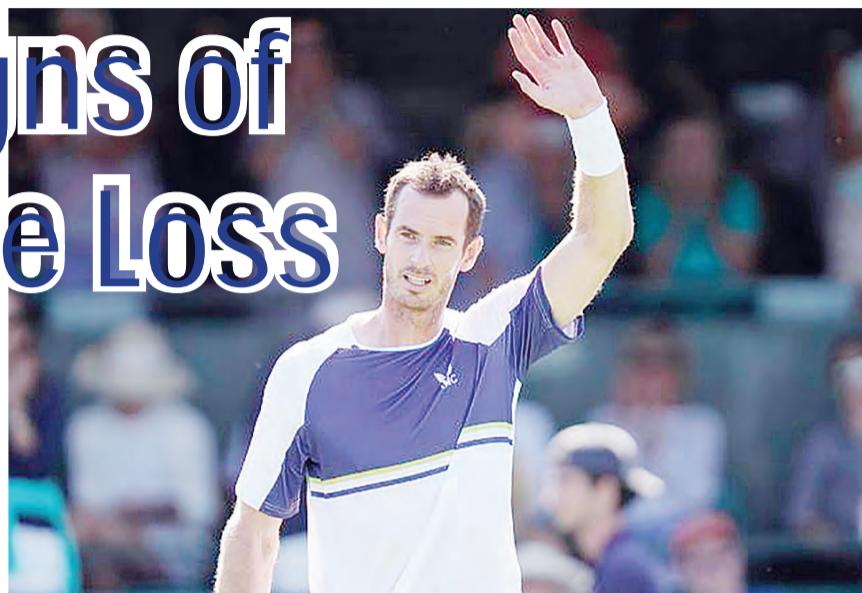
"(I want) to continue to improve. If I keep seeing progress I'll continue to keep playing."

Meanwhile world No. 130 Bernarda Pera powered past Aleksandra Krunic 6-3, 6-3 to win her first career WTA title on the red clay of Budapest.

Bernarda Pera realized a dream with eyes wide open—and riveted on the ball.

Qualifier Pera powered past Aleksandra Krunic 6-3, 6-3 to win her first career WTA title on the red clay of Budapest.

The 130th-ranked Pera did not drop a set



in the tournament. Pera dropped just five games in two qualifying wins then defeated Marina Bassols Ribera, Aliaksandra Sasnovich, Elisabetta Cocciaretto, home favorite Anna Bondar and Krunic to capture her first title in her first WTA final.

"I want to congratulate Aleks for a great week," Pera said afterward. "Thank you for pushing me to play one of the best matches I ever played. I want to congratulate your team as well. I'm really happy for you and I hope to play you in many finals.

"I want to thank my boyfriend for supporting me this week. Thank you for taking my coach's job even though you never touched a racquet before you met me."

The left-handed Pera served 61 percent and saved five of the six break points she faced in a victory that vaults her to No. 81 in the live rankings.

Bursting out of the blocks with confident strikes, Pera won eight straight points and 12 of the first 13 points surging out to 3-0 lead in her maiden WTA final.

Serving for the opening set, Pera lined up a short forehand but pushed the shot down the line and Krunic answered with a lob in the corner to save a set point. Pera squandered another set point committing her third double fault of the game.

Calming the tension, Pera found her first serve when it mattered most.

On her fifth set point, Pera lashed a backhand down the line closing a hard-fought opening set in 44 minutes.

Iran Manhandles Japan To Reach Semis of FIBA Asia Cup



IRAN NEWS SPORTS DESK

TEHRAN – Iran went to its old reliables to drub Japan, 88-76, and book an automatic quarterfinal berth in the 2022 FIBA Asia Cup Sunday at Istora Senayan in Jakarta.

The trio of Hamed Haddadi, Behnam Yakhchali, and Mohammad Jamshidi tore the Akatsuki Five to shreds as Team Melli completed the 3-0 sweep of Group C.

Haddadi imposed his will with 21 points, 11 rebounds, four assists, and three blocks, Yakhchali corralled 21 points, five boards, and two steals, and Jamshidi got 20 points, two rebounds, two assists, and two steals in the win.

Yuta Watanabe was held to a 6-of-15 shooting from the field for his 17 points and 10 rebounds as Japan ended pool play at 2-1.

The Akatsuki Five will now await the loser of the game between the Philippines and New Zealand as its playoff date on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Syria gave Kazakhstan the boot with a 77-67 victory to take the No. 3 seed in Group C.

De Jong Joins Barcelona on Tour Despite €85m Agreement

LONDON (Dispatches) - Frenkie de Jong is part of FC Barcelona's squad for their upcoming pre-season tour in the US despite Man Utd agreeing a fee to sign him.

