

Governor of Hirmand County in the North of Sistan and Baluchestan Province of Iran Announced a Conflict Between the Iranian Border Guards and the Taliban Forces On the Border of the County

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **141,998** With **61** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

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Iran Advancing Fast in Aerospace Industries

TEHRAN (IFP) - The commander of the aerospace division of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the space sector is extremely significant and a key ground for progress in other fields, stressing that Iran is now advancing quickly in the field of aerospace industries.

Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh says capabilities and technologies developed in the military sector overflow into other industries.

"Today, in the exchanges with other industrial groups and sectors, and with the aim of indigenizing technology and ending the monopolies and problems caused by the cruel sanctions of the enemies, the overflow of technologies and capabilities in the defense sector is helping other fields and industries and has led to the removal of many problems," he said.

According to Hajizadeh, this has been made possible through the close cooperation of the aerospace industries and university elite in technology parks.

The general added that Iran is now stronger than ever, more than four decades after the Islamic revolution in the country.

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India Welcomes Iran At the SCO Meet

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - At the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) foreign ministers' meet in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, India highlighted the importance of joint efforts in confronting global and regional challenges and expanding the forum. At the meet, India also welcomed Iran's entry into the SCO which is expected to influence the group's influence on the world market.

As in previous meetings, New Delhi focused on countering radicalism and terrorism. Issues concerning Afghanistan were also discussed in the forum.

"New Delhi considers SCO to be an essential organization for several reasons: first, it provides India with a platform to participate in the deliberation of security in Eurasia; second, terrorism is a threat common to most of the states of this bloc; third, India is keen to develop connectivity and transport networks with Central Asia and Afghanistan; fourth, India can play a role in Afghanistan through this organization; and finally, this organization facilitates economic and cultural cooperation among the member states," Prof Rajan Kumar, School of International Studies, JNU, tells Financial Express Online.

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America's Power in Decline, Witnessing Failures



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The IRGC commander-in-chief Major General Salami said that America's power and influence is in decline, adding that Washington is retreating from the region as it witnesses failures everywhere.

Major General Hossein Salami made the comments in an IRGC ceremony on Sunday during which he added that the Islamic Revolution led by late Imam Khomeini has grown stronger despite all the problems and difficulties as well as the psychological warfare waged by the enemy.

The IRGC chief added that the Islamic Revolution is advancing on both different fronts of mind (soft power) and the geographical, political and economic front (hard power), the impact of which can be seen around the world.

On the contrary, Major General Salami pointed to the failure of the US sanctions in the form of Trump-era "Maximum Pressure Campaign" against Tehran and said that "When we are in an economic war, but we don't look to be a defeated country, this is a sign of victory and a manifestation of the fact that people believe that the country is moving towards getting stronger, progress and being aspiring in the military, political and cultural fields."

Salami also pointed to the U.S. failures in Afghanistan and its withdrawal from the country and said, "It is a fact that the enemy is retreating from the trenches that it had created in the depths of the human mind and geography."

He also pointed out that the United States has lost power to create dependent governments and underscored that "America's political territory is dwindling and witnessing failures."

In addition to the disgraceful US exit from Afghanistan, he also pointed to the U.S. failures in Syria and Egypt and said, "Look at the big plans and plots that were designed in the Zionist regime, but were pushed to be put aside. These cases are signs that announce a big event, which is the failure of America."

The IRGC Commander-in-Chief emphasized that today "neither can Saudi Arabia do anything for America, nor America for Saudi Arabia," adding, "Saudi Arabia, which used to help America with money, has lost its ability to solve its economic problems today."

He went on to point to the U.S. president's recent West Asia tour and said, "Joe Biden returned home from his recent trip to the region with no achievements."

General Salami also said that the Islamic Revolution has spread its power to the Mediterranean Sea's coasts today while the enemy is desperate and does not know with to do with growing Iran and Islam's power.

Iran Bracing to Become Regional Hub for Russian Gas

TEHRAN (IP) - A senior energy expert says following the Ukraine war, Iran has the chance to use Russia's excess gas export capacity to become a regional hub for the item.

Senior energy expert Habibollah Zafarian, referring to the capacity of cooperation between Iran and Russia in the gas market under the \$40 billion memorandum of understanding between the National Iranian Oil Company and the Russian Gazprom Company, stated: "Gas trade due to strategic and economic benefits is a very important matter that is emphasized in the country's upstream documents."

According to Shana, he added: "In the general policies of the economy of resilience, special emphasis has been placed on increasing gas exports, and in the vision document for 2025 of the oil industry, it has been stated that Iran should achieve a share of 8 to 10 percent of the world's gas trade. Now Iran's share of world gas trade is less than 2%."

The senior energy expert said: "Iran should be able to become a regional gas hub based on gas trade with neighboring countries. Iran's gas reserves and privileged geographical location allow the country to play an influential role in the gas trade of the region."

Zafarian added: "Iran's strategy should be defined in such a way that it buys the surplus gas of the countries of the region as much as possible and exports gas to the consuming countries at a higher price."

He underscored: "Three countries around us, including Turkmenistan, Qatar, and Azerbaijan, have surplus gas and are now exporting, and the rest of the countries in the region, including Armenia, Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait, and the Persian Gulf littoral states, especially the UAE and Oman, Pakistan, and Afghanistan want to import gas. As a result, there is a great opportunity for Iran to become the gas hub of the region with gas trade between exporting and importing countries."

This senior expert in the field of energy said: "After the developments of the war in Ukraine, changes happened in the gas market, such as Qatar advancing its gas field development plan and increasing the export of liquefied natural gas (LNG) at a faster pace, and recently signed a contract with five European and American companies to develop its fields."

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Au Revoir Mr. Biden

We are living in a strange world and any moment we can hear some strange news coming from any part of the world and accordingly we realize some big names are struggling and even declining like we see nowadays regarding the U.S. and its President Joe Biden.

In recent decades predominantly in recent years, we have been watching the decline of the arrogant U.S. as the country is losing its dominance over the countries especially some lackey regimes and therefore the country's presidents have also been losing their influence over other countries. But Mr. Biden is the worst among the U.S. presidents or at least recent polls being conducted in the U.S. claims it.

According to a new poll, Biden has become the least popular modern US president at this period in a term of office. The new Gallup poll as reported by RT on Friday shows Biden's approval rating hit a new low, dropping for the first time to 38 percent.

Biden's latest approval rating is down three points from the previous month and 12 points from July 2021. Biden's approval rating has plummeted to 36 percent as more and more Americans show dissatisfaction with him due to high inflation and rising gas prices in the country, according to a new poll.

Fifty-nine percent believe Biden's performance has been poor with 45 percent of those who were interviewed in the survey "strongly disapproving" the Democratic president's performance.

However, on the other side of the spectrum Senate Republicans have been skeptical about whether Donald Trump can win the GOP nomination in 2024, or even run for another term in the White House.

One Republican senator, who requested to remain anonymous as reported by The Hill, said the "cascade" of embarrassing details about Trump's conduct in the weeks before Jan. 6, 2021, and during the attack on the US Capitol will seriously damage his political viability ahead of the 2024 election.

"I don't think he'll run again and that's a good thing, because of the whole cascade of events," the senator noted.

As the poll shows, Biden is becoming the worst American President in years despite an overwhelming victory in the 2020 presidential election where he defeated his incumbent rival President Donald Trump in an election whose result was questioned by Trump as Trump still insists on rigging in the election.

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Iran Approves Over \$131m Of Foreign Investment

TEHRAN (MNA) - Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has approved 52 foreign investment projects valued at about \$131.5 million in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21- July 22), IRNA reported.

According to the latest data released by the ministry, of the total number of investment projects in the current year's four-month period, 84 percent was the share of the industry sector, 10 percent was the share of the mining sector, while trade-related projects accounted for six percent of the total figure.

Out of the 52 cases of foreign investment in the mentioned sectors, 15 cases had 100 percent foreign investment, 29 cases were joint ventures and eight cases were in the form of civil partnership, mutual sale, or build-operate-transfer (BOT).

The highest volume of foreign investment approved in the industry, mining, and trade sectors in the period under review was in the categories of basic metals, manufacturing of transportation equipment, and chemical products.

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info@irannewsdaily.com

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Iran Ready to Supply Lebanon's Fuel Demand

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A senior official in Iran's Foreign Ministry said that Tehran was ready to talk with Lebanon on supplying their fuel demand.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as one of the biggest producers and exporters of energy in the region, stands with the Lebanese people to help them, Mohammad-Sadeq Fazli said in a tweet on Sunday.

The deputy foreign minister for West Asia added that Tehran was prepared to host the Lebanese for negotiations on supplying their fuel demand. We would never leave our friend alone on difficult days, he noted.

Leader Urges Necessary Measures to Repair Damage of Iran Floods

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Iranian authorities should adopt all the necessary initiatives to repair the extensive damage caused by devastating summer floods across the country.

In a Saturday message, Ayatollah Khamenei said the terrible and damaging flood in many parts of the country has inflicted physical, financial and emotional injuries on many Iranians.

The Leader offered his condolences to all the victims of the flooding and called on the Iranian officials to take necessary initiatives to repair the damage caused by the floods.

Ayatollah Khamenei also appreciated the timely and rapid presence of the officials in the flood-hit areas and also for the efforts made by the popular relief groups for helping the victims.



