

President Ebrahim Raisi in a Message Felicitated Iran's National Junior Wrestling Team on Winning The World Championship Which Was Held in Italy and Thanked Those Who Involved in This Success

IRAN NEWS

The Number of People Who Died In Wednesday Night Floods in the Imamzadeh Dawood, in the Northwest of Tehran Rose 8 While Some Are Still Missing

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Iran to Increase Citrus, Honey Exports to China

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran will start exports of citrus fruits and honey to China under new agreements reached between the two countries.

The two deals were signed virtually on Thursday between Iran's agriculture minister Javad Sadatinejad and China's customs chief Yu Jianhua, according to a statement by Sadatinejad.

Sadatinejad told the IRIB News that a first agreement would allow Iranian farmers and exporters to access the \$600-million citrus fruit market of China, adding that Iranian honey producers will have the opportunity to compete in China's vast and profitable honey market under the second agreement signed with Beijing authorities.

The minister said the two deals would outline the hygiene and safety protocols required for exports of citrus fruits and honey from Iran to China.

Government figures show Iran's annual production of citrus fruits is around 5.5 million metric tons (mt) while annual honey output in the country stands at around 130,000 mt.

That comes as agrifood shipments only account for around 15% of Iran's annual exports to China, according to the Iranian customs office figures. **See Page 7**

Iran Non-Oil Exports up 22% y/y

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's non-oil exports rose 22% in value terms in March-June compared with the same period last year.

Figures by the Iranian customs office (IRICA) show non-oil exports from the country rose by 22% in value terms in the four months to late July compared with the same period last year.

IRICA figures published on Thursday showed that exports of goods from Iran, including petrochemicals and oil byproducts, had reached a total value of \$17.24 billion for over 35.65 million metric tons (mt) of shipments sold to foreign customers between March 21 and July 21.

China was responsible for \$5.617 billion worth of purchases of Iran's non-oil shipments in March-July, followed by Iraq at \$2.398 billion and the United Arab Emirates at \$2.264 billion, the figures showed.

They showed that Iran's exports to Turkey had reached just over \$2 billion in the four months to July while exports to India stood at \$567 million.

Imports into Iran also rose by 17% in value terms in March-July compared to the same period last year as the country spent \$17.24 billion on nearly 11.16 million mt of shipments over the period, IRICA said. **See Page 7**

President Warns of Iran Harsh Response to Any Act of Aggression



TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi has warned that any act of aggression against the Islamic Republic will draw "a harsh response" from Iranian armed forces that will make aggressors regret their act.

Raisi made the remarks on Thursday as he addressed a group of Iranian Army officers during a visit to Noje Airbase, located 47 kilometers (29 miles) north of the western city of Hamadan.

"In the face of the Islamic Iran's might, no one would even consider the idea of launching an attack on the country's soil. Regional states are proud of Iran's power and feel safe and secure because of such might," the Iranian president said.

He lauded the country's progress in the field of defense industry, stating that the enemy is monitoring the movements and preparedness of Iranian Armed Forces, but cannot take any hostile action due to the capabilities, effective mobilization and willpower of Iranian Armed Forces.

"The Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces (Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei) and we in the administration have declared many times that we will make anyone who wants to attack the country deeply regretful," Raisi said.

He also underscored the importance of the presence of Iranian Armed Forces in open and international waters, hailing the deployment as a measure aimed at establishment of security and promotion of military prowess.

Earlier this week, the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) naval forces said the Islamic Republic will teach a painful lesson to enemies in case they launch any act of aggression against the country.

Brigadier General Alireza Tangsiri made the remarks in a Monday tour of four Iranian islands near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which include the Lesser and Greater Tunbs in addition to Abu Mousa and Siri islands.

"If the enemy takes any foolish measure to foment sedition or carry out an act of aggression against the Islamic establishment, we will respond in a way that would teach them and their allies a painful lesson and will nip that plot in the bud," Tangsiri said.

Meanwhile Raisi said Iran takes its power and national security from its people, who always participate in the country's affairs, although the Islamic Republic enjoys great military capabilities.

In a speech at a gathering of people during his trip to Hamedan Province, in western Iran, the president said the fact that the U.S. openly admits to the failure of its harsh economic sanctions on Iran means the participation of people generates power for the country.

"We take pride in our weapons power, but the most important element of national might and security is in fact the pious and participant people of Iran," he said.

The Iranian nation, he said, always "embraces danger" and stands ready to defend the country, something that serves as a source of frustration for enemies and hope for supporters of the Islamic Revolution.

The enemies are resolved to detach the people from all the ideals that they have faith in, but the "sinister conspiracy" will once again face defeat, the president said.

"Upon the people's demand, we have seriously placed resistance against domineering powers and the hegemonic system on our agenda, and we will never back down on our legitimate positions," President Raisi said.

The enemies, he added, should know that the Iranians are still the same people that stood resistant in the face of the ex-Iraqi regime's eight-year war on the Islamic Republic in the 1980s.

Iran Building Completely Indigenous Research Reactor

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami talks to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) during a visit to the Uranium Conversion Facility (UCF) in Isfahan on Wednesday.

Iran is building a "completely indigenous" nuclear research reactor in Isfahan, head of the country's atomic energy organization says.

The research reactor to test fuel for other reactors will be built at the Isfahan Nuclear Technology Center, Mohammad Eslami said during a visit to the Uranium Conversion Facility (UCF) in the city.

"We have planned that based on the studies carried out, we will officially start the construction of the research reactor at the Isfahan site in the coming weeks," the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said.

"It must be said that this project is completely indigenous and Iranian, which will complete the chain of research, evaluation, testing and assurance of our nuclear power production."

Eslami said the nuclear fuel cycle is the most important part of the nuclear industry. **See Page 7**

Tehran Urges Washington to Be Realistic

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign minister says his country welcomes continuation of the path of diplomacy with the aim of reaching an agreement on the removal of anti-Tehran sanctions and the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, while urging the US to be "realistic".

In a telephone call with European Union (EU) foreign policy Chief Josep Borrell, Hossein Amirabdollahian addressed the issue of the bloc's recent initiative, asserting that Iran "welcomes continuation of the path of diplomacy and negotiations" to reach a deal.

Borrell on Tuesday said he had proposed a new draft text aimed at reviving the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"This text represents the best possible deal that I, as facilitator of the negotiations, see as feasible. It is not a perfect agreement, but it addresses all essential elements and includes hard-won compromises by all sides," he wrote in an article for the Financial Times.

The top Iranian diplomat told his European counterpart that the US constantly says it is in favor of an agreement, adding that if such an intention holds water, the country "should manifest itself [both] in the text of the agreement and in action." **See Page 7**

Kenya Banks on Iran For Tea Sales

NAIROBI (Dispatches) - Kenya is considering increasing its tea export share to Iran and other countries in Asia to cover for expected low demand in Pakistan.

Speaking during the Exporters forum held in Nairobi, Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industries chairman Richard Ngatia said they are wooing Iran to increase its tea imports from the current 56 per cent to 100 per cent.

The Democratic Republic of Congo was identified to be of great potential as a tea export market as the average tea consumption is 10 cups per day.

"Apart from Iran, we want to increase our share of export to United Arab Emirates, Malaysia and Egypt to cover for expected low demand in Pakistan that imports 50 per cent of our tea," Ngatia said.

Last month Pakistan asked its citizens to cut tea consumption to two cups daily as the country battles the highest inflation in four decades. According to the latest Export Performance report tea was among Kenya's export products to Pakistan that dropped in the year 2021 from Sh52.8 billion in 2020 to Sh51.4 billion in 2021. **See Page 7**

Iran's Oil Earnings Soar Despite Sanctions

TEHRAN (OilPrice) - Iran's oil industry seems to be going from strength to strength despite ongoing U.S. sanctions on Iranian energy, as governments worldwide look to secure their oil supplies in the face of global shortages and rising prices.

Several heads of state have announced their intentions to increase the import of Iranian oil as Iran continues to boost production, largely ignoring U.S. sanctions, to ensure their energy supply. Considering Iran's announcement that it saw a 580 percent increase in its oil and condensates income from March to July compared with the same period last year, it appears that U.S. sanctions are doing little to dissuade countries around the globe from purchasing Iranian energy. The country's Minister of the Economy, Ehsan Khandouzi, stated: "Due to the increase in oil exports and our new budget's currency conversion rate, we saw a 580% increase in the treasury's income from the export of oil and condensate in the first four months of this year."

Iran has been pumping oil funds back into its treasury with plans to rebuild its economy as its oil wealth increases. Nevertheless, the country is facing over 50 percent inflation, driving product and utility costs up. The Brent benchmark has increased from \$76 per barrel this time last year to \$104 per barrel now, meaning that Iran can be highly competitive with its oil prices to attract export partners while restoring its oil wealth. **See Page 7**

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Iran Capable of Producing 6 Types of Corona Vaccines

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Health says that the infrastructure of the country has paved the way for producing 6 domestic vaccines in the fight against the coronavirus.

Saeed Einollahi, who accompanied President Raisi in his visit to Hamadan, western Iran, said on Thursday: "Thanks to the efforts of Iranian scientists, the infrastructure and capacity needed to manufacture 6 types of domestic vaccines are available in the country."

Einollahi said the enemies were trying to tarnish the reputation of the Iranian medical staff by representing them as the opponents of the Iranian causes and values, but its efforts foundered.

Tehran Urges Taliban to Remove Barriers to Realization of Iran Water Rights

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister has called on the Taliban government in Afghanistan to remove "artificial barriers" to the realization of the Islamic Republic's water rights.

Hossein Amirabdollahian made the remarks on Thursday during a phone call with the acting Afghan foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi.

The Iranian official said a ranking delegation hailing from Iran's Ministry of Energy were to travel to Afghanistan to work towards removal of standing obstacles in the way Iran's availing itself of its water right from the Hirmand River.

Iran and Afghanistan have been locked in the protracted dispute for decades. The two sides signed a water-sharing accord in 1973, under which Afghanistan pledged to deliver an average of 820 million cubic meters of water per annum to Iran.

