

**Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 142,060 With 62 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran Exported 116m Liters of Gasoline Worth About \$32m in the First Month of the Current Iranian Calendar Year, Data Released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Showed**

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7556 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

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**Return to Implementation of JCPOA Hinges on Will of U.S.**

*IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK*

TEHRAN - Foreign ministry spokesman says return to the implementation of the Iran nuclear deal – JCPOA – hinges on the will of the United States.

Nasser Kanaani said in his weekly presser on Monday that this is completely dependent on the will of the other party, and specifically the American side, to show its readiness to achieve a logical, balanced, and enduring nuclear agreement and avoid reference to irrelevant issues.

Kanaani added that Iran considers reaching an agreement its serious strategy and does not view the negotiations as a tactical matter.

“We expect the Europeans, who emphasize the necessity of the return to the [nuclear] agreement, to reiterate to the US that resuming the implementation of the deal depends on the will of the US and this is a two-way road,” the spokesman said.

He also said it is possible that there is an agreement in the near future on the timing of the negotiations for removal of sanctions and “we can possibly witness a new round of the talks”.

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**Tehran Can Technically Make A-Bomb, But Not Mulling It**



*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN - Iran’s atomic energy chief has echoed earlier remarks by another high-ranking Iranian official that the Islamic Republic has the technical means to produce an atomic bomb but has no intention to do so.

Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), told Fars News Agency on Monday “As Mr. (Kamal) Kharrazi mentioned, Iran has the technical ability to build an atomic bomb, but such a program is not on the agenda,” referring to remarks by the senior adviser to Leader of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in July.

Eslami said the interaction between the AEOI and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been constructive and there has been no disruption, because “all of our capacities are being fulfilled based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Safeguards Agreement.”

He said the possible military dimension (PMD) accusations leveled by the West against Iran’s nuclear energy program stem from the terrorist group Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) and Israel.

The Iranian atomic energy chief highlighted that the main goal of Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with the West, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was to remove the misunderstandings and stop the accusations.

Eslami added Iran decided to turn off all JCPOA-related cameras at its nuclear sites as the ‘false’ accusations by the West did not stop.

He also said that members of the Iranian parliament are seeking to draw up a comprehensive nuclear roadmap so that the change of administrations would not affect the nuclear program.

After a meeting with the parliament’s Energy Committee on Sunday evening, Eslami said the lawmakers are pushing to turn the 50-year roadmap for nuclear industry into law so nuclear development would be shielded from decisions by the next administrations.

Eslami said Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization has planned to develop nuclear energy, including use of radiations and radiopharmaceuticals, so the nuclear technology would be more tangible in people’s lives.

On April 9, the AEOI unveiled the roadmap that addresses all aspects of the nuclear technology and the industrialization of the domestic nuclear sector.

The parliament is expected to legislate it before the end of the current Iranian year (March 20).

Iran says it will remain persistent in its push to develop and expand its nuclear program despite pressures and sanctions by the West.

**Tehran Ready to Conclude JCPOA Talks Swiftly**

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran is ready to swiftly conclude the Vienna talks on reviving the nuclear deal and give the United States another chance to act responsibly toward its contractual obligations under the 2015 accord, says Iran’s lead negotiator.

Ali Bagheri Kani, who also serves as Iran’s deputy foreign minister for political affairs, tweeted on Sunday that the Islamic Republic has shared its “proposed ideas, both on substance and form, to pave the way for a swift conclusion of Vienna negotiations.”

He explained that Iran and the P4+1 group of countries have been in talks in the Austrian capital with the purpose of “fixing the damaging complicated situation caused by the US unilateral and unlawful withdrawal” from the deal, officially called the JCPOA, back in 2018.

The senior Iranian diplomat emphasized that Iran is working closely with its JCPOA partners, in particular the European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell as the coordinator of the JCPOA Joint Commission.

He said such cooperation aims to “give another chance to the US to demonstrate good faith and act responsibly.”

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**IRGC General Urges Readiness for Hybrid Wars**

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A high-ranking Iranian general called on the military forces to enhance their preparedness for engagement in hybrid warfare waged by the enemies.

In a meeting with a group of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) officers, Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, the top military adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, called on the IRGC and other armed forces to be geared up for the enemy’s hybrid warfare.

“The IRGC should realize the enemy’s strategy and threats,” he noted, warning that the war the enemies have launched against the Iranian nation at present is a hybrid one with political, economic, cultural and media dimensions.