"It is the duty of all of us to continue these Go-pleasing measures and make constant efforts to alleviate the effects of these painful events," the Leader stated.

Twenty-one out of 31 Iranian provinces have been affected by flooding over the past week, with the capital Tehran being one of the hardest-hit areas.

So far, more than 3,700 people have been housed in emergency shelters across the country and another 2,500 have been taken to safety.

Relief operations are still under way amid flood warnings in place in many regions where people are advised to stay off river banks and valleys.

Speaker Calls for Establishing Specialized Early Warning Systems

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker called for setting up a national network comprising early warning systems for predicting incidents and natural disasters.

An early warning system is an adaptive measure for climate change, using integrated communication systems to help communities prepare for hazardous climate-related events. A successful EWS saves lives and jobs, land and infrastructures and supports long-term sustainability.

Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf in his pre-agenda speech on Sunday morning, while referring to the recent flood, called for the mobilization of all the facilities to immediately deal with the problems of the people, especially the treatment of the injured and compensation for the damages caused to the people.

His remarks came as at least 61 people have died and 32 persons are still missing after heavy rainfall caused flooding across Iran.

"Regarding the issue of flooding in different parts of the country, all the facilities of the country should immediately address the problems of the people, especially to find the missing and treat the injured. All should be mobilized and provide compensation for the damages caused to the people."

The speaker of the parliament emphasized setting up a national network comprising early warning systems for predicting incidents and natural disasters.

"Sectional handling of problems and treatment after the occurrence of incidents is undoubtedly not enough, municipalities are obliged to submit continuous reports regarding the dredging operations of canals and waterways."

Qalibaf stated: "In addition to the need to speed up the establishment of the national early warning system, the country's rescue and relief system, the situation of deployment of troops, provision of necessary equipment and training should also be seriously improved according to the existing experiences."

IOCC Inks Trilateral Cooperation MOU With TPO, ISIPO

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce has signed a trilateral memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) and Iran's Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) to facilitate the export of non-oil goods to Oman and to increase the volume of trade between the two countries.

The MOU was signed on Sunday by TPO Head Alireza-Peyman Pak, ISIPO Head Ali Rasoulzadeh, and Chairman of Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce Mohsen Zarabi, the TPO portal reported.

The main goal of this memorandum is to facilitate the participation of the country's manufacturers and production units located in industrial parks in Oman's specialized exhibitions and to increase the presence of Iranian products in the Omani market.

Based on the MOU, the parties will collaborate to provide capable domestic producers located in



industrial parks with special incentives and supports such as subsidies.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Peyman-Pak said: "Many good measures have been taken regarding the improvement and promotion of communication between TPO and Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce which

have been very effective."

He pointed to the establishment of a direct shipping line between the two countries of Iran and Oman with the support of the government, saying: "We are also pursuing guarantee issues for exporters through the export guarantee fund."

The TPO head underlined the ISIPO supports for production units as one of the effective points with regard to facilitating foreign trade, saying: "Based on this memorandum, ISIPO and TPO will follow up plans for sending delegations and holding exhibitions in Oman more strongly."

Strengthening Relations With Eastern Countries

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's foreign ministry spokesman says the strategic balances in the region and the world are changing from the West to the East.

The spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Nasser Kanaani stated that the strategic balances in the region and the world are changing from the West to the East and said: "Today, the gaze of the nations of the region, including the Arab world, is no longer towards the west as it had been in the past."

Kanaani, in a meeting with Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the head of the Iran-China Friendship Association, said: "Today, most of the nations of the region have a negative view of the United States, and the Arab governments are trying to rebalance their relations with the United States, China and Russia."

Referring to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's emphasis on looking to the East, Kanaani said: "Looking to the East in Iran and strengthening relations with Eastern countries, including China, should be a strategic approach and not just a tactical approach against the West."

Referring to the capabilities of the Iran-China Friendship Association, the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran added: "This non-governmental organization can help correct the views inside the country towards the East and correctly introduce the capacity. There are many economic and cultural exchanges with the East, including China."

Pointing out that a major part of the 25-year cooperation document between Iran and China is related to cultural issues, Kanaani emphasized the need to pay more attention to cultural issues in Iran-China relations.

Iran Determined to Achieve Good, Durable Agreement to Revive JCPOA



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister has reiterated his country's resolve to clinch an agreement for the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Hossein Amirabdollahian made the remark in a late Saturday phone call with his Qatari counterpart, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.

During the call, the two foreign ministers discussed the latest developments in their countries' relations in various political, economic and consular sectors.

Touching on the talks between Iran and the remaining parties to the JCPOA, Amirabdollahian emphasized the Iranian government's determination to achieve a good, strong and durable agreement for the revival of the landmark deal.

The Qatari foreign minister, for his part, underlined Iran's logical positions during the JCPOA revival talks, stressing the importance of continued talks aimed at removing the sanctions imposed on Iran over its peaceful nuclear program.

On Wednesday, Iran's foreign minister told European Union (EU) foreign policy chief Josep Borrell that Tehran welcomes continuation of the path of diplomacy aimed at reaching an agreement on the removal of sanctions and the revival of the JCPOA, while urging the US to be "realistic."

The top Iranian diplomat added that the U.S. constantly claims it is in favor of an agreement, but that claim "should manifest itself [both] in the text of the agreement and in action."

The Iranian top diplomat explained the initiatives that Iran has come up with in order to "keep the diplomatic window of opportunity open."

Europe Seeking to Address Own Energy Concerns Through JCPOA Talks

TEHRAN (IFP) - The chair of the Iranian parliament's foreign relations committee says Europe is trying to act as a mediator in the talks for revival of the 2015 nuclear deal to help get Iran and the U.S. agree on a solution and that is aimed at providing for the continent's energy needs in the winter.

Abbas Golroo made the comments in an interview with IRNA on France's expression of readiness to mediate in the nuclear talks.

"Iran welcomes the move by any country that seeks to act as a mediator in the nuclear negotiations. But if France fulfills its own duty as a members of the nuclear negotiating parties, the talks will definitely produce results sooner," he said.

Golroo further explained that the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, caused many problems in the process of its implementation.

He said, however, that the European signatories also failed to fulfill their own commitments.

No Dams Broke Amid Floods in Southeast

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Local authorities in southeastern Iranian province of Kerman have denied reports suggesting a dam broke in the region forcing authorities to order the evacuation of a city of nearly 10,000 people.

Head of Kerman Regional Water Company Ali Rashidi said that authorities had decided to release water from a small earth-fill dam near the city of Dehaj, located 70 kilometers from the city Shahrehabak, to prevent a burst in the dam because of the floods that began a day earlier.

"Based on the information we have received ... the situation in the dam is under control," Rashidi was quoted by the official IRNA news agency.

Local authorities said a decision taken earlier on Saturday to evacuate people from Dehaj because of fears of a dam burst had been cancelled.

"There is no need for evacuation of the city," said head of Kerman's disaster management department Majid Saeedi, adding that evacuation plans will proceed if the floods get worse causing problems for a larger dam near Dehaj .

At least 61 people have been killed and more than 32 remain unaccounted for in various provinces in Iran after floods triggered by heavy rain affected hundreds of towns and villages across the country.

However, a late statement by Mohsen Mansouri, the top government official in the northern province of Tehran, where the capital city is located, said that a total of 36 people had been killed in floods in the province since Friday.

Photo shows authorities and people inspecting damage inflicted on a residential area in the central Iranian city of Yazd because of floods on July 30, 2022.

MPs Seeking Impeachment of Cultural Heritage Minister

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian lawmaker says a group of his colleagues have activated a motion for the impeachment of Ezzatollah Zarghami, the minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism.

Striking a sarcastic tone, Abbas Moghtadaei, deputy head of the parliament's foreign relations and national security commission, from the historical city of Isfahan, said in a tweet that Zarghami's impeachment bid had been set in motion in order to make the minister more active and get him to improve his performance.

Addressing President Ebrahim Raisi, he wrote the bid was meant to "help you achieve a better performance in the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism."

"Now, your minister will put his heart into the job and the people will hear more news about the minister's activities," he added.

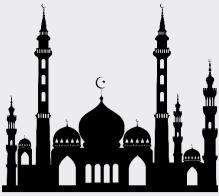
Zarghami has been facing accusations of mismanaging the historical sites of Isfahan.

Turkey Sends Humanitarian Aid to Iran



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Turkey sent humanitarian aid to the country in connection with the flooding in Iran, Turkish Ministry of National Defense, Trend reports citing Turkish media.

"Due to the flood in Iran, a transport plane belonging to our Air Force took off from Ankara's Etimesgut Airport to deliver essential relief items such as tents and blankets. It is planned to send another plane," the ministry said.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

13:10

20:28

04:36

06:13

52. It is such as obey Allah and His Messenger, and fear Allah and do right, that will win (in the end),

53. They swear their strongest oaths by Allah that, if only thou wouldst command them, they would leave (their homes). Say: "Swear ye not; Obedience is (more) reasonable; verily, Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do."

Surah 24. Light (52 - 53)

Iran, India Explore Ways To Broaden Marine Trade Via Chabahar Port

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – In a gathering to mark Chabahar Port which was held in Mumbai, India, Iran and India explored ways to broaden marine trade exchanges via Chabahar Port.