The Islamic Republic has repeatedly criticized Afghanistan for failing to honor the agreement.

What has made the dispute bitter is the construction of many hydroelectric projects on the river, most importantly the Kamal Khan dam in Nimroz province, and the Kajaki dam 100 miles (160 kilometers) northwest of Kandahar province.



Adding to his remarks, Amirabdollahian said Kabul's allowing Tehran to exercise its water right in the dispute served as an "important barometer" of the Afghan governing body's commitment to its international obligations towards the Islamic Republic.

He pointed to the southeastern Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchestan's dependence on Hirmand's water, saying if the issue was not "expeditiously and seriously" resolved, it would have an adverse effect on the other areas of cooperation between the countries.

The Afghan official, for his part, described the countries' relations as "brotherly and aimed at helping the Afghan nation."

"We are committed" to allowing Iran to exercise its water right," he added, proposing formation of a joint technical and operational team that could restore the water's direction towards the Iranian territory.

Iran Attained Ballistic Missile Guidance Tech Under Sanctions

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Chief Commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami said that the country managed to attain the artificial intelligence required to guide drones and ballistic missiles while it was under sanction.

Salami made the comment in an address to a seminar attended by thousands of university students in the holy city of Mashhad, northwest Iran.

He said that the artificial intelligence technology enables an unmanned aircraft to fly more than 2,000 km from every point and hit a motion target or a specific location.

The IRGC chief commander hailed Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for making the country powerful and presenting a comprehensive roadmap for its progress.

Salami said that more than four decades after the Islamic Revolution, enemies, including the U.S., are still trying to confront it through sanctions, maximum pressure aimed at isolating Iran, psychological warfare, as well as attempts to destabilize the West Asian region.

But, he added, the Islamic Revolution has led to the rising resistance in the region, with powerful resistance forces now active in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and Syria.

Hungary Welcomes Cultural Exchanges With Iran

SHIRAZ (IRNA) - Ambassador of Hungary to Iran said that his country welcomes cultural exchanges with Iran, adding that Cultural Affairs Department in embassy with its allocated budget is commissioned to boost cultural ties.

Ambassador Zoltan Varga Haszonits who was speaking at the mausoleum of the internationally renowned Iranian poet Hafez Shirazi on the occasion of unveiling a memoir in the honor of a Hungarian renowned poet Csokonai Vitéz Mihály said that the ceremony is related to the cultural relations of Iran and Hungary, which have a long history of about two centuries.

The Hungarian ambassador said the sisterhood between Shiraz and Pecs in Hungary was established in the year 2016, but these two beautiful cities sisterhood must not be limited



to the ongoing ceremony, as the cultural exchanges between the Iranian and Hungarian nations must continue for good.

He said that Csokonai is a poet who has composed in memory of Hafez, and in his poetry he has also like Hafez focused on love and meaning of life.

The Managing Director of Iran Historical Monuments Preservation and Renovation

Hadi Ahmadi, too, said in the ceremony that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, too, is determined to use all its potentials aimed at expansion of tourism and cultural relations with all friendly nations, including Hungary.

He said that Hafez poetry is among the most precious heritage of the world literature, and although he has composed in Persian language, the different translations of his poems, too, reflect the alluring magic and beauty of his works.

Amirabdollahian, Iran Envoy to Sweden Discuss Nouri Case

TEHRAN (MNA) - In a meeting with the Iranian envoy to Sweden, the Iranian Foreign Minister made important recommendations regarding the case of imprisonment of Iranian citizen Hamid Nouri in this country.

Iranian Ambassador to Sweden, Ahmad Masoumifard met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and briefed the Iranian top diplomat about his mission in the political, international, regional, economic, and commercial fields.

During this meeting, Amirabdollahian provided the necessary guidelines regarding the future plans for relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sweden.

The two sides discussed the case of the Iranian citizen, Hamid Nouri who was illegally arrested by Swedish police in November 2019.

Emphasizing that the Stockholm court has not the eligibility to deal with such alleged crimes, the Iranian Foreign Minister made important recommendations regarding the imprisonment of Hamid Nouri in this country.

On July 12, the Secretary of Iran High Council for Human Rights urged the UN to hold the Swedish government accountable for the illegal detention and trial of Nouri, while calling for his immediate release.

Also, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, in a phone call with his Swedish counterpart Ann Linde, had stressed the immediate release of Nouri.

Nouri was arrested upon arrival at the Stockholm Airport in November 2019 and was immediately imprisoned on bogus charges.

Sowing Discord Among Muslims, Major Project of Enemy

TEHRAN (IP) - The secretary general of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought said the enemy aims to sow the seeds of discord among the Muslim countries to break them up.

Addressing the tenth meeting of the Islamic Republic of Iran's cultural attaches held in Tehran on Wednesday, Hamid Shahriari said that the enemy is seeking to divide Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Syria.

Shahriari went on to say that Iranophobia, Islamophobia, and Shiaphobia are three major goals of the enemy.

He added that in order to counter the enemies' plan to sow discord among Shi'as and Sunnis, "we should be after the creation of a united Islamic Ummah and regional integrity." Shahriari stressed the necessity to study and analyze the enemy's plans for cultural invasion, warning that planning cultural activities without considering the enemy's projects would not yield fruitful results.

He said to counter the enemy's conspiracies, Muslim nations should deepen their cultural interactions adding that social media provide a suitable platform to dispatch cultural messages of the Muslim nations.

He added that to this end, the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought is working on several social media projects, including Rubix software on which 10 living languages can be installed.

Tehran Seeking Good, Sustainable Nuclear Deal

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has said Tehran will continue the nuclear talks aimed at removing U.S. sanctions, but it wants a strong and sustainable agreement.

Speaking in a gathering of Iranian cultural attachés abroad, Amirabdollahian elaborated on the latest developments in the talks to remove sanctions against Iran, stating that the foreign ministry would continue the negotiations, but Iran wanted to achieve a good, strong, sustainable deal.

The talks between Iran and the P4+1 have reached stagnation for months after they began to negotiate for a possible return of the US to the nuclear deal a year and a half ago.

Advisor Rules out Iran Made New Demands in JCPOA Talks

TEHRAN (MNA) - Mohammad Marandi, an advisor to the Iranian negotiating team in the nuclear talks said that the Western countries are lying that Iran has made excessive demands beyond the JCPOA.

Mohammad Marandi, an advisor to the Iranian negotiating team in the talks on the removal of anti-Iran sanctions made the comments in an interview with the Jamaran website based in Tehran.

"They falsely claim that Iran has made excessive demands or that it wants to acquire guarantees from the next American administration," Marandi added. He further pointed out that "the framework of the talks have been based on the JCPOA, the authority of the incumbent U.S. president."

The advisor also said that the western countries make the claim that Iran has made excessive demands beyond the JCPOA in order to turn the world public opinion against Tehran.

Marandi also said that Iran needs to make sure that it will benefit economically from any agreement.

He added that the United States is still not willing to give sufficient guarantees to Iran.

Meanwhile, he added that Iran has not made any new demands.

The advisor also pointed out that the removal of IRGC from the list of sanctions was not and is not Iran's precondition in the talks.

"Basically, any tension in our region will greatly increase the oil and gas prices in the world, and this issue will be to Israel and its security's disadvantage," he elsewhere pointed out.

Iranian Nation Firmly Stood Against Enemies Excessive Demands

TEHRAN (MNA) - Commemorating the name and memory of Operation Mersad, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that the noble nation of Iran has firmly stood against the enemy's excessive demands and oppression.

Speaking in an open session of the Parliament, Qalibaf said that the noble and courageous Iranian people, in addition to standing against excessive demands and oppression of the foreign enemy, have also stood against the treachery of traitors (MKO and other terrorists groups) inside the country.

The enemy that once allied with Iraqi Baathist regime and committed brutal crimes against the Iranian people has now exerted economic pressures and has targeted the livelihood of the Iranian people, Qalibaf noted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iranian Parliament speaker pointed to the sanctions imposed against the Iranian people and stated that when enemies' conspiracies were thwarted by the noble nation of Islamic Iran, they resorted to the imposition of economic sanctions and targeted the livelihood of Iranian people.

Sanctions imposed by enemies is in the continuation of their animosity against Iranian people and the Islamic Establishment, he underlined.

Barbarism Not to Avert Doomed Fate of Apartheid Israeli Regime

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry has denounced the demolition of six Palestinian houses in the occupied West Bank, stressing that the apartheid Tel Aviv regime cannot escape its grim fate by pressing ahead with barbaric activities.

"The destruction of six Palestinian residential structures east of Ariha by the Zionist army's bulldozers on Wednesday, July 27, represents a daily practice of the occupiers that includes destruction, shooting, massacre, violence, suppression, arrest of minors, destruction of agricultural lands, chopping down trees, etc.," Nasser Kana'ani wrote in a post published on his Twitter page.

He added, "Of course, the continuation of such barbarism, which takes place under the unconditional support of the United States, will not change the doomed fate of the Zionist apartheid regime."

Israeli forces razed down six Palestinian houses east of Ariha on Wednesday, in what rights advocates condemn as the regime's policy of dispossession and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

Cyberspace Security Needs Revision

TEHRAN (IFP) - The minister of information and communications technology says the government, as the protector of the citizens' interests, has to promote the country's cyber security infrastructure and open up the space for people and businesses.

Issa Zarepour told an information network conference in Iran's ICT Research Institute that in all complicated communications development projects, including the internet of things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI), the administration puts boosting cyberspace security high on the agenda.

The minister said Iran has gained self-sufficiency in hardware products in the field, adding it needs to improve its economic competitiveness in international markets for the next stage.

He said although Iran has come a long way to develop security in recent years, the country needs to further step up the security as many users are still vulnerable to phishing and ransomware messages from hackers.

Iranian online infrastructure, including transportation and railways company, has been targeted by stepped-up cyber attacks in recent months.