He further highlighted the failure of US plans to form a hegemonic monopoly in the world over the past 30 years, saying the withdrawal of military forces from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria demonstrates the defeat of the US and NATO.

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**Iran Buys Over 50% of Orthodox Tea Offerings At Kochi Auctions**

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Iran continues to be a major buyer at the Kochi tea auctions, especially for quality orthodox grades, procuring more than 50 per cent of the offerings in this category.

Traders said Iran buyers used to procure large quantities from Sri Lanka, but the current uncertainties in the island nation facilitated them to scout for their grade from Kochi. The surge in tea prices in Kolkata auctions to around 500 rupees per kg has also forced Iran buyers to come to South Indian auctions, especially Kochi, which alone offers their preferred grades. Around 80 per cent of black tea buyers from North India are opting for Kochi for specified varieties with prices ruling lower at 350 rupees. This helps them to blend the brew to cater to export markets.

Turkey has also started focusing on Kochi auctions for quality teas. However, Tunisia and Iraq are looking at much cheaper and secondary grades, while Russian buyers prefer low-priced teas.

The quantity of orthodox varieties offered in sale 30 was 880,000 kg. However, average price realization was down by around 20 rupees per kg at 165 rupees. Traders attributed the trend to increased offerings of secondary types.

**U.S. Reviews Sanctions on Iran’s Oil-Carrying Network**

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The U.S. newspaper The Wall Street Journal says Washington is investigating sanctions targeting “a trader based in the United Arab Emirates” and “a network of companies suspected of collaborating with Tehran” in connection with Iran’s offshore oil exports and transportation.

The possible new sanctions from Joe Biden’s administration are part of a broader U.S. effort to “increase diplomatic pressure on Tehran” and bring the Iranian delegation back to the nuclear talks table in Vienna with the goal of finalizing the revival of the JCPOA, according to the report released on Sunday.

Washington has closely monitored a network of individuals and companies that transported oil through “one tanker to another” through Iranian-Iraqi border waters and then forged documents to hide the true origin of oil shipments, the report said.

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**Hezbollah Does Not Rule Out War With Israel**

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The Lebanese resistance movement of Hezbollah does not rule out going to war with Israel over the regime’s attempts at impinging on Lebanon’s natural resources.

The movement’s Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah made the remarks amid a maritime dispute that escalated in early July, after the Israeli regime moved vessels into the Karish Gas Field, which lies in Lebanon’s territorial waters.

Given the entrance of the Israeli vessels into the waters, he said, “Hezbollah’s leadership discussed the options in front of the country,” adding that “there is a 50 percent chance that [the situation] could be resolved, and a 50 percent chance that the situation could advance towards war.”

The resistance’s attitude and behavior towards the Israeli regime in the case, Nasrallah said, depended on the results of ongoing indirect negotiations between Beirut and Tel Aviv over the disputed maritime area.

On Saturday, U.S. Senior Adviser for Energy Security Amos Hochstein arrived in Beirut in order to meet with Lebanese officials to mediate ongoing talks between Lebanon and Israel over their long-standing maritime border dispute.

Hours before the meeting, Hezbollah released a video showing Israeli vessels operating in the disputed area in the Mediterranean, warning that all the occupying regime’s platforms and targets were “within the reach” of its missiles.

Adding to his remarks, Nasrallah likewise cautioned that “we have been ready over the past 40 years, and are still ready to sacrifice our lives for our dear nation.”

Israel launched two wars against Lebanon in the 2000s. In both cases, it was forced to retreat after suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of Hezbollah.

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## Police Dismantle Arms-Smuggling Gang

AHVAZ (IP) - The police commander of Khuzestan Province announced that an arms smuggling gang had been dismantled and its members were arrested in Shadegan city. Brigadier-General Mohammad Salehi stated that the Iranian police forces had captured the six members of the arms smuggling gang after identifying and monitoring them.

He highlighted that during the inspection of smugglers' depots, the Iranian police officers found five weapons, 9,000 live bullets and more than 100 cold weapons.

## MoU Signed for Construction of 2 Refineries

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi described the signing of the financing agreement for the construction of the Shahid Soleimani Petrorefinery and Morvarid-e Makoran Refinery an effective measure in achieving the country's goals in the fields of attracting investment in the direction of production boom, neutralizing sanctions, preventing crude oil sales and converting oil into more value-added products, and creating science-based employment.**

Raisi described as a blessed day at the signing ceremony of the memorandum of understanding for participation and financing for the construction of the Shahid Soleimani Petrorefinery and Morvarid-e Makoran Refinery before noon this Monday.