India's Ministry of Port, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) in association with India Ports Global observed 'Chabahar Day' to mark the Chabahar – Link to INSTC – Connecting Central Asian Markets in Mumbai today. INSTC (International North-South Transport Corridor) is India's vision and initiative to reduce the time taken for EXIM shipments to reach Russia, Europe, and enter the central Asian markets. The Chabahar Port located in Iran is the commercial transit center for the region and especially Central Asia.

Deputy Head on Port and economic affairs of Marine and Ports Organization of Sistan and Baluchestan Mr. Hossein Shahdadi, Advisor to Minister and Head of the Center for International Affairs of Iran's Ministry of Road and Urban Development Mr. Masoud Ostad Hosein, Jalil Eslami, Deputy of Port and Economic Affairs of Ports and Marine Organization Mr. Jalil Eslami and some of managers of the private sector of port operation sector of the country were Iranian representatives in the event.

Touching upon the event, Mr. Shahdadi said that introduction of Chabahar and exploring ways for cooperation via Chabahar Port as well as removing hurdles in way of goods transit for and from India to other countries via this port are the main goals of this event.

He added that some specialized meetings between shipping lines and owners of the goods with customs and banking officials of India were on agenda.



Shahdadi pointed to the role of Chabahar Port in developing regional trades and emphasized tha importance of Chabahar has encouraged Indian officials to earmark a day on Chabahar Port in one of most important cities of India.

India's Union Minister Mr Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of State Mr Shripad Yesso Naik, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to India Mr. Nurlan Zhalgasbayev, Ambassador of Kazakhstan Mr. Asein Isaev, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Mr. Lukmon Bobokalonzoda, Ambassador of Tajikistan Mr. Shalar Geldynazarov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan Mr. Dilshod Akhatov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan Mr Consul General (CG) of Afghanistan Mr. Zakia Wardak and Council General of Iran Mr. Alikhani were other prominent participants of this event.

Meanwhile in his address to the event Mr. Sonwal stated, "Our vision is to make Shahid Beheshti Port at Chabahar a transit hub and linking it to INSTC to reach out to Central Asian Countries." He said "We look forward to businesses and logistics companies to utilize the incentives of the Shahid Beheshti Port and Chabahar Free Trade Zone." He added, "We urge all the representatives and stakeholders to come forward with suggestions to reduce the transportation time and cost further to make a cheaper, shorter, faster and more reliable route from India to Iran and Central Asia."

During the event, the delegates from the Central Asian countries highlighted how Chabahar link with INSTC can play a vital role in boosting EXIM trade in their regions and its potential to further boost development in the landlocked countries. During the day-long event, several presentations and Government to Business sessions took place. Presentations and speeches were given by Chairman IPA, MD IPGL, FFFAI and Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs.

Housing Price Increases 8.3% in Tehran

TEHRAN (MNA) - Average housing price rose 8.3 percent in the capital Tehran during the fourth Iranian calendar month Tir (ended on July 22), compared to its previous month, according to a report by Statistical Center of Iran (SCI).

Based on the SCI data, the average price for one square meter of a residential unit in Tehran stood at 448 million rials (about \$1,611) during the mentioned month.

The average housing price in the said month also increased 27.1 percent in comparison to the same month in the previous year.

As reported, the number of real estate deals stood at 8,685 in the capital city in the fourth month of this year.

As previously reported by Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the average housing price rose 16 percent in the capital Tehran during the last month of the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), compared to the same month in the preceding year.

Based on the CBI data, the average price for one square meter of a residential unit in Tehran stood at 351.2 million rials (about \$1,263) during the last month of the past year, up 6.2 from its previous month, and 16 percent from the same month of the preceding year.

Housing prices in Iran have been constantly rising over the past three years due to various internal and external factors.

Although, in early May, the chairman of Real Estate Agencies Union said, "This year is the year of lower housing prices; this condition will continue in the country for the next two years, and we will see a continuous decrease in housing prices".

Pakistani Pilot Was To Blame for Near Miss

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's aviation chief says a near-miss between two Pakistani planes flying in the Iranian airspace on July 24 was due to an unauthorized decision by the pilot of one of the planes to descend to a dangerous altitude.

Speaking to reporters, president of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) Mohammad Mohammadi Bakhsh criticized as "unprofessional" remarks made this week by a spokesperson of Pakistan International Airlines which blamed the near miss on human error by Iranian air traffic controllers.

Mohammadi Bakhsh said the pilot of one of the flights that were bound for Peshawar had misunderstood Iranian air traffic control and decided to drop to an altitude that could have led to a collision with another PIA flight bound for Dubai.

"We have the transcription of the conversation between the pilot and the country's airspace control center. The pilot had a false understanding of the controller's advice and reduced its altitude without clearance," he was quoted by the official IRNA news agency.


"We will take legal action on this issue in the international (aviation) organizations," said the official, who also serves as a deputy to Iran's transportation minister.

The comments come as the CAO has yet to announce the official results of an investigation into the alleged near miss between the two PIA planes.

CAO officials said earlier this week that they were waiting for control center documents and reports from the pilots of the planes to further investigate.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan claimed this week that pilots of the two planes had managed to correct their path and avoid a collision based on warnings issued by a cockpit system.

Iran, Turkey to Boost Water Cooperation



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Spokesman for the water industry, who attended a presser on Sunday morning, said that Iran and Turkey are going to boost water cooperation and the atmosphere between the two sides is positive.

Iran's Spokesman for the water industry Firouz Ghasemzadeh referred to the recent state visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, saying that the promises have been made by the Turkish side to form technical committees to solve water Issues.

Gahssemzadeh further called the atmosphere between Iran and Turkey on water cooperation positively.

Earlier, Firouz Ghasemzadeh emphasized that the only agreement Iran signed with Turkey in the past years regarding the water share of the Aras River and The Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) is related to one of the tributaries of the Aras River, which includes a small water share.

He then pointed to recent floods in the country which increased the water inputs of dams, adding that it has increased by some 260m cubic meters.

He said that usually monsoons in Iran hits south or southeast of the country but this year it has reached even Alborz Province and this unexpected rains have led to deadly floods.

Ghasemzadeh went on to say that the amount of rainfalls has been good in a way that water inputs of dams has increased by 260m cubic meters but in the upcoming months this amount can be calculated correctly.

He also refuted reports on pollution of drinking water system and said that no dam has been damaged amid the floods and by the way drinking water systems have not been damaged.

He went on to say that energy ministry has plans to manage water consumption by using different solutions like increasing the price of water for overconsumption.

Ghasemzadeh also said that talks with Afghanistan on Iran's share of water will soon be held, adding that some 820m cubic meters of water should enter Iran during the wet year time and this figure will decrease in drought time but this year Afghanistan has released only 4m cubic meters of water towards Iran.

Tehran, Minsk Stress Drawing Roadmap for Expanding Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) - Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Reza Fatemi-Amin and Belarusian Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko have emphasized drawing a roadmap for developing economic collaborations between the two countries.

Fatemi-Amin who visited Belarus on top of a senior delegation for attending the two countries' 15th Joint Economic Committee meeting was received by Golovchenko, Industry Ministry news portal Shata reported.

During the meeting, the two sides stressed the need for using their complementary economic capacities to develop mutual ties and boost trade exchanges.

Mentioning the potentials of the two sides for expanding trade ties, Fatemi-Amin said Iran's annual foreign trade is about \$120 billion and Belarus' foreign trade exchange is \$80 billion a year, however the trade between the two countries is only \$40 million, which is very low considering the mentioned figures.

He further invited Golovchenko to travel to Iran to visit some international exhibitions and get familiar with the Islamic Republic's technological and industrial advancements.



"Sanctions might have caused pressure in the short term, but in the long term, they benefit the countries," he said.

Meanwhile, Golovchenko said good cooperation between Iran and Belarus has been established in all international arenas and the two countries should collaborate more in confronting the unipolar world.

"On all international platforms, be it the United Nations Organization, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, we adhere to such principles as the multipolar world, the inviolability of sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, and equal cooperation in the international arena," the prime minister emphasized.

"Your visit is important and well-timed. Now is the right time to take a fresh look at our relations, and to take steps to strengthen our trade and economic cooperation. We have already established very good and constructive contacts at the political level. Our countries traditionally support each other in the international arena and regularly exchange official visits. The leaders of our states met almost a year ago," Golovchenko said.

He also expressed readiness to take advantage of Iran's progress in various sectors and called for maintaining stable cooperation to deal with the pressures that have been put on Iran, Russia, and Belarus due to sanctions.

Golovchenko also expressed his country's willingness to import cars from Iran.

Iranian Gold Coins, Bullion Purchases 2.5 Times in Spring

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In its latest seasonal report, the World Gold Council announced a 2.5-fold increase in purchases of coins and bullion by Iranian citizens this spring.

Iranians bought 7.4 tons of gold coins and bullion this spring, a 138% increase from the same period last year, almost 2.5 times, according to the report published on the World Gold Council website.

The dollar rate peaked from the beginning of spring to the end of this year from 26,000 toman to 32,000 toman, and people have dramatically increased the purchase of bullion and gold coins to preserve their rial assets. The price of The Freedom Spring coin had also peaked this spring from 11.8 million toman to 15 million toman.

In general, in the first six months of this year, Iranians bought 16.7 tons of bullion and gold coins, a nearly 80% increase from the same period last year.

Also, the purchase of gold jewelry by Iranians during this period has grown by 27 percent to 12.2 tons.