Iran says the United States and Israel are behind the sabotage acts.

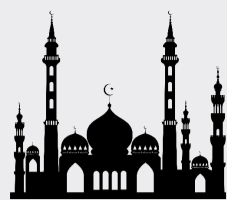
Iranian Police Deliver Hard Blow to Mossad-Linked Group

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Iranian police have arrested the chief and members of an espionage group affiliated with the Zionist regime, the intelligence body of the police said in a press release on Thursday.

The Intelligence Organization of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran said that the group of five was encouraged by a separatist leader to get connected with the Zionist regime's intelligence - Mossad.

Financially or otherwise incentivized by Mossad, the group collected information from critical locations in Iran but were under monitor by the Iranian police intelligence from the very beginning, according to the release.

They also carried out arson attacks and advertised against the Islamic Republic of Iran and had received enough training for armed sabotage operations, the release said, adding that the members of the group were arrested before they could perform such operations.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:30
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:34
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:11

48. When they are summoned to Allah and His apostle, in order that He may judge between them, behold some of them decline (to come).
49. But if the right is on their side, they come to him with all submission.

Surah 24. Light (48 - 49)

Pakistan Eyes Increasing Rice Export to Iran

BY: F. TAHERPOOR

TEHRAN – Chairman of Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) Mr. Ali Hussam Asghar says Pakistan is keen to increase its rice exports to Iran, noting that implementation of barter trade between the two countries will accelerate this rise.

On Wednesday, Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran in collaboration with REAP held the first international Pakistani Rice Festival at Hotel Espinas Palace of Tehran in the presence of Pakistani rice exporters delegation led by Mr. Asghar, Iran's deputy Agriculture minister on international affairs Mr. Hooman Fathi, Head of Iranian Rice Importers Association Mr. Abbas Tavakoli and some Iranian and Pakistan rice business activists.

Addressing the event, Chairman of REAP Mr. Asghar said he is happy that the first edition of international rice festival is being held in Tehran as his country is one of the biggest producers of basmati and Iran is one of the biggest market for Pakistani rice.

He added that the visit and this event is aimed at getting acquainted with Iran's market and Iranian people's taste and he believes those who have dinner in this event will be good ambassadors for promoting Pakistani rice.

Asghar went on to say that Pakistan has increased its rice export to Iran as it has increased its share of Iran's rice market from 5 to 30 percent in recent years. He reiterated that one of the goals of this visit and holding festival is to have some B2B meetings with Iranian rice business activists and discuss the issue of barter trade.

He said that with the support of Pakistan government and Pakistan Ambassador to Tehran, both countries signed agreement for barter trade which is good news especially for REAP. He added that Pakistan's revenues from exporting rice are around \$2.5b annually. He reiterated that Pakistan has exported some \$600,000m of rice to Iran and the association is trying to increase the amount of rice from 100,000 tons to one million tons annually, and implementation of the barter trade will play a key role to this end.

He reiterated some of Pakistan's top rice exporters are accompanying him in his visit to Tehran and hailed efforts of deputy agriculture minister on international affairs Mr. Fathi.



Chairman of Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan Mr. Ali Hussam Asghar (L) and Pakistan Ambassador to Tehran Mr. Rahim Hayat Qureshi are seen addressing the participant at the Rice Festival at Hotel Espinas of Tehran on Wednesday.

Meanwhile Pakistan Ambassador to Tehran Mr. Rahim Hayat Qureshi, for his part, stressed the significance of growing exchanges between the private sector on both sides to strengthen bilateral economic relations between Pakistan and Iran and to reach the target of \$5b in bilateral trade. He then highlighted that the Rice Festival was part of a series of activities to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Independence of Pakistan and 75 years of establishment of diplomatic relations with Iran.

Then Head of Iranian Rice Importers Association Mr. Tavakoli, for his part, hailed efforts of REAP for its presence in Tehran and explained goals of Iran's Rice Importers Association. He then pointed to the good and amicable ties of Iran and Pakistan, and pointed to ways for expansion of trade cooperation like border markers.

He went on to say that unfortunately the trade volume between Iran and Pakistan unlike their political and cultural relation is not satisfactory, stressing that but in recent years the trade volume has increased and it is now around \$1.5b and according to the talks between the two countries, it has been decided this figure to increase to \$5b in a five year span and then to \$15b.

Tavakoli added that currently 35% of Iran's rice import is from Pakistan and hailed Pakistan Embassy and REAP for accelerating the process for export of rice. He further said that Iran's government and Majlis are ready to resolve problems on course to expansion of trade ties and expressed hope Pakistan government would do the same. He also expressed hope that the free trade agreement between the two states would be implemented in order that Iranians can use more Pakistani rice and in return Pakistanis would also enjoy more Iranian goods.

Deputy Agriculture Minister on International Affairs Mr. Fathi in the event welcomed the REAP delegation as chief guest on the occasion.

At the end of the event delectable Pakistani and Iranian dishes made with Pakistani long grain aromatic basmati rice were served.

Head of PR of Iran Business Hub UAE Appointed

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Business Hub UAE in a decree appointed Hamid Talimi as his advisor and Head of Public Relations of the trade center.

In his decree, Mr. Mohammad Reza Talee pointed to the great experiences and commitment of Mr. Talimi as the reasons behind his appointment as the new head of public relations of the center and his advisor.

Talee expressed hope Mr. Talimi by employing his experiences would succeed in materializing the executive goals of the center.

Talimi is a veteran journalist with almost three decades of working in the economic newspaper and once he was editor-in-chief of Sobh-e Eghtesad daily and he had cooperation with IRAN NEWS English daily, too.

Iran Business Hub with the aim of promoting exports and investments more proactively, provides localized support, market information, consulting and networking services to companies venturing into the UAE market. An experienced team of trade officers stands ready to help business owners discover business opportunities the UAE offers you.



Iran-Belarus Joint Economic Commission to Be Held in Minsk

TEHRAN (MNA) – The 15th Iran-Belarus joint economic commission is slated to be held on July 28th and 29th in Minsk.

Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin will chair the commission.

Strengthening and expanding mutual cooperation between the two countries in the fields of commercial and industrial cooperation, agriculture and fish breeding, investment, geology and water resources, health and pharmaceuticals, transportation, as well as the cooperation between chambers of commerce are on the agenda of this summit, according to the Deputy Iranian Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari.

The 14th Iran-Belarus joint economic commission was held in Tehran 5 years ago.



MSC Consolidates Its 10th Place in Steel World

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) announced consolidation of the company's position in the world steel rankings and it is still tenth in the world among steelmaking countries according to the latest report of World Steel Association.

Mr. Mohammad Yaser Tayebnia said that this success has been achieved due to continuity of production in Mobarakeh Steel Company despite slump in steel production in the world and 18.8% slump in the steel production in the country.

In an interview, Tayebnia explained this valuable achievement and pointed to the reasons behind growth in production in Mobarakeh Steel Group.

He said MSC since the beginning of the current year has achieved brilliant achievements in all production lines by setting consecutive records in a way that in the first quarter of the year MSC produced 2.991m tons of crude steel which shows 11.1% growth comparing to the same period in the



preceding year (311,000 tons more than preceding year) and the company also produced 866,000 tons in Iranian month of Khordad (May 22 – June 22) which shows 15% growth.

He also hailed endeavors of personnel of MSC who produced 1.04m tons of sponge iron in month of Khordad which shows 9.9%

growth and in the field of hot coil the company registered production of 593,000 tons which registered 31% growth.

Tayebnia went on to say that every year in summer and winter due to the rise in energy consumption in the country, the company faces with restriction in gas and electricity supply and this leads to decline in production in all lines, adding that the company has plans for these periods in order to minimize halt in production or hat in production of steel sheets.

He reiterated that the strategy of the company has always been to produce any type of product which the domestic market needs it most and for this reason the company does study on the market needs.

ESCO Sets New Record For Monthly Production



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Manager of Rolling Engineering of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) says the company set a new record for monthly production which happened in last Iranian month of Tir (June 22- July 23) by producing 20,800 tons.

Mr. Mohammad Amin Yousefzadeh said that rolling engineering had put on agenda its plan for increasing production of coil since January 2021 and before that, the average monthly production was 10,000 tons that the amount reached 19,000 tons by March 2022 and this figure rose to 20,800 tons in different sizes in last Iranian month of Tir.

He then pointed to the parameters which played great role in rise in coil production and said increasing the linear speed and resolving problems, high skills and experience of the personnel as well as more concentration of Rolling 350 Unit on production of coil were the main reasons for this new record.

Yousefzadeh went on to say that after rail and H products, coil is the third value added production of the company, noting that coil product for the first time in 1999 was produced and the amount stood at some 2,000 tons per month and through the years its production has grown and developed.

He reiterated that the value added of exporting product of coil is two times more than rebar whose price has faced sharp decline and therefore coil production profit is two times more than rebar. He noted coil is produced based on the ISO-6030 and in case the customer demands different standards, the company after studying the demand will take action for its production.

Iran, Turkey Agree to Set Up Committee For Pursue Water Problem

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran and Turkey agreed to establish a joint committee to follow up and resolve problems on the water facing the country.

Iranian Minister of Energy Ali Akbar Mehrabian made the remarks and said, "In the course of the recent visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the high-ranking delegation of the country to Iran, officials of the two countries held comprehensive talks in the field of resolving water problems."

Iranian and Turkish presidents agreed to set up a joint committee in line with settling water shortage problems facing the country, Mehrabian restated.

During the meeting held in this regard, Iran expressed its major concern over Turkey's measures taken in building dam in the upstream part, he added.

In this regard, the Iranian Minister of Energy and the Turkish Minister of Agriculture were mandated to set up a joint committee to resolve the water shortage problem, he added.

He then pointed to the cooperation of Iran with its neighbors in the field of energy and stated that Iran has established very good interaction with neighboring countries including the Republic of Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkmenistan and Armenia.