The Red Devils have been targeting De Jong throughout this summer. New boss Erik ten Hag has identified him as a key target.

Earlier this week, it was reported that Man Utd and Barcelona had come to a 'full agreement' over the transfer. This would see United pay an initial €75m plus €10m extra in add-ons.

Five dinky defenders as Manchester United move for little Lisandro Martinez. The clubs still have obstacles to overcome if the transfer is going to be completed though.

Fabrizio Romano is reporting that the player still has 'no intention' to leave Barcelona this summer.

The saga has now taken a fresh twist as De Jong has been included in Barcelona's squad for their pre-season tour in the states.

The Spanish giants have games coming up during the tour against Inter Miami, Real Madrid, Juventus and New York Red Bulls over the next couple of weeks.

Romano adds that there is 'no agreement on the player side' with Man Utd. It is understood that personal terms are still to be discussed.

Gnabry Offers Bayern Good News by Extending Contract

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich said on Saturday they had extended the contract of Germany winger Serge Gnabry until 2026, the news closely following the announcement of a deal to sell Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona.

Bayern announced the two developments in quick succession as they presented their squad for the upcoming season at the Allianz Arena.

Like Lewandowski, Gnabry's future at Bayern had seemed to be in doubt but on Saturday both sides proclaimed how happy they were with the deal.



Skocic Reinstated as Iran National Soccer Team Coach

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Just days after reports on dismissal of Dragan Skocic as head coach, the Iranian Football Federation (IFF) spokesman announced Sunday that the Croatian will lead Iran into November's World Cup after all.

In the latest episode of a chaotic build-up to Group B games against England, the United States and Wales, Ehsan Osuli said after a meeting of the IFF board of directors that there had been a change of heart.

"The outcome of the meeting is that Dragan Skocic is the head coach of Iran's national team and will continue to be so," Osuli said. "He has a contract until the end of the 2023 Asian Cup."

The federation voted to fire Skocic, who took the job in early 2020, on July 11 after a friendly defeat to Algeria in June and reports of divisions in the team.

Local coaches such as Ali Daei, Javad Nekounam, Amir Ghalenoi and Afshin Ghotbi had been shortlisted to lead Iran past the group stage in its sixth World Cup appearance.

With Skocic now remaining in the job, the federation has appealed for unity.

"We ask that the national team players, the media, ex-players and everyone unite for the common goal to elevate the name of Iran," Osuli added.

India Dismiss England for 259 In 3rd ODI

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Hardik Pandya took a career-best 4-24 as India dismissed England for 259 in the deciding one-day international at Old Trafford.

The pace-bowling all-rounder helped India compensate for the absence of Jasprit Bumrah, due to back spasms, in the finale of a three-match series all square at 1-1.

England captain Jos Buttler top-scored with 60 on his Lancashire home ground -- his highest innings since he succeeded the now retired Eoin Morgan as white-ball skipper.

He shared stands of 75 and 49 with Moeen Ali and Liam Livingstone respectively, but just when it seemed 50-over world champions England were about to cut loose, India pegged them back.

There were 25 balls of the innings remaining when No. 11 Reece Topley was bowled by leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal (3-6) -- the only one of the 10 wickets England lost that didn't fall to a catch.

England started brightly after India captain Rohit Sharma won the toss.

Jason Roy struck three fours in the first over of the day, from Mohammed Shami, off-driving the opening ball for a boundary before clipping the third and fourth deliveries through the legside.

But it was a different story at the other end as Mohammed Siraj, recalled in place of the injured Bumrah in the only change by either side following England's series-levelling 100-run win at Lord's, started with a double-wicket maiden.



Bayern Agree Lewandowski Move to Barcelona

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich confirmed they have agreed a deal with Barcelona for the sale of Poland star Robert Lewandowski to the Spanish club.

"We have a verbal agreement from Barcelona. It's good for both sides that we have clarity," Bayern president Herbert Hainer said on the club's Twitter account.

"Robert is a very deserving player, he has won everything with us. We are incredibly grateful to him."

Bayern did not give details but Spanish and German media reported the two-time FIFA men's player of the year had agreed a four-year deal worth 50 million euros (\$50.4m), including five million in potential add-ons.

Later, the Catalans confirmed the move for the 2020 Champions League winner.

"Barcelona and Bayern Munich have reached an agreement in principle for the transfer of Robert Lewandowski, dependent on the player passing a medical and contracts being signed," they said in a statement.

Forward Lewandowski told German television he would be joining the Barcelona squad on their tour of the United States from July 18-31.

Media reported he would undergo his medical in Miami.

The agreement between the two teams closes the standoff with the 33-year-old who said at the end of May "it is certain that my story with Bayern has come to an end."