IME Posts Higher Trade Records in Value and Volume

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,062,224 tons of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$437m, logging growths of 8% and 6% in volume and value of traded compared with the week before that.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 1,632,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$232m.

On this floor the IME sold 946,234 tons of cement, 391,000 tons of iron ore, 202,617 tons of steel, 31,500 tons of sponge iron, 30,000 tons of cast iron, 15,545 tons of zinc, 8,025 tons of aluminum, 8,015 tons of copper, 100 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 7 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 424,839 tons of commodities worth more than \$199m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 79,749 tons of polymeric products, 10,800 tons of vacuum bottom, 25,500 tons of lube cut, 26,292 tons of chemicals, 25,700 tons of sulfur, 3,652 tons of base oil, 225 tons of insulation and 154,732 tons of bitumen.

The IME also traded within the same week 5,343 tons of commodities on its side market.



Lebanon Seizes Ship Carrying Stolen Ukrainian Grain

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - A Lebanese prosecutor ordered the seizure Saturday of a Syrian-flagged ship that docked at a northern port with a cargo of Ukrainian grain Kyiv's embassy in Beirut said was "illegal".

Prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat instructed police to investigate the Laodicea, which docked in Tripoli earlier this week, a judicial official said.

Oueidat "ordered the seizure of the ship until the investigation is completed", the official said on condition of anonymity. Lebanese police were also instructed to consult Ukraine's embassy after it claimed that the grain aboard the Syrian-flagged ship was loaded from a region occupied by Russian forces.



Pope Admits He Must Slow Down or Quit

ROME (Dispatches) - Pope Francis admitted he needs to slow down, telling reporters after a six-day trip to Canada that he cannot maintain his pace of international travel -- and may have to think about retiring.

"I don't think I can go at the same pace as I used to travel," said the 85-year-old pope, who suffers pain in his knee that has seen him increasingly reliant on a wheelchair.

"I think that at my age and with this limitation, I have to save myself a little bit to be able to serve the Church. Or, alternatively, to think about the possibility of stepping aside."



Ukraine Claims Scores of Russians Killed in Southern Fighting



KYIV (Dispatches) - The Ukrainian military said it had killed scores of Russian soldiers in fighting in the south, including the Kherson region that is the focus of Kyiv's counter-offensive in that part of the country and a key link in Moscow's supply lines.

Rail traffic to Kherson over the Dnipro River had been cut, the military's southern command said, potentially further isolating Russian forces west of the river from supplies in occupied Crimea and the east.

Defense and intelligence officials from Britain, which has been one of Ukraine's staunchest allies in the West since Moscow's Feb. 24 invasion, portrayed Russian forces as struggling to maintain momentum.

Ukraine has used Western-supplied long-range missile systems to badly damage three bridges across the Dnipro in recent weeks, cutting off Kherson city and - in the assessment of British defence officials - leaving Russia's 49th Army stationed on the west bank of the river highly vulnerable.

The Ukrainian military's southern command said more than 100 Russian soldiers and seven tanks had been destroyed in fighting in the south on Friday.

The first deputy head of the Kherson regional council, Yuri Sobolevsky, told residents to stay from away from Russian ammunition dumps.

"The Ukrainian army is pouring it on against the Russians and this is only the beginning," Sobolevsky wrote on the Telegram app.

The pro-Ukrainian governor of Kherson region, Dmytro Butriy, said Berislav district was particularly hard hit. Berislav is across the river northwest of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant.

"In some villages, not a single home has been left intact, all infrastructure has been destroyed, people are living in cellars," Butriy wrote on Telegram.

Reuters could not independently verify the reports.

Officials from the Russian-appointed administration running the Kherson region earlier this week rejected Western and Ukrainian assessments of the situation.

In an intelligence update on Saturday, Britain's defense ministry said Russia had likely established two pontoon bridges and a ferry system to compensate for bridges damaged in Ukrainian strikes.

Russian-installed authorities in occupied territories in southern Ukraine were possibly preparing to hold referendums on joining Russia later this year, and were "likely coercing the population into disclosing personal details in order to compose voting registers," it added.

On Friday the ministry described the Russian government as "growing desperate", having lost tens of thousands of soldiers in the war. The chief of Britain's M16 foreign intelligence agency, Richard Moore, added on Twitter that Russia is "running out of steam".

Ukraine and Russia have traded accusations over a missile strike or explosion that appeared to have killed dozens of Ukrainian prisoners of war in eastern Donetsk province. The incident took place early on Friday in the frontline town of Olenivka held by Moscow-backed separatists.

Havana Announces Blackouts, Cancels Carnival

HAVANA (Reuters) - The Cuban capital of Havana will begin electricity blackouts in August, has canceled carnival and is taking other measures as the country's energy crisis worsens, state media reported.

The capital, home to a fifth of the population of 11.2 million and center of economic activity in Cuba, had been spared the daily power outages of four or more hours that the rest of the island has endured for months.

Blackouts have sparked a few small local protests this summer and a year ago in July fueled a day of unprecedented unrest across the country as discontent boiled over.

For now, a schedule of power outages will mean each of Havana's six municipalities will have its electricity cut every three days during peak mid-day hours, according to the local Communist Party daily, Tribuna de la Habana, which reported on a meeting of local authorities.

The blackouts reflect a deepening economic crisis that began with harsh new U.S. sanctions on the island in 2019 and worsened with the pandemic that gutted tourism, and then Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



Swiss Set to Match EU Sanctions If China Invades Taiwan

ZURICH (Dispatches) - The head of the Swiss agency that implements economic sanctions expects the neutral country to adopt any punitive measures the European Union launches against China if it invades Taiwan, she said in a newspaper interview.

China has been stepping up military activity around Taiwan seeking to pressure the democratically elected government there to accept Chinese sovereignty. Taiwan's government says only the island's 23 million people can decide their future, and while it wants peace, it will defend itself if attacked.

Asked by the Neue Zuercher Zeitung paper if Switzerland would adopt EU sanctions against China in that case, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) Director Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch said: "I strongly believe that we would adopt such sanctions."

"However, sanctions in the case of China would be far more drastic (than sanctions against Russia) because the economic relations are much more important. Therefore, there would probably be greater discussions in the EU and the United States as well as in Switzerland than there were in Russia. But I hope it will never come to that."

Ineichen-Fleisch defended Switzerland's record on adopting EU sanctions against Russian individuals and companies over Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, which Moscow describes as a "special military operation".

Pressure has mounted on Switzerland -- a popular destination for Moscow's elite and a holding place for Russian wealth -- to more quickly identify and freeze assets of hundreds of sanctioned Russians.

As of this month Switzerland has frozen 6.7 billion Swiss francs (\$7.04 billion) worth of Russian financial assets and 15 properties, and Ineichen-Fleisch said this figure was unlikely to change much.

"We at SECO have no indication that there are many assets of sanctioned persons that have not yet been found," she said.

Britain's Trains Disrupted in Second Widespread Rail Strike in a Week

LONDON (Dispatches) - Around 5,000 train drivers across almost a quarter of Britain's rail network went on strike on Saturday, as part of a campaign for higher pay after the country's inflation rate hit its highest in 40 years.

The 24-hour strike organised by train drivers' union ASLEF is the second significant industrial action this week on Britain's rail network, after 40,000 members of the RMT and TSSA unions - which represent other rail staff - held a major strike on Wednesday.

Soaring inflation - consumer price inflation is currently 9.4% - and patchy wage rises have exacerbated labor tensions across sectors including postal services, health, schools, airports and the judiciary.

The rail strike was expected to cause "significant disruption" all day Saturday and on Sunday morning, according to Network Rail, which runs Britain's rail infrastructure.

Almost all services on seven of the country's 34 train operators were cancelled, including regional networks for southeast and eastern England as well as

long-distance lines linking London with southwest England, northeast England and Edinburgh.

Britain's train services are mostly run on a for-profit basis by foreign state-owned rail companies which receive short-term contracts and operating subsidies from the government. Those subsidies ballooned as passengers stayed home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ASLEF General Secretary Mick Whelan said the franchise agreements typically only provided for 2% pay rises for drivers.

"At this time of the cost of living crisis we believe this Catch-22 situation can't go on," Whelan told BBC radio.

Steve Montgomery, managing director of rail operator First Rail and chair of the industry-wide Rail Delivery Group, said operators would give bigger pay rises only if train drivers agreed to changes in working practices that would save money.

"We're not saying to people 'work longer hours', but to be more productive within the hours they currently have," he said.



Australia PM Unveils Draft Indigenous Recognition Referendum Question



SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese unveiled the wording of a draft referendum question as part of moves to enshrine an Indigenous voice in parliament.

The government is seeking a referendum, which is necessary to make changes to the constitution, on recognising indigenous minorities in the constitution and requiring governments to consult Aboriginal people on decisions that impact their lives.

The change is a commitment Albanese's centre-left Labor Party took to May's general election, where it defeated the conservative Liberal-National coalition. The coalition had wanted to establish indigenous representation in parliament through legislation.

Albanese, who revealed the plan in a speech at an Indigenous festival in remote Arnhem Land, in the Northern Territory, proposed the draft referendum question: "Do you support an alteration to the Constitution that establishes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice?"

The prime minister suggested three sentences be added to the constitution if the referendum succeeds, enabling the voice to be set-up.