16th Meeting of Iran-Russia Commission to Be Held in Autumn

TEHRAN (Shana) - The deputy oil minister for international affairs and trade announced that the 16th meeting of the joint commission of Iran and Russia would be held in October or November in Moscow.

Ahmad Asadzadeh told Shana: "In this meeting, the numerous memorandums signed between Iran and Russia in various economic and commercial sectors, including the \$40 billion memorandum between the National Iranian Oil Company and Russia's Gazprom, will be considered."

The National Iranian Oil Company and Russia's Gazprom last Tuesday (July 18) signed a memorandum of understanding worth about \$40 billion for developing the Kish and North Pars gas fields, increasing the pressure of the South Pars field, developing 6 oil fields, swapping gas and petroleum products, completing LNG projects, construction of gas export pipelines and other scientific and technological cooperation.

First Announcement

شناسه آگهی: ۱۳۵۶۱۶۹

TENDER NO.:

01-31-58-9580003



National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
12	PARTS FOR "JOHN CRANE" MECHANICAL SEAL .	470 NO

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 1,686 EURO or 450,450,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material-procurement-management-tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN
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NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

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Nicaragua Bus Accident Leaves 16 Dead

ESTELI (Dispatches) - A road accident in northern Nicaragua has left 16 people dead, including 13 Venezuelans believed to be migrants, police said.

The accident -- which left another 47 people injured -- occurred late Wednesday at a precarious crossroads on the Pan-American Highway in the department of Esteli.

"Sixteen people died, amongst them five women and 11 men -- 13 Venezuelan nationals, a Nicaraguan and two yet to be identified," national police said in a statement, describing the accident as a "total disaster." Officers believe the incident occurred when a speeding bus hit two cars.



ICC Issues Arrest Warrant For C. Africa Rebel Leader

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) - The International Criminal Court said it had issued an arrest warrant for a Central African Republic rebel leader for war crimes and crimes against humanity during civil strife in 2013.

Nourredine Adam, head of an armed faction of former rebels from the mainly Muslim Seleka group, is wanted over crimes allegedly committed while he was security minister at the time, the ICC said in a statement.

He is wanted for crimes including torture, imprisonment, persecution, enforced disappearance and cruel treatment at detention centers run by the then-ruling regime, prosecutors said.



China President U.S. Against Playing With Fire Over Taiwan



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Chinese President Xi Jinping warned U.S. President Joe Biden against "playing with fire" over Taiwan, as concerns mounted over a possible visit to the Chinese-claimed island by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Chinese state media said Xi told Biden in their fifth call as leaders that the United States should abide by the "one-China principle" and stressed that China firmly opposed Taiwanese independence and interference of external forces.

Biden told Xi that U.S. policy on Taiwan had not changed and that the United States strongly opposes unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait - a reference to the 100-mile-wide body of water separating the island from the mainland, a White House statement said.

While highlighting Taiwan, Xi also stressed that the two sides needed to maintain communication on macroeconomic policies, global supply chains, and safeguarding global food and energy security, Chinese state media said.

Beijing has issued escalating warnings about repercussions should Pelosi - a Democrat like Biden - visit Taiwan, which says it is facing increasing Chinese military and economic threats. A visit by the House speaker would be a dramatic, though not unprecedented, show of U.S. support for the island.

"Those who play with fire will only get burnt," Chinese state media quote Xi as telling Biden. "(We) hope the U.S. side can see this clearly."

The White House readout said the two leaders also discussed a range of other issues, including climate change and health security.

China has given few clues to specific responses it might make if Pelosi, a long-time critic of Beijing, particularly on human rights issues, makes the trip. Pelosi had yet to confirm the trip.

The presidents' call lasted over two hours. U.S. officials had said it would have a broad agenda, including discussion of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which China has yet to condemn.

At its core though, U.S. officials said they saw the exchange as another chance to manage competition between the world's two largest economies, whose ties have been increasingly clouded by tensions over democratically governed Taiwan, which Xi has vowed to reunite with the mainland, by force if necessary.

Washington does not have official relations with Taiwan and follows a "one-China policy" that recognizes Beijing, not Taipei, diplomatically. But it is obliged by U.S. law to provide the island with the means to defend itself, and pressure has been mounting in Congress for more explicit support.

"The call was a part of the Biden Administration's efforts to maintain and deepen lines of communication between the United States and the PRC and responsibly manage our differences and work together where our interests align," the White House said.

One person briefed on planning for the call said the Biden administration thinks leader-to-leader engagement is the best way to lower tensions over Taiwan.

Ukraine Steps Up Drive to Retake Russian-Controlled South

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine stepped up its drive to retake its Russian-controlled south by trying to bomb and isolate Russian troops in hard-to-resupply areas, but it said it saw evidence that Moscow was redeploying its forces to defend the territory.

In messages to mark the annual Day of Ukrainian Statehood, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy congratulated Ukrainians and sounded defiant.

"We will not give up. We will not be intimidated. Ukraine is an independent, free, indivisible state. And it will always be so," he wrote on Telegram.

After Russia and Ukraine struck a deal last week to unblock grain exports from Black Sea ports, U.N. aid chief Martin Griffiths said he was hopeful the first shipment of grain from a Ukrainian Black Sea port could take place as early as Friday.

He said "crucial" details for the safe passage of vessels were still being worked out, however, adding that "the devil was in the details".

Salvini Under Scrutiny Over Russia Ties

ROME (Dispatches) - Italian right-wing leader Matteo Salvini's ties with Russia were again under scrutiny following questions about the run-up to the collapse of Prime Minister Mario Draghi's government.

La Stampa newspaper reported that a diplomat at the Russian embassy met one of Salvini's aides in late May in Rome, and asked if any of the ministers from Salvini's League party intended to resign from Draghi's coalition.

The League pulled out of the government last week, alongside Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia and the populist Five Star Movement, causing Draghi to resign and triggering September elections.

The meeting was said to have taken place at the same time as Salvini drew criticism for conducting parallel diplomacy with Russia over the war in Ukraine.

He planned a trip to Moscow ostensibly for peace talks -- with flights bought by the Russian embassy, an arrangement his team insists was only done due to difficulties circumventing EU sanctions.

They said they reimbursed the embassy and the trip in the end never happened. Foreign Minister Luigi di Maio on Thursday condemned "this attempt by the Russian side to have the League minister withdraw from Draghi's government".

Salvini "must explain the relations he has with Russia", said di Maio, like Draghi a strong advocate of EU sanctions against Moscow and Italy's sending of weapons and money to help Kyiv's resistance.

Enrico Letta, leader of the centre-left Democratic Party, also said the ties between Salvini and Russia were "concerning".

Salvini hit back condemning "fake news", putting the claims down to mudslinging at the start of the campaign for the September 25 elections.

"A divided and desperate left ... spends its time looking for fascists, Russians and racists who are not there," he said, insisting his party was "on the side of the West".



N.Korea's Leader Says Nuclear Deterrent Is Ready

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country is ready to mobilize its nuclear war deterrent and counter any U.S. military clash, and criticized South Korea's new president for the first time, warning Seoul was pushing towards the brink of war.

Kim made the remarks during a speech at an event to mark the 69th anniversary of the July 27 Korean War armistice, which left the two Koreas technically still at war, according to the official KCNA news agency.

The confrontation with the United States posed nuclear threats since the 1950-53 war and required the North to achieve an "urgent historical task" of beefing up its self-defense, Kim said.

"Our armed forces are thoroughly prepared to respond to any crisis, and our nation's nuclear war deterrence is also fully ready to mobilize its absolute strength faithfully, accurately and promptly to its mission," he said.

Kim also denounced South Korea's new conservative President Yoon Suk-yeol by name for the first time, accusing him of threatening the North's security and right to self-defense.

Yoon's office expressed deep regret over Kim's "menacing" remarks, saying South Korea is capable of "strongly and effectively" responding to any provocations at any time.

"We once again urge North Korea to take the path of dialogue to achieve substantive denuclearisation and peace," Yoon's spokeswoman Kang In-sun told a briefing.

Kim's speech came after Seoul and Washington officials said Pyongyang has completed preparations to conduct its first nuclear test since 2017.

South Korea's unification minister handling inter-Korean affairs said on Tuesday there was a "possibility" of the test around the anniversary of the armistice, though a military official said there were no immediate signs for it.

North Korea is likely to face stronger sanctions including measures targeting its cyberattack capabilities if it goes ahead with the test, South Korea's foreign minister said on Wednesday.

In the speech, Kim said Washington continues "dangerous, illegal hostile acts" against the North, and seeks to justify its behavior by "demonizing" the country.

The North has long accused the United States of double standards over military activities and pursuing a hostile policy towards Pyongyang, saying it hampers a restart of talks aimed at dismantling the country's nuclear and missile programs in return for sanctions relief.



India to Protect Its Interests as Chinese Boat Heads to Sri Lanka

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India, which is trying to expand its influence in crisis-hit Sri Lanka after China made deep inroads there, said it was aware of reports about the planned visit of a Chinese vessel to a Sri Lankan port built with money from Beijing.

Shipping data from Refinitiv Eikon showed research and survey vessel Yuan Wang 5 was en route to the southern Sri Lankan port of Hambantota and was expected to arrive on Aug. 11.

"The government carefully monitors any developments having a bearing on India's security and economic interests, and takes all necessary measures to safeguard them," India's foreign ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi told a weekly media briefing.

"I think that should be a clear message." He did not say what measures India was taking and who the message was addressed to.

China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Sri Lankan officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

A Sri Lankan government official told Reuters on condition of anonymity that Indian diplomats in Colombo had lodged a verbal protest with the Sri Lankan foreign ministry on Monday.

A Sri Lankan consulting firm, the Belt & Road Initiative Sri Lanka, says on its website that Yuan Wang 5 would be in Hambantota for a week.

"The vessel will conduct space tracking, satellite control and research tracking in the north-western part of the Indian Ocean region through August and September," it says, without citing a source.

Sri Lanka formally handed over commercial activities in its main southern port to a Chinese company in 2017 on a 99-year lease after struggling to repay its debt. The port is near the main shipping route from Asia to Europe.