The President called the construction of petrochemical complexes and petrochemical complexes one of the needs and necessities of the country and added, "The realization of the country's goals in the field of economic growth depends on large investments, and these memoranda are among the effective measures and groundwork for attracting small and large capitals in the path of construction and development".

Raisi stated that the signing of this memorandum is a step in the direction of realizing the Economy of Resistance, and stated, "This memorandum is also an effective step in the direction of neutralizing sanctions, preventing crude oil sales and converting crude oil into products with higher added value, meeting the country's



needs for petroleum products and creating new export capacities".

The President also pointed out the consensus of economic experts on the point that directing liquidity towards production removes concerns about liquidity growth, and clarified, "The memorandum that was signed today is also one of the successful examples of directing liquidity towards production".

Raisi stated that diligent work is the key to success, and noted, "Sometimes there may be small obstacles in the way of implementing a big project, but this should not cause the work to stop or even slow down and also do not recognize any obstacles in the way of implementing such projects".

The President considered the implementation of these projects to be a source of prosperity and progress for Bandar Abbas and especially Makoran beaches and said, "The implementation of these projects as science-based projects can create sustainable employment and production growth, especially in the downstream industries of the oil industry".

Raisi expressed his gratitude to First Vice-President Mohammad Mokhber, the Vice-President and Head of Plan and Budget Organization Mr. Mirkazemi, Oil Minister Javad Owji and all those who worked to prepare the ground for the signing of this memorandum.

## Majlis Commission Passes Prisoner Swap Deal With Belgium

TEHRAN (IFP) - A spokesman for the Iranian parliament's national security and foreign policy commission says the body passed the bill embodying a treaty for the transfer of convicts between Iran and Belgium.

Abolfazl Amouei said the motion had been referred to this commission for review and approval.

Amouei said the proposed 22-point treaty was sent to parliament in the form of a bill to run its legal course after being approved by the Iranian cabinet in June.

The Raisi administration says it agreed to the bill given the need to put in place a judicial cooperation mechanism between Tehran and Brussels and to expand bilateral ties.

The Belgian parliament had earlier approved the prisoner swap treaty with Iran, but a court in the European country later put it on hold temporarily.

Under the deal, Iranian diplomat Assadollah Assadi who is under arrest in Belgium for allegedly orchestrating an attack against a gathering of the MKO terrorist group in Belgium with be exchanged with a Belgian national in custody in Iran for espionage.

Iran vehemently denies Assadi planned an attack on Belgian soil.

## Tehran's Water Reserves Remain Negative



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Tehran Regional Water Company official said that although more than 9 million cubic meters have been added to Tehran's five dams reserves due to floods and rainfall, the capital's water reserves remain negative.

Prior to the recent rains, the amount of water stored in Tehran's five dams was 34 percent negative compared to the long-term average, but then it dropped to 25 percent, according to the director of the Office of Water Facilities Operation at Tehran Regional Water Company.

In an interview with ILNA, Mohammad Shahriari announced the largest increase in water reserves in Mamlou Dam, amounting to 5.5 million cubic meters.

At the same time, he added that the occurrence of most floods in the Mamlou Dam basin has increased the turbidity of the dam's water and the exit of the seventh treatment plant from the circuit, but did not mention the resumption of the refinery's activities.

Earlier in the day, officials in the capital announced that Tehran's dam reserves were down 21 percent from last year, which means a lack of drinking water in the metropolis.

Tehran, especially April, saw a shortage of rainfall and reduced dam storage, with rainfall in Tehran this month being just 10 mm, while the average rainfall in Tehran province is 43.5 mm.

## Committee to Be Formed To Avoid Border Conflict With Afghanistan



TEHRAN (MNA) – Following border conflict erupted between Iranian border guards and Afghan Taliban, Special Envoy of Iranian President for Afghanistan said that a joint committee will be formed to prevent border conflict with this country.

Referring to holding a meeting with officials of Taliban Ministry of Defense following border conflict, Hassan Kazemi Qomi on Sunday evening said that a joint committee will be formed to prevent border conflict with Afghanistan.

In a contact with border guards of this country, Ministry of Defense of the caretaker government of Afghanistan instructed its forces to avoid conflict, so that establishing a joint committee to prevent from repetition of such moves has been taken into consideration, he said.