"I ask all Australians of goodwill to engage on this," he said.

"Respectfully, purposefully we are seeking to secure support for the question and the associated provisions in time for a successful referendum, in this term of parliament." The voice would be a source of advice and accountability, but "not a third chamber" in the parliament, he added.

Opposition spokesperson for Indigenous Australians, Julian Leeser, told local media the speech was a "positive step", but that Australians needed to know how the function would work.

Australia's constitution makes no reference to indigenous people, whose leaders have toiled for generations to win recognition for injustices suffered since European colonisation in the 1700s.

Altering the constitution is difficult, requiring support of a majority of votes in a majority of states. The feat has only occurred eight times in 44 attempts since federation in 1901.

Japan E-Sports Players With Disabilities Shoot Down Stereotypes

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Street Fighter player Shunya Hatakeyama has muscular dystrophy, so he uses his chin to launch devastating combos. He is not the only Japanese gamer proving that disability is no barrier in e-sports.

Naoya Kitamura, who is blind and relies on sound to play beat 'em up game Tekken 7, also hopes that his skills in a billion-dollar industry will help make society more open-minded.

"I'll block a move and the sound it makes will tell me what kind of move it was," Kitamura said.

"Then I'll react and make my move," he told AFP, demonstrating a dizzying attack with Tekken character Lucky Chloe.

Competitive gaming is booming worldwide, with global e-sports revenues estimated at more than US\$1 billion, and many think it could one day be at the Olympics.

The sector is not as big in Japan as in e-sports-crazy China and South Korea, but it is gradually starting to take root. Keen to offer Japanese gamers with disabilities a chance to be part of the action, social welfare worker Daiki Kato founded a company called e-para in 2016.

Kato's firm employs players such as Hatakeyama and Kitamura, who are both 28, and gives them time to practise around their other duties, which include working on the company's website and helping organise gaming events.

Hatakeyama mostly enters Street Fighter V tournaments that are open to anyone — disabled or non-disabled — and says the beauty of fighting games is that "you can overcome handicaps and compete against different people".

"When I play in a tournament I don't want my disability to be an issue," he said.

"I want to move people with the way I play."

Hatakeyama was born with degenerative muscular dystrophy and has used a wheelchair since he was about six years old.

He has always loved fighting games, but over the years his muscles weakened so much that he could not hold a controller.

Depressed, he quit playing for six years until he and a friend decided last year to design and make a custom controller that he could operate with his chin.

Using his fingers to press buttons on his computer keyboard, Hatakeyama says he quickly got back into the groove. Now he also coaches other players with disabilities, talking them through complicated combos and offering tips on different characters.

"If I had never played fighting games, I don't think I would try to find solutions whenever I encountered something difficult," he said.

Many of e-para's gamers are new to e-sports and do not have much experience of competing in tournaments.

Company chief Kato believes there is a growing market for gamers with disabilities and he thinks manufacturers will start to sit up and take notice.

"If you have more people with hearing impairments or visual impairments playing games, game manufacturers will react by making more games that they can play," he said.

Kato wants to use e-sports to showcase the talents of people with disabilities, saying many people in Japan "don't have much chance to interact" with them.

Kitamura, who has microphthalmos and has been blind since birth, says e-sports can help change the perception that people with disabilities "just need assistance".



Demolition Looms For Historic Shanghai Neighborhood

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - Bricked-up doorways, crumbling facades and a small group of defiant locals: One of Shanghai's oldest neighborhoods is barely clinging to life as the city presses ahead with demolition and redevelopment plans.

Laoximen or "old West Gate" — named for its position in Shanghai's 16th-century defensive walls — was once the city's cultural center.

Built around the site of a Confucian temple, the mostly two- and three-storey buildings of stone and wood are an anachronism at the heart of Shanghai's gleaming commercial district.

Thousands of residents — a mix of old Shanghai families and migrant workers drawn to the low rent — were ordered to leave their homes at the end of 2017, though some have clung to the ageing buildings for years after the deadline.

Yang, who declined to give his full name, is one of the last residents who has resisted compensation from the government and held onto his home in Laoximen, a damp labyrinth of long corridors stacked with old furniture and household appliances.

"This piece of land was bought by my grandfather," Yang, whose family has lived in the area since before the Communist Party took power in 1949, told AFP.

Most of his neighbors have agreed to leave, but Yang is holding out for what he says is compensation that would match "the value of the house".

According to the local government, Laoximen residents can receive as much as 20,000 yuan per square meter, with bonus payments for moving out early.

But the average pre-owned apartment in Shanghai currently costs more than 55,000 yuan per square meter, according to property company Anjuke.

The final demolition was apparently delayed by the pandemic, but diggers have resumed their work after Shanghai emerged from lockdown earlier this year.

Where locals once dined at popular restaurants, large red-and-white signs on the walls urge cooperation with redevelopment plans.

"Open, fair and just: Promote the renovation of the old city," one reads.

Doors and windows have been sealed with cement blocks in the winding streets, pockmarked with piles of old chairs, boards and doors.

A short walk from Shanghai's swanky Bund riverside, Laoximen is one of thousands of ageing neighbourhoods in China where residents have been relocated and the land has been taken back by the government in the name of redevelopment and progress.

Many of the homes in the neighborhood predated modern building standards, and lack heating or central plumbing.

Residents are typically offered new apartments or a sum of money to give up their homes, though some redevelopment projects have caused public anger and violent confrontations in parts of the country.

Replacing Laoximen's once densely packed alleyways with larger, higher-end developments could also help the city achieve its goal of capping its population at 25 million by 2035.

Authorities announced the goal in 2017 as part of a campaign to curb "big city diseases" including congestion and housing shortages.

Wu Weigang, a retiree who grew up in the area with his extended family, has especially fond memories of celebrating Chinese New Year in Laoximen as a child.



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Exxon, Chevron Post Blowout Earnings

LONDON (Dispatches) - The two largest U.S. oil companies, Exxon Mobil Corp and Chevron Corp, posted record revenue on Friday, bolstered by surging crude oil and natural gas prices and following similar results for European majors a day earlier.

The U.S. pair, along with UK-based Shell and France's TotalEnergies, combined to earn nearly \$51 billion in the most recent quarter, almost double what the group brought in for the year-ago period. Exxon outpaced its rivals with a \$17.9 billion quarterly profit, the most for any international oil major in history.



Eurozone Inflation Shoots Up to Yet Another Record, Hits 8.9% in July

LONDON (Dispatches) - Inflation in the eurozone shot up to another record high in July, pushed by higher energy prices driven partly by Russia's war in Ukraine, though the economy still managed some meager growth.

What's more, the peak in the consumer prices index (CPI) could still be months away, keeping pressure on the European Central Bank (ECB) to opt for another big interest rate increase in September.

Annual inflation in the eurozone's 19 countries rose to 8.9% in July, an increase from 8.6% in June, according to the latest numbers published Friday by the European Union statistics agency.

Inflation has been running at its highest level since 1997, when record-keeping for the euro began.

Energy prices surged by 39.7%, slightly lower than the previous month, while prices for food, alcohol and tobacco rose by 9.8%, faster than the increase posted last month.

The eurozone's economy, meanwhile, grew from April through June, expanding by 0.7% compared with the previous quarter and up 4% over the same period in 2021.

That contrasts with the United States, whose economy has contracted for two straight quarters, raising fears of a recession with inflation at 40-year highs. But the job market is even stronger than before the COVID-19 pandemic, and most economists, including Federal Reserve (Fed) Chair Jerome Powell, have said they don't think the economy is in recession.

Many, however, increasingly expect an economic downturn in the U.S. to begin later this year or next, much like in Europe.

Europe's proximity to the war in Ukraine and its reliance on Russian energy mean it's at risk of recession as Moscow throttles down flows of natural gas that power factories, generate electricity and heat homes in the winter.

More reductions this week through a major pipeline to Germany, Nord Stream 1, have heightened fears that the Kremlin may cut off supplies completely. That would force rationing for energy-intensive industries and spike already record-high levels of inflation driven by soaring energy prices, threatening to plunge the 27-nation bloc into recession.

While European Union governments approved a measure this week to reduce gas use by 15% and have passed tax cuts and subsidies to ease a cost-of-living crisis, Europe is at the mercy of Russia and the weather. A cold winter, when natural gas demand soars, could draw down storage levels that governments are now scrambling to fill but have been made infinitely harder by Russia's cuts.

"With the region's gas supply now reduced and inflation set to remain high for some time, the eurozone is likely to fall into recession," Michael Tran, an assistant economist with Capital Economics, said in an analysis this week.

Economists' forecasts vary on the impact on economic output, especially country by country, but ING bank says the hit from a complete cutoff of Russian gas to the 19 countries sharing the euro would be 1% to 3% of GDP in the short run.

"Given that we are already expecting a mild recession, this would be enough to get to a full-blown recession," ING analysts said in a research note this week.

To combat soaring inflation, the European Central Bank raised interest rates last week for the first time in 11 years by a larger-than-expected half-point. It's expected to be followed by another increase in September.

India's April-June Fiscal Deficit Narrows Amid Fall in Subsidies

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's federal fiscal deficit for the three months through June rose lower-than expected to 3.5 trillion rupees (\$44.17 billion), helped by a lower spending on subsidies and higher tax collections, government data showed on Friday.