U.S. and Indian officials have been concerned that the \$1.5 billion port could become a Chinese military base.

A Sri Lankan official told Reuters on Monday Beijing was welcome to pour more money into vast China-backed projects in Hambantota and Colombo.

China is one of Sri Lanka's biggest lenders and has also funded airports, roads and railways, unsettling India.

As Sri Lanka now battles its worst economic crisis in seven decades, India this year alone has provided it support of nearly \$4 billion.



Monkeypox Symptoms, Diagnosis, Treatments And Vaccines



PARIS (Dispatches) - The World Health Organization declared monkeypox a global health emergency at the weekend, as calls grow for swift action to stop the spread of the virus.

More than 16,000 confirmed cases have been recorded in 75 countries so far this year, the WHO said. Here is an overview of the symptoms, diagnosis, treatments and vaccines.

Symptoms

The first symptoms can include a fever, headaches, sharp muscle pains, fatigue, a rash, as well as swollen and painful lymph nodes.

Around one to three days after the appearance of a fever, a rash can turn into painful, fluid-filled skin lesions. After a few days or weeks, the lesions or sores turn into scabs, before falling off.

Monkeypox has long been endemic in Central and Western Africa. In countries elsewhere that have recorded cases since May, the lesions have been more common around the genitals and anus, as well as on the mouth.

On Monday, the UK Health Security Agency expanded its list of symptoms to include just one or two genital or anal lesions, as well as rectal pain or bleeding.

Symptoms have varied between patients, however. They usually last between two to four weeks, and the virus is contagious until the rash has fully healed.

Diagnosis

Most of the recent global cases have been in men who have sex with men and have recently had sex with a new partner, according to the WHO.

A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine last week found that 98 percent of infected people were gay or bisexual men, and 95 percent of cases were transmitted through sexual activity.

Diagnosing the virus can be difficult due to its inconsistent symptoms, which can resemble sexually transmitted infections, several health authorities have warned.

Europe has been the epicentre of the outbreak, with many cases among younger men living in cities, according to the WHO.

Confirming a case of monkeypox may require a PCR test, or a sample or biopsy of a skin lesion.

Those with potential cases must isolate while waiting for test results. Once the virus is confirmed, isolation is recommended for three weeks.

Monkeypox has been detected in semen, but is not considered a sexually transmitted disease, instead spreading through close physical contact. The European Centre for Disease Prevention (ECDC) recommends using a condom for 12 weeks after recovery.

Treatment

The disease usually heals by itself after two to three weeks, sometimes taking a month.

In many cases, the only treatment needed is to address the symptoms, such as clearing up a fever or soothing the itching.

Sometimes the lesions can become extremely painful, however, requiring serious painkillers or even hospital treatment.

The most severe cases have been seen in children, pregnant women and people with compromised immune systems.

No deaths have been reported so far in Europe or the United States.

People with monkeypox are advised not to scratch the lesions, as this could spread the virus or leave a scar, and to cover them to avoid the temptation.

GM Affirms 2022 Profit Outlook



DETROIT (Dispatches) - General Motors Coreaffirmed its full-year profit outlook on an expected surge in demand and said it was curbing spending and hiring ahead of a potential economic slowdown, but a 40% drop in its quarterly net income disappointed, sending shares lower.

The Detroit automaker's net income fell 40% in the second quarter from a year earlier due to supply-chain snarls, including a global semiconductor chip shortage that hit hardest in June. The company's shares fell 3.5% in midmorning trading.

Chief Executive Mary Barra said the company was "already taking proactive steps to manage costs and cash flows" ahead of a possible slowdown in the economy.

"In addition, we have modeled several downturn scenarios, and we are prepared to take more deliberate action when and if necessary," she added on a conference call with analysts.

Barra said GM was modeling a moderate downturn in its planning, not a severe one. She also said the global chip shortage's impact will last into next year.

The company, a bellwether for U.S. manufacturing and global automaking, has taken steps to offset a surge in inflation and other challenges, Chief Financial Officer Paul Jacobson said.

"We've slowed down some hiring (and) we have put off some costs and expenses we were going to make going into this year to try to balance that out with the pressure we've seen from both inflation as well as some of the other supply-chain challenges," Jacobson told reporters on a conference call, adding that GM was not contemplating layoffs.

Nevertheless, Jacobson said GM sees a lot of pent-up demand for its vehicles, in marked contrast with U.S. retail giant Walmart Inc's warning on Monday that consumers were cutting discretionary purchases as it slashed its profit forecast.

The automaker reaffirmed its forecast of full-year net income of \$9.6 billion to \$11.2 billion, and adjusted earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) of \$13 billion to \$15 billion, with global deliveries expected to rise sharply in the second half of the year.

Second-quarter net income was \$1.7 billion, or \$1.14 a share, down 40% from \$2.8 billion, or \$1.90 a share, a year earlier. Analysts had expected \$1.20 a share, according to Refinitiv data. Revenue rose nearly 5% to \$35.8 billion.

GM said average transaction prices jumped \$6,600 per vehicle in the quarter, and noted that U.S. dealer inventories remain historically low, at 10 to 15 days' supply.

But the company also said it had more than 90,000 unfinished vehicles, mostly high-margin trucks and SUVs, waiting for chips and other parts. Morgan Stanley analyst Adam Jonas estimated their value at \$4.5 billion in revenue and \$1.5 billion in EBIT.

CFO Jacobson said GM expects to finish and deliver all those vehicles by year-end.

While the automaker is spending more to ramp up its electric vehicle and battery operations, GM's projected EV volume over the next two years lags that of Ford Motor Co, which expects to build 600,000 EVs in 2023. GM said it plans to build 400,000 EVs in North America "over the course of 2022 and 2023."

"It's time to walk the walk and not just talk the talk for GM, as patience is wearing thin on the Street around the name," Wedbush Securities analyst Daniel Ives said in a research note.

GM's China operations lost \$100 million in the quarter due to COVID-19 restrictions there.



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Pakistan Raises Power Prices Amid Energy Crisis

KARACHI (Dispatches) - Pakistan raised electricity prices to match rising generation costs amid a global energy crisis and a heatwave, even as the country grapples with its highest inflation in over a decade, the power minister said.

Inflation last month reached 21.3%, driven mainly by rising food costs, and the country also faces fast-depleting foreign reserves, a depreciating currency and widening current account deficit.

"Cabinet has approved an increase in electricity tariffs but lifeline (poor) consumers will not be affected," Power Minister Khurram Dastagir Khan told reporters in Islamabad, adding that the increase would not apply to them.



U.S. Consumer Confidence Near 1-1/2-Year Low

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. consumer confidence dropped to nearly a 1-1/2-year low in July amid persistent worries about higher inflation and rising interest rates, which could undercut spending, pointing to slower economic growth at the start of the third quarter.

The survey from the Conference Board on Tuesday showed consumers sharply reassessing their spending plans this month, with the share of those polled intending to purchase major appliances like refrigerators and washing machines over the next six months the smallest since the current series began in late 2010. That, combined with other data showing new home sales tumbled to their lowest level in just over two years in June, painted a picture of an economy vulnerable to a recession.

Economic activity is cooling as the Federal Reserve aggressively tightens monetary policy to tame inflation. The U.S. central bank is expected to raise its policy rate by another 75 basis points on Wednesday, which would bring the total interest rate hikes since March to 225 basis points.

"The decline in consumer confidence tells us that the economy is on unsure footing," said Jeffrey Roach, chief economist at LPL Financial in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Conference Board's consumer confidence index dropped 2.7 points to a reading of 95.7 this month, the lowest level since February 2021. It was the third straight monthly decline. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index would fall to 97.2.

The survey's present situation index, based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions, fell to 141.3 from 147.2 in June. Its expectations index, based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business and labor market conditions, ticked down to 65.3. That was the lowest since March 2013 and compared with 65.8 in June. The persistent reading below 80 keeps a recession in play.

The survey's so-called labor market differential, derived from data on respondents' views on whether jobs are plentiful or hard to get, fell to a still-high 37.8 this month from a reading of 39.9 in June. This measure correlates to the unemployment rate from the Labor Department and suggests a still-healthy jobs market. But the labor market is cooling, with new claims for unemployment benefits at an eight-month high.

Stocks on Wall Street were trading lower. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury yields fell.

Consumers' inflation expectations over the next 12 months eased to 7.6% from 7.9% in June.

High inflation is forcing consumers to re-evaluate. The share of consumers planning to buy major household appliances like refrigerators, washing machines, dryers and televisions over the next six months dropped to 39.4% from 45.4% in June. That was the smallest since the current series started in November 2010. There was break in the series when the Conference Board changed companies for the survey.

Fewer consumers intended to buy a motor vehicle. That suggests consumer spending was tepid at the start of the third quarter after an expected slowdown in the April-June quarter. Sluggish consumer spending, which left businesses with excess inventory, is expected to have resulted in the economy barely growing in the second quarter.

BOJ to Keep Rates Low

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - The Bank of Japan won't make any quick or drastic changes to its monetary policy framework and is likely to keep interest rates low, even as this week's board reshuffle brought in less dovish members, former BOJ policy board member Sayuri Shirai said.

"Japan's neutral rate is very low... Together with inflation expectation, Japan's nominal interest rate will be low," Shirai told the Reuters Global Markets Forum (GMF).

Shirai expected any change in policy from the BOJ to be gradual and carefully orchestrated, which in the near-term could include widening the band of its yield curve control (YCC), so as not to fuel speculative activity in the markets.

"Most likely scenario is expanding 10-year yield target range. Of course, new (BOJ) governor may do more flexibility," she said, adding however, that she did not expect any "big major change". As part of its efforts to fire up inflation to its 2% target, the BOJ guides short-term rates towards -0.1% and caps the 10-year bond yield around 0% under its YCC policy.