Tax collections grew, partly due to higher inflation, helping the government collect more goods and services tax (GST), as well as higher corporate tax receipts on improved economic activity.

On the expenditure side, the government's spending on major subsidies including food and fertilizers, came down around 680 billion rupees during April-June period, compared to over a trillion rupees a year earlier.

This has given a confidence to finance ministry officials that they could meet the targeted fiscal deficit of 6.4% of GDP for the current fiscal year ending in March 2023, despite headwinds on the economic front.



India to Ground MiG-21 Fighter Jets by 2025

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India will ground all its Soviet-era Russian fighter jets, the MiG-21, by 2025, following the death of two officers in a crash, the latest in a series of casualties involving the single-engine jet's failure, a newspaper reported on Saturday.

The Times of India quoted unnamed Indian Air Force officials as saying the MiG-21s have long past their retirement but must be replaced before being grounded.

The report did not specify what portion of India's fighter-jet capability would be affected. The Wion news outlet said the air force has around 70 MiG-21s. The air force and defense ministry have been buying aircraft from Western makers in recent years.

A senior defense ministry official declined to confirm or deny the Times of India report, telling Reuters only that discussions on the future of the MiG-21 were underway, as sourcing of spare parts from Russia was increasingly difficult due to the war in Ukraine.

A defense ministry spokesman did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment. The MiG-21, dubbed "flying coffins" by the Indian press, has been the country's key fighter jet since its introduction in 1963 but has been plagued by crashes in later years.

The jets have been a critical security asset in India's military infrastructure, used for example to strike neighboring rival Pakistan after an alleged suicide attack in the disputed Kashmir region in 2019.

Thursday's crash of an air force MiG-21 Bison in the desert state of Rajasthan brings to six the number of MiG-21 crashes since last year, with five officers killed, according to official data and a source.

In 2012, then-Defense Minister A.K. Antony told parliament that more than half of India's 872 MiG-21s had been lost to crashes over the previous four decades.

British Businesses Turning Away From China

LONDON (Dispatches) - British businesses are cutting ties with China due to concerns about political tensions, a shift that is likely to stoke inflationary pressures, the head of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said in an interview published on Saturday.

"Every company that I speak to at the moment is engaged in rethinking their supply chains ... because they anticipate that our politicians will inevitably accelerate towards a decoupled world from China," CBI Director-General Tony Danker was quoted as telling the Financial Times newspaper.

China was Britain's biggest source of imported goods in 2021, accounting for 13 per cent of the total, while it was the sixth-largest destination for goods exports, according to Britain's official trade statistics.

However, British security concerns have risen in recent years, fuelled by disagreements with China over Hong Kong and other issues. Last week, the head of Britain's foreign intelligence service, Richard Moore, said China was now his top priority, ahead of counter-terrorism work.

Britain has also increasingly blocked Chinese takeovers of companies on national security grounds.

Both the remaining candidates in the Conservative Party leadership contest — Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and former finance minister Rishi Sunak — have said they intend to take a tougher line on China.

Danker said growing U.S. concern about China had also made British companies more wary about being dependent on Chinese suppliers, and that going elsewhere was would be "more expensive and thus inflationary".

"It doesn't take a genius to think cheap goods and cheaper goods may be a thing of the past," he added.

British inflation hit a 40-year high of 9.4 per cent last month, partly because of the surge in energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Turkish Inflation Seen Nearing 81% in July

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's inflation is expected to near 81% in July and was seen declining to just 70% by end-2022, a Reuters poll showed on Friday, as global energy and commodity costs and the lira's steady decline continue to push prices higher.

Inflation has surged since last autumn, when the lira slumped after the central bank gradually cut its policy rate by 500 basis-points to 14% in an easing cycle sought by President Tayyip Erdogan.

It has been further stoked this year by the economic fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as the lira's continued decline. The currency shed 44% against the dollar last year, and is down 27% this year.

The median estimate 10 institutions who participated in the Reuters poll for annual inflation in July was 80.50%, with forecasts ranging between 79.45% and 82.50%.

That would make it the highest reading since August 1998, when annual inflation was 81.4% and Turkey was battling to end a decade of chronically high inflation.

The median forecast for the monthly figure was 2.90%, in a range of 2.28% and 4%.

Inflation was seen falling only to 70% by the end of the year, according to the median estimate of 11 economists, with forecasts between 60.75% and 77%.

The median for the year-end was 69.5% in the previous Reuters poll conducted in June.

The government has said inflation will fall with the new economic program, which prioritizes low rates to boost production and exports and aims to achieve a current account surplus.

Erdogan has said that he expects inflation to come down to "appropriate" levels by February-March next year, while the central bank raised its end-2022 forecast to 60.4% on Thursday from 42.8% previously.

The bank's quarterly presentation showed the estimated range of annual inflation reaching nearly 90% this autumn before easing.

Opposition lawmakers and economists have questioned the reliability of the Turkish Statistical Institute's (TUIK) figures, claims TUIK has dismissed. Polls show Turks believe inflation is far higher than official data.

Signs Emerge That Global Inflation Could Be Transitory



LONDON (Dispatches) - (Reuters) - Central banks and markets may have dropped the narrative that inflation is "transitory," but there is a strong chance that current spikes in prices are temporary and will soon begin to trend downward, economists and former central bank policymakers told the Reuters Global Markets Forum (GMF).

"I'll confess I'm still in team transitory," said Stephen Poloz, former governor of the Bank of Canada, referring to the rises in consumer prices.

Central banks around the world have revised earlier views that inflationary pressures were temporary and have embarked on a series of rapid interest-rate hikes. Poloz, however, said that while price rises have lasted longer than markets anticipated due to external shocks, they have likely peaked.

"The exogenous increase in commodity prices took over a year to peak, which means 'transitory' gets defined as at least 24 months," he said.

Several economists saw the combination of central banks tightening rates, the increasing likelihood of an economic recession, and commodity prices giving up gains made in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as contributing factors to declining price pressures.

"The current sharp increase of interest rates by many central banks may eventually undermine the economy and cause that weaker demand," said Takahide Kiuchi, former Bank of Japan policy board member.

Recession fears are looming globally including in the United States, the eurozone and the United Kingdom, leaving policymakers faced with the dilemma of tightening policy even as risks grow.

The steep growth in money supply in the wake of the COVID-19 economic fallout drove U.S. inflation higher, but "the money growth has come to a complete halt," said Timothy Congdon, founder of the Institute of International Monetary Research.

"I think that we can restore the stability of the prices at the expense of deterioration of the economy," said Kiuchi.

Other factors such as growing technology advances are also likely to structurally keep inflation in check, Poloz said.

Iran Exports 116m Liters of Gas in One Month

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Customs statistics show that Iran has exported 116 million liters of gas worth 32 million dollars during the first month of the current Iranian calendar year. Due to the recent increase in gas production in Iran, it was not only able to stop imports but also joined the group of gas exporters in the world. It means that Iran has exported 4m liter gas per day. Statistics show that the country has exported 86,000 tons gas in the first month.



Rich Countries Failed to Meet Their Climate Funding Goal

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Rich nations failed to meet a long-standing pledge to deliver \$100 billion to help poorer countries cope with climate change, the OECD said. Back in 2009, developed countries promised that by 2020 they would transfer \$100 billion per year to vulnerable states hit by increasingly severe climate-linked impacts and disasters.

In fact, they provided \$83.3 billion in 2020 - falling \$16.7 billion short of the target, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said.

The missed goal is no surprise. The OECD uses U.N. data processed with a two-year delay, and rich countries have already signaled the target would not be met until 2023.

But it is a blow ahead of COP27, the United Nations' annual climate summit in November, where countries will face pressure to cut CO2 emissions faster.

Finance has become a sore point in these talks, and developing economies say they cannot afford to curb pollution without support from the rich nations responsible for most of the CO2 emissions heating the planet.

"Honouring that commitment is central to renew trust," said Yamide Dagnet, Climate Justice Director at the Open Society Foundations, though she said \$100 billion is a slither of vulnerable states' actual needs.

"We need developed countries to present credible plans to escalate their climate finance," Dagnet said.

The OECD does not break down the data by individual countries. It said it was not clear how the COVID-19-induced economic slump may have hit countries' contributions, which include public loans, grants, and private investments that public bodies helped mobilize.

In recent years the European Union and its 27 member countries have, together, been the biggest climate finance provider.

As crop-shrivelling droughts, rising sea levels and deadly heat strike the world's poorest



nations, they are also demanding compensation for these escalating climate-linked losses.

The United States, EU and other big polluters have so far resisted steps that could lead to such payments - but some officials said positions were beginning to shift.

"I believe a Loss and Damage Funding Facility is gaining traction," said Carlos Fuller, Belize's Ambassador to the United Nations.

"We now need to work on those developed countries who remain hesitant," he said.

Climate Change Made Britain Heatwave 10 Times More Likely



PARIS (Dispatches) - Climate change caused by human activity made this month's record-shattering heatwave in Britain at least 10 times more likely to occur, according to research released on Friday.

Eastern England recorded an all-time high temperature of 40.3 degrees Celsius (104.5 degrees Fahrenheit) and the hot spell sparked fires that destroyed dozens of homes in London.

Overall, at least 34 locations in Britain registered record highs on July 20, when the heatwave peaked over Western Europe.

An international team of researchers modelled how likely such an extreme hot weather event would have been before the industrial era began in the mid-19th century.

They then compared this likelihood with that of a heatwave occurring in the current climate — that is, with the planet nearly 1.2C hotter on average than in pre-industrial times.

They focused on maximum temperatures in Britain's most affected region — central England and east Wales — and found that the record-breaking heat was made at least 10 times more likely due to the human-generated greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

The study found that extreme heat events across Europe had increased even more than had been estimated by climate models.

Computer-generated models estimated that greenhouse gas emissions increased temperatures in the July heatwave by 2C. But in actual fact, the heatwave was 4C hotter than it would have been without manmade warming.

"In Europe and other parts of the world we are seeing more and more record-breaking heatwaves causing extreme temperatures that have become hotter faster than in most climate models," said Friederike Otto, senior lecturer in climate science at the Imperial College London's Grantham Institute for Climate Change.

"It's a worrying finding that suggests that if carbon emissions are not rapidly cut, the consequences of climate change on extreme heat in Europe, which already is extremely deadly, could be even worse than we previously thought."

In 2020 scientists at Britain's Met Office calculated that the likelihood of temperatures topping 40C in the natural climate — that is absent of human-caused warming — to be roughly one in 1,000 years.

Today that estimate stands at one in 100 years but scientists involved in the study said that observed weather extremes were happening even faster than predicted by models.

"Even with a conservative estimate, we see a large role of climate change in the UK heatwave," said Mariam Zachariah, research associate at the Grantham Institute.

U.S. Sets \$1.74b Deal With Moderna for Updated COVID Vaccine

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The U.S. government said on Friday it agreed to a \$1.74 billion deal for 66 million doses of a Moderna Inc COVID vaccine updated for the Omicron subvariant for use in a fall and winter booster campaign, sending Moderna shares up 3%.

Combined with 105 million doses the government already agreed to buy from Pfizer Inc and partner BioNTech SE for \$3.2 billion, the latest deal puts the U.S. booster dose supply at about 171 million shots.

COVID-19 infections in the United States have been on the rise as the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants of the Omicron variant have spread to account for more than 90% of U.S. infections, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

These subvariants have significant mutations from the earliest versions of Omicron and protection from vaccines wanes over time.



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration in June recommended that vaccine manufacturers target these subvariants for a potential fall season booster dose in a bivalent vaccine that also includes the original strain.

Moderna's initial 66 million doses are for delivery this year. The government's deals with Moderna and Pfizer could go up to 300 million doses from

each company if it exercises all of its options and secures funding from the Congress.

"As we look to the fall and winter... we are ensuring Americans have the tools they need to stay safe and help keep our nation moving forward," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said in a statement.

The booster candidates need to secure FDA authorization and a recommendation by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, before they can be made available for wider use.

Faster Growth May Help Bacteria Remove Lake Plastic Waste

PARIS (Dispatches) - Chemicals leaking from plastic waste make bacteria grow faster in European lakes, according to research published that authors said could provide a natural way to remove plastic pollution from freshwater ecosystems.

Microplastics have been found in virtually every corner of the globe — from the highest glaciers to the bottom of the deepest sea trench — but the impact of plastic pollution in lakes is less well researched than in oceans.

When plastic materials such as carrier bags break down in water, they release simple carbon compounds slightly different to those produced when organic matter such as twigs and leaves disintegrate.

Researchers from the University of Cambridge wanted to see what effect these compounds had on bacteria populations in 29 lakes across Scandinavia.

They cut up plastic bags from four major British shopping chains and mixed them with water until the carbon compounds were released.

They then filled glass bottles with water from each lake, mixing a small amount of the plastic water into half of these samples.

In the water with plastic-derived compounds, the bacteria had doubled in mass within 72 hours and already absorbed around half of the carbon present in the samples.

Overall, they found that the bacteria in the plastic water samples grew nearly twice as easily (1.72 times) as the lake bacteria with no plastic water added.

Andrew Tanentzap, from the University of Cambridge's Department of Plant Sciences, said the study showed the profound impact plastic pollution is likely having on bodies of freshwater where the waste is present.

"It's almost like the plastic pollution is getting the bacteria's appetite going," he said.

"This suggests that plastic pollution is stimulating the whole food web in lakes, because more bacteria means more food for the bigger organisms like ducks and fish." The study examined how bacteria react to plastic carbon compounds in lakes with different depths, locations, surface temperatures and organic matter content.

It showed that bacteria were better at removing plastic pollution in lakes with fewer unique natural carbon compounds because there were fewer natural food sources.

The results suggested that in some places, specific types of bacteria could be harnessed to help break down plastic waste.

"But you'd want to know more about the ecosystem balance before committing to doing that," first study author Eleanor Sheridan told AFP.

She also cautioned against assuming that bacteria alone could solve the growing ecological disaster posed by plastic waste.

Plastics are "not only damaging to ecosystems on a macro level, they also contain chemicals that leach out and last beyond when a plastic bag is fished out of the water," Sheridan said.

"I hope that this increases awareness of the multitude of different effects that just one type of pollution can have on the environment."

Au Revoir...

FROM PAGE 1

Most respondents to a Yahoo/YouGov survey conducted earlier this month said neither Trump nor Biden should seek re-election in 2024.

Supporters of the former U.S. president Trump believe they would be "better off" if GOP-led states separated from the rest of the United States, according to a recent poll.

The survey showed most Americans have lost hope in a brighter future with 46 percent saying the next generation will be "worse off" and only 25 percent saying it will be "better off."

Similarly, 37 percent of respondents in the survey believed America's best days were "behind us" and just 31 percent showed faith that the best was "still to come".

As the polls show, the weak performance of Biden both in the domestic or international issues have weakened the Democrats in the society as they may even lose their dominance both in the Congress and the Senate in the mid-term elections to be held by the yearend.

Biden and his administration are struggling with issues like inflation and fuel price and he has been also unable to fulfill his promise to fully curb the coronavirus and he even contracted the virus in recent days.

In the international scene, Biden has performed very poorly in a way that he has come under attack even by the U.S. allies in the Middle East and his only achievement can be getting closer to Europe especially regarding the Ukraine issue. Issues like Afghanistan and Iran's nuclear program have led to disgrace for Biden's Administration.

Most political analysts believe that the senior Democrats will encourage him not to run for the second term in 2026 although he insists he wants to run. Most Democrat voters have said they prefer some other Democrat candidates to Biden to vote for him or her.

So the upcoming mid-term elections in the U.S. for both the Congress and Senate will be decisive for the future of Biden's decision for running the next term but most political analysts, except some media outlets like CNN, believe that Americans will say "bye-bye" to Biden at the end of November 2016 because he will be no longer the American President for the next term and currently Americans have to tolerate him as president to finish his term because of his failure in fulfilling his presidential campaign promises.

Iran Advancing...

FROM PAGE 1

"In the military sector, in different arenas including missiles, drones, etc., we now benefit from special superior capabilities that prevent enemies from realizing any of their illusions [concerning Iran]," he said.

He said even enemies of Iran now acknowledge its deterrent power and the fact that the country's military industries are moving at the frontiers of technology.

India...

FROM PAGE 1

On Iran joining the grouping, External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar while attending the meeting said: "The entry of Iran will strengthen the SCO forum as now all the member-nations will have the opportunity to use the facilities of the Chabahar Port in Iran." Highlighting India's humanitarian assistance to war torn Afghanistan to fight hunger and food crisis, he urged the SCO members to help in combating the crisis.

Iran Approves...

FROM PAGE 1

Turkey, India, Afghanistan, China, and Germany were the top five countries with the highest volume of investment, while, Khorasan Razavi, Hormozgan, Tehran, Alborz, and Qazvin were the top five provinces in terms of the volume of approved foreign investment.

Afghanistan, the UAE, Turkey, Germany, and Iraq were also the top five investors in terms of the number of approved projects during the said time span.

Back in April, the Iranian government approved a new resolution to facilitate foreign investment in the country.

Iran Bracing to...

FROM PAGE 1

Zafarian added: "In the recent developments in the gas market, Russia has minimized gas exports to Europe, and the U.S. is trying to increase its LNG exports in order to replace part of Russian gas in the European market."

"Now an opportunity has been created for Iran to form a strategic cooperation with Russia in this space, and of course this cooperation should be based on Iran's national interests," he added. "The two countries of Iran and Russia can form this gas cooperation based on their national interests and create a win-win game."

Tavares Joins Marseille on Loan

MARSEILLE (Dispatches) - Portuguese left-back Nuno Tavares has joined Marseille on a season-long loan from Arsenal, the two clubs announced.

The 22-year-old signed for Premier League side Arsenal from Benfica last year and made 28 appearances for the Gunners, scoring once. He was largely used as a back-up for injury-hit Scottish full-back Kieran Tierney and Arsenal have also signed left-back Oleksandr Zinchenko from Manchester City in the close season, pushing Tavares further down the pecking order.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

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Evenepoel Wins San Sebastian Classic

MADRID (Dispatches) - Belgian Remco Evenepoel made a long range solo break to blow away his rivals and win the San Sebastian Classic for the second time.

The Quick-Step rider broke clear with 45km to go to reclaim the title he won in similar fashion in 2019 as he builds towards next month's Vuelta a Espana.

Evenepoel, 22, crossed the line nearly two minutes ahead of France's Pavel Sivakov with fellow Belgian Tiesj Benoot, two and a half minutes off the pace.