Spain Raises Inflation Forecast for 2022

MADRID (Dispatches) - Spain raised its inflation forecasts for 2022 and 2023 and lowered its economic growth target for 2023, Economy Minister Nadia Calvino said, citing the war in Ukraine for its continued negative impact on European economies.

The inflation target was lifted to 7.8% in 2022 from a previous 6.1% projected in April, while for 2023 it was revised upwards to 2.9% from 2.2%.

Driven by rising energy and food prices, annual inflation in Spain surpassed 10% for the first time in 37 years in June, forcing the government to raise its expectations for consumer prices. "The war is having major economic and social effects. All governments are revising growth forecasts downwards and inflation forecasts upwards," Calvino said.

Spain maintained its growth target for 2022 at 4.3%, partially helped by a strong tourist season leading to "strong GDP expansion" in the second quarter, she said.

The country's statistics institute is due to release second quarter GDP growth later this week.

For 2023, however, Calvino lowered the economic growth target to 2.7% from a previous target of 3.5%.

The downgrade came on the same day the International Monetary Fund revised its growth forecast for Spain down to 4% in 2022 from 4.8%. The IMF expects 2% growth in 2023.

The government also maintained its budget deficit targets for this year at 5% of GDP and 3.9% for 2023, Budget Minister Maria Jesus Montero said, as the fiscal straightjacket rules that set a 3% budget gap limit on EU member countries remain suspended. Spain expects a 3% budget deficit in 2025, she added.

U.S., Taliban Make Progress on Afghan Reserves

KABUL (Dispatches) - U.S. and Taliban officials have exchanged proposals for the release of billions of dollars from Afghan central bank reserves held abroad into a trust fund, three sources familiar with the talks said, giving a hint of progress in efforts to ease Afghanistan's economic crisis.

Significant differences between the sides remain, however, according to two of the sources, including the Taliban's refusal to replace the bank's top political appointees, one of whom is under U.S. sanctions as are several of the movement's leaders.

Some experts said such a move would help restore confidence in the institution by insulating it from interference by the militant group that seized power a year ago but which most foreign governments do not recognize.

While the Taliban do not reject the concept of a trust fund, they oppose a U.S. proposal for third-party control of the fund that would hold and disburse returned reserves, said a Taliban government source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The United States has been in talks with Switzerland and other parties on the creation of a mechanism that would include the trust fund, disbursements from which would be decided upon with the help of an international board, according to a U.S. source who also declined to be named in order to discuss the matter.

A possible model could be the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, a World Bank-administered fund created to get donations of foreign development assistance to Kabul, the U.S. source added.

"No agreement has been reached yet," said Shah Mehrabi, an Afghan American economics professor who is on the Afghan central bank's supreme council.

The U.S. State Department and Swiss foreign affairs declined to comment; the Afghan central bank did not respond to requests for comment.

Some \$9 billion in reserves have been held outside Afghanistan, including \$7 billion in the United States, since the Taliban overran Kabul last August as U.S.-led forces withdrew after 20 years of fighting the militants.

The international community wants the group to improve its record on women's and other rights before officially recognizing it.

The Taliban have promised to investigate alleged killings and say they are working to secure Afghans' rights to education and free speech within the parameters of Islamic law.

At talks in Doha last month, the Taliban submitted to U.S. officials their response to the U.S. proposal for a mechanism to free up Afghan assets, said Mehrabi, the Taliban official and a senior diplomat.

Hungary Hikes Rates Into Double Digits

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - The National Bank of Hungary (NBH) raised its base rate by 100 basis points to 10.75% on Tuesday, taking borrowing costs into double-digit territory for the first time since late 2008, and it flagged more rate hikes ahead due to rising inflation.

"It is warranted to tighten the base rate in a decisive manner in order to anchor inflation expectations and mitigate second-round inflation risks," the rate-setting Monetary Council said in a statement, adding that Hungary's economy was expected to slow in the second half of the year.

Deputy Governor Barnabas Virag said a government decision to scrap price caps on energy for higher-usage households would add 3 percentage points to the expected inflation rate over the 12-month period to August 2023.

"The NBH will carry on with its interest rate moves until we can see a clear turnaround in inflation," Virag told a briefing, adding the bank's focus was on curbing inflation and second-round impacts even as the economy was set to slow.

"Global recession risks have increased, signs of a slowdown are visible in the Hungarian economy as well, but we can assess the pace and size of this slowdown only over the coming months," he added.

Tuesday's decision was in line with the median forecast of 14 economists in a Reuters poll last week. At 1410 GMT, the forint, which sank to a record low versus the euro earlier this month, traded at 400.20 per euro, a touch stronger than immediately before the rate announcement.

The weakness of the forint is complicating the NBH's inflation challenge.

Hungary's budget and current account deficits and its lack of access to European Union funds had prompted investors to sell the forint amid worsening sentiment on international markets.

This is set to raise inflation further, while helping to rein in the budget deficit.

The forint has recovered to around 400 to the euro after weakening past 416 earlier this month, it is still down nearly 8% versus the euro this year, underperforming regional peers.

Analysts now see the base rate rising to 12% by the end of 2022, which would be its highest level in nearly two decades. Some analysts project even higher rates.

"Overall, we expect interest rates to rise to 13.00% later this year... We think the risks are probably skewed to the upside, particularly if European energy supply is severely disrupted, global growth concerns rise and the forint comes under further pressure," Capital Economics said in a note after Tuesday's rate hike.

U.S. LNG Exports to Europe On Track to Surpass Biden Promise



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - When U.S. President Joe Biden promised European leaders in March that he would help secure new supplies of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to offset shortages from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, his pledge was greeted with scepticism.

After all, the U.S. LNG industry was already hitting its export limits and the global market is dominated by long-term contracts that can dictate where exported gas would go for twenty years at a time.

It turns out, however, that Biden's promise may have been far too modest.

The United States is on track to blow past Biden's March commitment of an additional 15 billion cubic meters (bcm) of LNG for Europe this year, according to a Reuters analysis of export data compiled by Refinitiv, and to triple the pledge.

The No. 1 natural gas producer became the top LNG exporter in the world in the first half of 2022, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) said on Monday.

The surge is good news for a Biden administration that has sought to strengthen energy ties with Europe as a way to combat Russia's influence. But given the globe's voracious demand for natural gas, these European imports come at the expense of poorer nations like Pakistan and India, which could face energy deficits or be driven to new deals with Russia.

Through June of this year, the U.S. exported about 57 bcm of gas as LNG with 39 bcm, or 68%, going to Europe, Refinitiv data shows. That is compared with 34 bcm, or 35%, of LNG exports shipped to Europe for all of 2021.

That means the U.S. has already sent more gas to Europe during the first six months of 2022 than it did in all 12 months of 2021. If exports to Europe continue at the same pace through the second half of 2022, the total increase over 2021 would be around 45 bcm.

However, the pace of exports slowed in June after a fire shut Freeport LNG, which provides around 20% of U.S. LNG processing. Full operations are not expected till the year-end.

Iran-Belarus Trade Exchanges To Increase by Ten-Fold

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesman of Industries, Mines and Trade Ministry said that Iran-Belarus trade will in a short time be first ten-folded, and then twenty-folded.

Omid Qalibaf said that in line with the Iranian government's dynamic trade diplomacy, the minister of industries, mines, trade has drawn a broad horizon for bilateral trade ties within the framework of the Iran-Belarus Joint Trade Commission. He said that the important point in Iran's bilateral trade with Belarus is exporting the science-based companies' medical facilities to that country with the value of five million dollars each year.



IMF Cuts World GDP Outlook a Third Time as Inflation, Rates Jump

WASHINGTON (Bloomberg) -- The International Monetary Fund cut its global growth outlook for this year and next, warning that the world economy may soon be on the cusp of an outright recession.

Global economic expansion will likely slow to 3.2% this year, less than the 3.6% forecast by the fund in April and the 4.4% seen in January, the IMF said in an update to its World Economic Outlook released.

The series of interest-rate increases that central banks have unleashed to contain inflation "is expected to bite" in 2023, with global output growth set to slow to 2.9%, it said.

While the crisis lender is still forecasting positive growth, that will do little to quell rising concern of receding expansion or even outright recession in major economies as accelerating price increases eat away at incomes, savings and profits.

"The outlook has darkened significantly since April. The world may soon be teetering on the edge of a global recession, only two years after the last one," Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the IMF's chief economist, said in a blog accompanying the release of the update.

Consumer prices have consistently climbed more quickly than expected, with the fund seeing inflation accelerating even further this year as higher food and energy costs couple with lingering supply-and-demand imbalances. It now projects the global consumer-price gauge to increase 8.3% this year, which would be the biggest jump since 1996. The April estimate was 7.4%.

The risks the fund outlined in the April edition of the World Economic Outlook are materializing, the fund said. Such dangers include a worsening of the war in Ukraine, escalation of sanctions on Russia, a sharper-than-anticipated slowdown in China, renewed Covid-19 flare-ups and an inflation wave that's forcing central banks to raise interest rates.

And the risks to the revised outlook "are overwhelmingly tilted to the downside," it said. Among the plethora of concerns is the potential for "a sudden stop" of European gas imports from Russia due to the war, more persistent inflation and a further escalation of a property crisis in China.

The growth-outlook downgrades were broad, but the projection for US expansion took the biggest hit, with the IMF cutting it by 1.4 percentage points relative to the April estimate to 2.3% because of lower growth earlier this year, reduced household purchasing power and tighter monetary policy.

The forecast for 0.6% growth in the fourth quarter of 2023 on a year-over-year basis "will make it increasingly challenging to avoid a recession," according to the IMF.

The fund reduced the projection for Chinese expansion by 1.1 percentage points to



3.3%, with the nation's deepening property bust and mobility restrictions to stem Covid-19 outbreaks disrupting activity and having global spillover effects into stressed supply chains.

Taming inflation through tighter monetary policy should be the first priority for officials, the fund said.

This "will inevitably have real economic costs, but delay will only exacerbate them," it said.

With emerging and developing economies' debt at multidecade highs, the increase in global borrowing costs and exchange-rate depreciation is making dollar-denominated debt more difficult to service. The World Bank says about 60% of the world's 75 poorest countries are in or at risk of debt distress, and this is spreading to middle-income countries.

The IMF said it's placing an "unusually strong emphasis" on downside-risk scenarios in its update.

"Should additional shocks hit the global economy, economic outcomes would be even worse," it said.

Iran Unveils LNG, Helium Production Pilot Plant

TEHRAN (MNA) - The pilot plant for producing helium gas and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) as well as three knowledge-based products of plate-fin converters, purification systems and high-speed turbo-expanders were unveiled on Wednesday.

The unveiling ceremony was held on the sidelines of Board of Trustees of Sharif University of Technology with the participation of First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber, Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology and chancellor of Sharif University of Technology.

Emphasizing that taking advantage of high potentials and capacities of knowledge-based companies is one of the basic strategies followed up seriously at the 13th government under President Raeisi to solve problems facing the country, Mokhber stated that the government is determined to solve problems facing the country with the help of talented and expert youth of the country.

Describing the pilot plant for the production of helium gas and LNG by knowledge-based companies and university graduates as an appreciable and a commendable action, he said that this technology was possessed by the European and American countries and now, Islamic Republic of Iran could join the club of countries possessing technology for producing helium and LNG.

Due to its unique properties, helium is a strategic material in the world which is applicable in the fields of health, oil and gas, advanced materials, space, etc., he said, adding that in spite of huge resources in South Pars Gas Field, helium needed in the country was completely imported in the previous years and with the imposition of imposition of cruel sanctions, import of this product halted in the country and consequently, many industries sustained severe damages.

Iran's Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

In the face of energy insecurity, it seems that everyone wants some of Iran's oil, with many state leaders deciding to ignore U.S. sanctions to import vital energy resources to maintain their reserves. Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced this week that Turkey intends to boost its imports of both oil and gas from Iran following a meeting with President Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran. Raisi said that he hoped the two countries' trade ties would triple in the coming years to reach \$30 billion, following the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Finance Ministry of the Taliban stated last week that it had signed an agreement to decrease fuel prices, following a meeting in Iran to discuss oil purchases, and the price and transit of petroleum between the two states, as diesel increased by nearly 23 percent in June in Afghanistan. The Taliban intends to buy 350,000 tons of Iranian oil, starting this month.

The most concerning of all of Iran's oil trade allies is Russia. Vladimir Putin visited Tehran earlier this month for the second time since the Russian invasion of Ukraine following the signing of a \$40 billion memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Russia's state-owned Gazprom and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). This is just the latest news of cooperation between the two countries.

Gazprom will be supporting the NIOC's \$10 billion Kish and North Pars gas fields, which are expected to produce 10 million cubic meters of gas per day. The MoU also outlines plans to increase pressure in the South Pars gas field for \$15 billion and for Gazprom to support several Iranian LNG projects including export pipeline construction. This move is expected to give Russia greater control over Iran's gas exports.

And, of course, Iran is continuing to deepen ties with its fellow victim of U.S. sanctions Venezuela. Iran and Venezuela have been working hand-in-hand over the last year to circumvent sanctions on their oil and gas industries as they try to rebuild their economies. China has continued to support the partnership, buying energy from both powers by using alternative routes and ghost ships to transport sanctioned oil. Venezuela agreed to trade its oil for Iranian condensate, which was in short supply and is needed to dilute its heavy crude. The first delivery arrived in January, with 2 million barrels of condensate being shipped to Venezuela's Jose terminal.

And this month, Iran decided it would be increasing crude shipments to Venezuela to support the productivity of its aging refineries and allow for domestic oil exports. This follows a May agreement for the two powers to renovate Venezuela's El Palito refinery. State-owned Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) expects to receive 4 million barrels of Iranian crude this month, up from 1.07 million barrels in June. This aim is to help PDVSA rebuild the stock of its exportable grade crude, Merey, which is favored by Asian refiners.

With countries around the globe facing rising oil prices and the fear of energy shortages, due in part to new sanctions on Russia, many governments are putting their energy security above respect for U.S. sanctions. If Iran can maintain its competitive oil prices, it seems likely that it will continue to quickly rebuild its oil industry over the next year and beyond.

Iran to Increase Citrus...

FROM PAGE 1

Sadatinejad said farming exports to China are expected to jump in the year to March with the signing of the two new agreements.

Iran has sought to rely more on trade revenues since its crude oil exports came under American sanctions in 2018.

The country is currently a major supplier of agriculture products to the Middle East, Central Asia, the Eurasia and the Caucasus.

Increased exports caused a major boom in activity in the Iranian agriculture sector in the two years following the imposition of US sanctions. Government figures show that total output from the sector increased by more than a third in the five years to March 2020 to reach over 125 million mt.

Iran Non-Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

The UAE, a main re-exporting hub in the Persian Gulf, was the largest supplier of goods into Iran over the four months to July 21 with \$4.875 billion worth of exports. It was followed by China at \$4.422 billion and Turkey at \$1.787 billion, said the Iranian customs office, adding that imports from India and Russia had amounted to \$859 million and \$599 million, respectively.

Iran's main import shipments over the period were grains, including wheat and rice, mobile phones, animal feed and oil seeds, it added.

Iran Building Completely...

FROM PAGE 1

"It should be noted that until now, all the commotion raised has been for enrichment, and the next station is the fuel cycle industry, which we have already been utilizing at the research semi-industrial stage," he said in reference to the West's accusations against Iran's nuclear program.

Eslami said foreign countries did not cooperate with Iran on completing the nuclear fuel cycle, adding even some countries came to do the project, but they abandoned the work halfway and left it.

Currently, the domestic industrial capacity and engineering change order at the Atomic Energy Agency of Iran and knowledge-based companies enables the country to move toward industrialization in order to produce fuel for reactors, including at the UCF in Isfahan.

"It should be known that nuclear power is designed and built in an integrated manner only in a few countries of the world and because they do not cooperate with us in this field, we must fully develop capacity and localize it... so that the people of Iran can benefit from it and receive clean electricity without any fluctuations" from nuclear facilities, the official said.

Eslami stressed that the main issue regarding the advancement of Iran's nuclear program is to increase the capacity of domestic power plants.

So far, Iran has built 1,000 megawatts of sustainable nuclear power capacity and is building another 2,000 megawatts of nuclear power plants, he said.

"We have also planned to produce 10,000 megawatts of new nuclear power, with the scheme included in the current budget law," Eslami added.

He explained that his agency is locating sites, especially in Iran's south to find suitable places compatible with the requirements of nuclear power plants before launching study and design operations.

"All the same, we will use international partnerships, but we will not wait for anyone, because Iran has sufficient scientific, industrial and technological capacities," he said.

"Fortunately, there are large companies in the country that can support the 10,000 megawatt nuclear power production program, but we also welcome any company and institution that participates in the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran's projects," Eslami said the clean and sustainable electricity produced at Iran's first nuclear power plant in Bushehr is equal to about 85 million barrels of oil, which has a great impact on the reduction of pollutants and the health of society.

Kenya...

FROM PAGE 1

The Asian country seeks to cut high import bills as its foreign currency reserves continue to fall rapidly, putting pressure on the government to cut import costs and keep funds in the country.

Pakistan's forex reserves dropped from around \$16 billion in February to less than \$10 billion in the first week of June, barely enough to cover the cost of two months of all its imports.

Harry Kimtai principal secretary State Department for Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture said that tea production in the country has been increasing for the past 10 years. "One of our key export products is tea and statistics show that there is growth in tea consumption in Iran, one of our importers and we are planning to increase trade in that direction," said Kimtai. Other large importers of Kenyan tea according to the latest Kenya Economic Survey in metric tons include Egypt(9,252), United Kingdom(3,275), United Arab Emirates(2,844), Russia(2,127), Sudan(2,043), Yemen(1,297), Kazakhstan(800), Poland(527) and Jordan(479).

According to the report in January 2022, the export value of tea in Kenya decreased to Sh12.6 billion, (\$109 million).

In the previous month, the amount was measured at Sh12.7 billion (\$109 million).

Overall Kenyan exports grew by more than Sh2 billion in Uganda (Sh18.2 billion), Tanzania (Sh13.2 billion), Netherlands (Sh12.9 billion) and D.R.C (Sh10.2 billion). Other countries were the U.S.A (Sh10.2 billion), China (Sh7.1 billion), Rwanda (Sh4.8 billion), Ethiopia (Sh3.8 billion), Zambia (Sh3.6 billion), India (2.7 billion), Russia (Sh2.5 billion), Egypt (Sh2.2 billion), Somalia (2.1 billion).

Comparatively, there were specific markets whose performances declined including South Sudan (Sh6.0 billion), Pakistan (Sh1.5 billion), Sudan (Sh1.0 billion), the UK (0.5 Billion), and Saudi Arabia (Sh0.5 billion), and Germany (0.3 billion). The annual performance in 2021 was a better performance compared to 2020. It was, by and large, indicative that Kenya's export sector is resilient and can still compete globally.

Tehran Urges Washington to...

FROM PAGE 1

"There is no doubt concerning the will of the Islamic Republic's government for conclusion of a good, strong, and sustainable agreement," the Iranian official said, thanking Borrell and his deputy Enrique Mora for their efforts towards realization of an agreement.

Borrell, for his part, said the Iranian side had indicated its positive and serious will during the course of the negotiations, adding that it is the time for the talks to yield result. The top EU foreign policy official laid emphasis on his and his deputy's readiness to help facilitate and expedite this course through liaison and consultation with all concerned parties.

The United States reinstated sanctions on Iran in May 2018 after unilaterally leaving a historic accord between Iran and world powers that was sealed in 2015.

The Austrian capital of Vienna hosted several rounds of talks since April last year between Iran and the remaining parties to the deal to examine the prospect of the sanctions removal and potential revival of the deal. The talks' venue was shifted to the Qatari capital earlier this year, with the European Union being tasked with coordinating indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States. The first round of the talks last month was marked by U.S. indecisiveness. "If America treads realistically down the path of [finding] a resolution and conclusion of an agreement, then a good agreement would be accessible by all the parties," Amir-Abdollahian said. He noted that the Islamic Republic had, since the outset of the talks, shown its good faith and serious will towards emergence of an agreement.