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SPORTS

MONDAY AUGUST 1, 2022

Liverpool Win First Trophy of Season by Defeating Man City

LONDON (Dispatches) - Darwin Nunez scored and won a penalty to help Liverpool beat Manchester City 3-1 in the Community Shield.

City, last season's Premier League champions, and Liverpool, the FA and Carabao Cup winners, both paraded their big-money acquisitions at Leicester's King Power Stadium in Leicester but it was the Uruguay international who upstaged City's Erling Haaland.

Nunez came off the bench in the 59th minute with the score at 1-1 and his aerial presence won the late penalty from which Mohamed Salah put Liverpool in front for a second time.

But the former Benfica striker, having earlier been denied a goal by City goalkeeper Ederson, was not finished there and stooped to head home his first for the Reds in domestic competition in added time.

One new City signing did make his mark – the £14m former River Plate forward Julian Alvarez climbing off the bench to cancel out Trent Alexander-Arnold's opener – but the focus was really on the big men up top.

The traditional season curtain-raiser played out as expected with the country's top two sides going at it once again, but it was the nuance of what the new signings might bring which attracted the intrigue.

Haaland scored 86 goals in 89 matches for Borussia Dortmund before his summer move and he is likely to add many more for City once he and they have adjusted to each other.

The Norway international had the fewest touches of any player in the first half – eight – and the service he received throughout was scant.

But that did not mean he was not a threat and when Andy Robertson initially dispossessed him from Bernardo Silva's cross the 22-year-old reacted quickest to fire in a shot which third-choice goalkeeper Adrian batted away.

Nunez, however, justified Jurgen Klopp's decision to continue his integration from the bench. The 23-year-old scored four second-half goals in a pre-season friendly against RB Leipzig but that was not enough to persuade



his manager to start him from the off.

But when he was introduced he was a bundle of energy and, unlike City with Haaland, Liverpool seemed to be better equipped to supplement his talents.

With virtually his first touch he was brought down by Ederson, who was spared by an offside flag, and then the City goalkeeper raced out to block Nunez's shot with his chest after Jordan Henderson played him through.

Nunez is more a traditional number nine and less the multi-functional player Klopp usually prefers but that can work to his advantage and when he climbed highest to head down the ball struck the arm of Ruben Dias.

Referee Craig Pawson waved away handball claims but having been advised to consult the pitchside monitor he awarded a penalty and Salah swept past Ederson.

But Nunez was not finished there and his poacher's instinct saw him stoop to head home Robertson's knockdown in added time.

It was a pulsating finish to a game which had ebbed and flowed, with Alexander-Arnold putting Liverpool ahead in the 21st minute.

Thiago Alcantara's cross was killed instantly under the foot of Salah, whose pass rolled invitingly into the path of the full-back who whipped a shot which just flicked off the head of Nathan Ake on its way in via the far post.

City improved in the second half and Alvarez, introduced at the same time as Nunez, equalized in the 70th minute after Adrian saved Phil Foden's initial effort but fumbled the rebound.

VAR checked offside and although the goalkeeper appeared to have two hands on the ball, after a lengthy delay the goal was ruled legitimate to mean the new signing followed in the exalted footsteps of Sergio Aguero and Carlos Tevez as only the third Argentinian to score in the Community Shield.



Djokovic Hopeful He Can Compete at U.S. Open

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic said he is preparing for the US Open as if he will be allowed to compete at the hardcourt major, despite his refusal to take the Covid-19 vaccine.

Djokovic, who has three US Open titles, will not be able to participate at this year's US Open due to current rules under which travelers seeking to enter the U.S. have to be fully vaccinated and provide a proof before boarding flights.

Earlier this month, the 35-year-old was included in the entry list for the August 29-September 11 Grand Slam in New York.

"I am preparing as if I will be allowed to compete, while I await to hear if there is any room for me to travel to US," Djokovic said in a post on Instagram along with a video of him practicing.

More than 43,000 people have signed an online petition calling for the United States Tennis Association (USTA) to work with the US government to allow 21-times major champion Djokovic to compete in the US Open.

Djokovic won the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon titles last year but was unable to defend his Melbourne Park crown this year after being deported from Australia over his vaccination status in January.

The Serbian later said he was prepared to miss Grand Slam tournaments rather than take the Covid-19 vaccine.

Zimbabwe Beat Bangladesh In T20 Opener

HARARE (Dispatches) - Batsmen Sikandar Raza and Wessly Madhevere starred as Zimbabwe beat Bangladesh by 17 runs in Harare on Saturday in the first of a three-match Twenty20 international series.

Zimbabwe posted 205-3 and restricted the tourists to 188-6 to take the lead in a series that continues at the same venue and concludes on Tuesday.

It was the sixth consecutive victory by Zimbabwe since former batting star Dave Houghton began a second stint as national coach in June and a 13th loss in the last 14 T20 internationals for Bangladesh.

Pakistan-born Raza, often the most prolific Zimbabwe run getter, smashed an unbeaten 65 off 26 balls after coming in at number five, including four sixes and seven fours.

Madhevere was close to bettering his career-best T20 score of 73 when forced to retire injured midway through the final over having contributed 67 runs.

More cautious than Raza, his 46-ball innings included nine fours and he shared increasingly fruitful partnerships with captain Craig Ervine, Sean Williams and Raza.

Bangladesh, lacking several key figures, struggled with their bowling and fielding, and were always behind the Zimbabwe run rate of 10.25 as they chased victory.

Wicketkeeper and stand-in skipper Nurul Hasan top scored with 42 off 26 deliveries, hitting four sixes and a four.

Najmul Hossain Shanto was the other batsman to cause Zimbabwe some trouble, with his 37 including a six and three fours.

Luke Jongwe, with 2-34 in four overs, was the pick of the Zimbabwe bowlers at Harare Sports Club.

Zimbabwe began the series in a confident mood having won all five matches as hosts this month in a qualifying tournament for the T20 World Cup in Australia during October and November.

Bangladesh were weakened by the absence of Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mushfiqur Rahim and the retired Tamim Iqbal.

Alcaraz Moves Closer to Title



UMAG (Dispatches) - Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz reached his seventh semi-final of the year with a straight-sets win over Facundo Bagnis at the Umag clay-court tournament.

The 19-year-old Spaniard raced away with the first eight games of the match before sealing a 6-0, 6-4 win over his 120th-ranked opponent from Argentina.

Having started the week at a career-high of five in the world, Alcaraz will replace Stefanos Tsitsipas at number four should he defeat Italian qualifier Giulio Zeppieri in today's semi-finals.

"It means a lot to be able to reach the number four ranking, to have a chance to do it," Alcaraz said after yesterday's match.

Brooksby Upsets Isner In Atlanta

ATLANTA (Dispatches) - Sixth-seeded Jensen Brooksby upset defending champion and second-seeded John Isner 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 in an all-U.S. matchup to reach the semifinals of the Atlanta Open.

Isner, a six-time winner of the event, saved four match points in the next-to-last game before Brooksby closed out his victory.

Up next for Brooksby is a showdown with another U.S. player, Frances Tiafoe. The fourth-seeded Tiafoe got past eighth-seeded American Brandon Nakashima 6-4, 6-2.

Third-seeded Australian Alex de Minaur posted six aces while rallying for a 4-6, 6-3, 6-0 victory over France's Adrian Mannarino to reach the semifinals.

The 23-year-old de Minaur, who won the event in 2019, will face Ilya Ivashka of Belarus in the semis. Ivashka, 28, upset fifth-seeded Tommy Paul 6-2, 3-6, 6-1.

Meanwhile Third-seeded Roberto Bautista Agut won 70.2 percent of his first-serve points en route to a 6-3, 7-6 (3) victory over fellow Spaniard Albert Ramos-Vinolas to reach the final at Kitzbuhel, Austria.

Bautista Agut led 5-2 in the second set before the fifth-seeded Ramos-Vinolas made a charge and won the next four games. But Bautista Agut rolled through the next game and won the tiebreaker to advance to play either Austrian wild card Filip Misolic or Germany's Yannick Hanfmann.



Vettel Backs Schumacher to Replace Him at Aston Martin

LONDON (Dispatches) - Sebastian Vettel has backed friend and fellow German Mick Schumacher to replace him at Aston Martin when the four times Formula One world champion retires at the end of the season.

Vettel, 35, announced his retirement yesterday with immediate speculation about who might be his successor alongside Canadian Lance Stroll at the British-based team.

"I do have my opinion. I mean, I think very highly of Mick," Vettel told reporters at the Hungarian Grand Prix, the last race before the August break.

"I'm obviously not entirely objective, because I'm very close to him. But I do think he's a great driver. And he's a learner, he keeps learning when others sort of stall, or stop making progress," he added of the 23-year-old.

"So he does have a lot of qualities, but he's also very young still, and doesn't have a lot of experience," Vettel said that the decision was for the team to make but he would "not hold back" his opinion if asked. The German is close to the Schumacher family, with Mick's father, the seven times world champion and Ferrari great Michael, a boyhood hero of Vettel's.

Schumacher senior has not been seen in public since he suffered serious head injuries in a skiing accident in the French Alps in 2013. Vettel has taken on something of a mentor role for Mick since his compatriot joined the Ferrari-powered Haas team in 2021 after winning the Formula Two title.