Zagallo Hospitalized Over Respiratory Infection

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Iconic Brazilian football player and coach Mario Zagallo has been admitted to hospital with a respiratory infection, the clinic that admitted him said.

The 90-year-old, who was the first person to win the World Cup as both a player and a coach, was admitted to intensive care at a hospital in Rio de Janeiro on Tuesday.

He is currently "lucid, breathing spontaneously, without the help of apparatus," said the Barra D'or hospital in a statement. Zagallo was tested for Covid-19 but that came back negative, the clinic said.

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Barber Covid Positive Ahead of Comm Games

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Javelin world champion Kelsey-Lee Barber's bid to also win the Commonwealth title was dealt a blow Thursday, with the Australian testing positive for Covid-19, team officials said.

Barber, who claimed her second world crown last week at Eugene, Oregon in the United States, tested positive at the Australian team camp ahead of the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham this week. But with the women's javelin final not until August 7, she could still compete.

Djokovic Sends Letter to Biden Over US Open Saga

LONDON (Dispatches) - The row over Novak Djokovic's ban from the US Open has escalated after a Serbian group in America reportedly sent a letter to Joe Biden, calling for the world No 7 to be allowed into the country to compete. Unvaccinated travellers are currently banned from entering the United States, and with less than five weeks until the final Grand Slam of the year begins, Djokovic is still uncertain over whether he can compete.

Djokovic's ban from the States has attracted attention in recent weeks, with several American political figures speaking out over the ban and pressuring Biden to let the three-time US Open champion into the country. And the President could now be forced to address the issue, with a lawyer-backed letter being sent to him with support from the Serbian-American Voting Alliance (SAVA), per Politika.

"The US Open is the biggest tennis tournament in the world, and it won't be what it is without Novak Djokovic," the letter read. "Considering the economic situation and the crisis at all levels, America must not allow the US Open not to take place in its full glory and capacity, which means the arrival of Novak Djokovic, who has been crowned three times at the US Open."

The letter cited article 3(b) "national interest" of the presidential proclamation, which allows for some foreign nationals to be exempt from existing Covid restrictions if it is deemed in the national interest. And the letter, written with the help of one of SAVA's lawyers Borko Komnenovic, attempts to prove Djokovic's participation in the US Open would qualify.

"Novak does not pose any security threat, is one of the healthiest people in the world due to his disciplined life and serves as a role model and inspiration to millions around the world. It is in America's interest that the biggest tournament in the world hosts the best player in the world, especially since he just won the seventh Wimbledon in London," it continues.

SAVA president and founder, Dr. Olga



Ravasi, also confirmed the group were in contact with members of Congress to further their argument. She said: "We are continuing the most important conversation and consultation with the Republican Congresswoman Claudia Tenney and her team, who strongly advocated contacting President Biden and proposing a possible procedure in Congress."

"A member of our SAVA organisation, lawyer Borko Komnenovic, helps in this, supervising possible legal parameters. We are also in contact with Congressman Frank Mrvan, a democratic member of the Serbian caucus, in whose district there are a large number of Serbian-American voters, including Serbian Radio Chicago itself. It would be significant to have agreement from both parties on this issue."

SAVA is a "non-partisan Political Action Committee" which aims to raise funds to financially support and elect federal candidates whose views support and align with the community of Serbian-Americans, and hopes to make Serbian voices heard and reflected in political decisions.

Meanwhile, it remains to be seen whether the rules will change in time for Djokovic to compete, but the Serb himself admitted he wasn't holding out for a special exemption despite SAVA's efforts. After winning Wimbledon earlier this month, he said: "I don't think exemption is realistically possible. If that is possibility, I don't know what exemption would be about. I don't know. I don't have much answers there. I think it's just whether or not they remove this in time for me to get to USA."

Zverev Return More Realistic For Davis Cup In September



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Alexander Zverev has not given up hope of playing next month's U.S. Open but the German world number two is more likely to return to action from his ankle injury during the group stage of the Davis Cup Finals in mid-September.

Zverev was forced to retire after suffering an injury during his French Open semi-final against Rafael Nadal and had surgery on torn ligaments in his right ankle last month.

The 25-year-old has yet to be ruled out of the year's final Grand Slam, which starts on Aug. 29 on the hardcourts of Flushing Meadows in New York.

"Sascha is recovering well and is still hoping that he can be ready for the US Open," a spokesperson for Zverev told Reuters. "However, it is still too early to tell if he will be able to compete there or not." This month, Zverev, who finished runner-up at the 2020 US Open, posted a video on social media in which he was seen walking without crutches. This week, he confirmed his participation in the Oct. 3-10 Japan Open in Tokyo.

But Olympic singles champion Zverev is targeting an earlier return to competitive action, aiming to lead Germany's campaign in the group stage of the Davis Cup, on Sept. 13-18.

Swiatek Returns With One-Sided Win

WARSZAWA (Dispatches) - World number one Iga Swiatek eased into the second round of the Poland Open with a straight-sets thrashing of fellow home player Magdalena Frech.

The French Open champion romped to a 6-1, 6-2 victory at the Warsaw clay-court event in her first match since suffering a shock third-round defeat by Alize Cornet in the Wimbledon third round.

"For sure playing in your hometown with all that crowd is pretty extraordinary," Swiatek said.

"I didn't get a chance to play many tournaments in Poland so for sure I needed extra focus and determination to come here and stay in the zone and not let my head think about other stuff." She added: "I'm happy that I was solid today because Magda is not an easy opponent. From the beginning I wanted to put pressure on her and I did that pretty well." Swiatek had been on a remarkable 37-match winning streak before her early exit at Wimbledon, taking six successive titles along the way.

The 21-year-old was back to her dominant best against Frech, not facing a single break point as she wrapped up the win in 73 minutes.

She will next face Romanian lucky loser and world number 146 Gabriela Lee for a quarter-final place.

Gill, Chahal Lead India to Series Defeat of West Indies

PORT OF SPAIN (Dispatches) - India underlined their strength in depth with a crushing 119-run victory over the West Indies on the Duckworth Lewis Stern method in the rain-affected third and final One-Day International at Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad.

Opening batsman Shubman Gill was left stranded two runs short of a maiden senior international century as rain ended the visitors' innings at 225 for three off 36 batting first.

Set a revised target of 257 off 35 overs, the home side crumbled to 137 all out off 26 overs with leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal leading the rout with figures of four for 17.



Suarez Signs Short-Term Deal to Rejoin Nacional

MONTEVIDEO (Dispatches) - Luis Suarez has signed a short-term contract to rejoin his boyhood club Nacional in Uruguay ahead of the World Cup in Qatar, the club's president said.

Suarez revealed on social media yesterday that he had a preliminary agreement to return the outfit where he started his career and Nacional president Jose Fuentes told Sport 890 radio station that the 35-year-old star has signed a five-month contract.

Suarez and the club president both said yesterday that some details still needed to be ironed out but Fuentes told Sport 890:

"It's already done, it's already resolved."

The former Liverpool and Barcelona star is Uruguay's all-time top goalscorer and set to compete at his fourth World Cup later this year.

Fuentes said Suarez should arrive in Uruguay this weekend and could make his debut as early as Tuesday in the Copa Sudamericana — South America's equivalent to the Europa League — against Brazilians Atletico Goianiense.

Suarez, who left Atletico Madrid at the end of last season and still lives in Spain, began his career at Nacional, making his debut aged 18 in May 2005.

After one full season he moved to Groningen in the Netherlands and then on to Ajax a year later.

There he caught the eye of Liverpool and after three and a half seasons in England he moved to Barcelona for a fee worth more than €80 million.

He enjoyed his most successful spell in Catalonia, winning four Spanish league titles and the Champions League in 2015, while he won La Liga again with Atletico in 2021.

UEFA to Trial Safe Standing in England, Germany and France



PARIS (Dispatches) - UEFA is launching a safe standing observer program in its competitions for matches in England, Germany and France this season with a view of reintroducing it on a permanent basis, Europe's football governing body said.

While safe standing areas are becoming the norm at the domestic level, UEFA's current regulations do not permit it in its competitions after a ban following the 1985 Heysel Stadium disaster.

The program has been approved by the Executive Committee but the body said it would be limited to just the top five ranked associations in the UEFA rankings where standing is already authorized and implemented at the domestic level.

Although Spain and Italy are in the top five, UEFA said it would be limited only to England, Germany and France as they were compliant with national and local legislation.

"The program will be carried out during the group stage and knockout phases up to and including the semi-finals of the 2022-23 UEFA men's club competitions. The finals are excluded," UEFA said in a statement.

Neymar to Go on Trial in Spain Just Before World Cup



MADRID (Dispatches) - Neymar is due to face trial in Spain in October just a month before the World Cup over alleged irregularities in his transfer to Barcelona nearly a decade ago, judicial sources said.

The Brazilian international, his parents and former Barcelona presidents Sandro Rosell and Josep Maria Bartomeu will be tried for alleged corruption related to the forward's move from Santos to Barcelona in 2013.

Rosell and Bartomeu will also face fraud charges in the trial which is scheduled to take place from October 17 to 31, a month before the World Cup gets under way in Qatar.

Neymar left Barcelona for Paris Saint-Germain in 2017 for a world-record €222 million, but it is his move from boyhood club Santos to Barca in 2013 which has caused controversy.

The case stems from a complaint by Brazilian group DIS, the former owner of a percentage of the player's rights.

Barcelona officially said the transfer cost €57.1 million, with €40 million going to Neymar's family and €17.1 million to Santos, but Spanish prosecutors later said it actually cost at least €83.3 million.

All the defendants have denied any wrongdoing, but appeals by them to Spain's high court have been rejected, forcing the case to go to trial.