An Iranian official said that there was a clash between Iranian forces and Taliban in Shagalak region of Hirmand city.

Regarding the cause of this conflict, governor of Hirmand city added that there was a border violation by Taliban forces and Taliban forces gave the necessary response and they (Iranian border guards) responded in return but there were no casualties.

A security official in Nimruz province of Afghanistan told that Taliban forces clashed with Iranian border guards during patrolling in the area near Iranian border and the two sides exchanged fire.

In this conflict, one member of Taliban was killed and another person was injured and damages were also caused to residential areas, he claimed

## Iran Ready to Cooperate With Venezuela in Tech Fields

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Islamic Republic of Iran is keen on expanding all-out cooperation with Venezuela in various technological areas, an Iranian vice president said.

Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari made the remarks in a meeting with Venezuelan Minister of Science Gabriela Jiménez on Monday, noting that development of knowledge enterprises has paved the ground for expansion of innovative and technological collaborations with friendly countries.

Pointing to the role of innovative and knowledge-based companies in medical partnerships with other countries, Sattari said that Iran has reached remarkable progress in developing vaccines for humans and animals, calling for creation of a mechanism to export Iran-made medicine to the Venezuelan market.

One of the main challenges of technological interactions is financial transactions, which should be solved by authorities from both nations to provide knowledge enterprises with the opportunity to expand coordination.

As to the preparedness of Iranian knowledge enterprises to take part in an upcoming Venezuelan exhibition, the vice president mentioned that more than 75 companies have expressed readiness to participate in the event, so Caracas is expected to determine its own



enterprises to pave the way for kicking off joint ventures.

For her part, Jiménez referred to Iran's capabilities in medicine as a good field for mutual exchanges, noting that areas of medical equipment and healthcare, livestock breeding technologies, herbs plantation, agriculture, and environment are among the fields that Venezuela is interested in utilizing Iranians' capacities.

Iran can significantly help the Venezuelan healthcare sector because the medical sector has severely been affected by sanctions, so Caracas requires medical raw materials, she argued.

Some Venezuelan researchers are scheduled to visit Iran in order to exchange views with scientists of Royan Institute, the science minister said, adding that stem cells are among the fields that Venezuela is keen on collaborating with Iran and using Iranians' achievements in this regard.

The Venezuelan official further said that Venezuela is the ninth country in the world in terms of biodiversity and that the country is prepared to collaborate with Iran in the field of medicinal plants.

She also invited the Iranian vice president to visit Venezuela in order to inspect the technological capabilities of the Latin American country and discuss ways to expand cooperation in scientific and technological sphere.

## Sweden-Backed Terrorist Ringleader Pleads Guilty

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The ringleader of a terrorist group responsible for a 2018 attack on a military parade in southwestern Iran, confesses to masterminding the atrocity as well as many other acts of terror targeting the Iranian nation.

The defendant, identified as Habib Farajollah Chaab, ringleader of the Harkat al-Nazal terror outfit, attended the first court hearing into the case in Tehran on Sunday.

"I have acknowledged all of my actions in writing and plead guilty to all of them," Chaab said. During the court session, the lawyer representing the survivors of the September 22, 2018 attack that killed at least 25 people, pointed to the defendant's role in various acts of terror and demanded "maximum punishment" for him on behalf of the families of the victims.

"The suspect has used various military hardware, including bombs, grenades, Kalashnikov rifles, etc. to perpetrate his crimes," he said.

The defendant admitted to being naturalized by Sweden and backed by the country's government, saying he had been provided with a device that would alert Swedish security officials to rescue him whenever he was in danger.

Taking to the podium, the prosecutor's representative berated Sweden for serving as a safe haven for Chaab as well as members of other anti-Iran terrorist groups such as the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, also known as PJAK, and the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MKO) terrorist cult.

"Chaab is this country (Sweden)'s national and is backed by them (the Swedish government)," even though he was on a Red Notice list and was sought by various international bodies.

Back in 2019, Chaab was arrested by the Polish authorities after travelling to Poland to attend a terrorist groups' gathering, he noted. Influence peddling and intervention on the part of the Swedish government and the United States, however, led to his release.

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy interior minister for security affairs referring to intriguing moves made by Taliban

border guards, including shooting at Iranian border guards, said that the alertness and good management of our forces ended the plot, but Taliban border guards should be briefed about borders' limits and geography.

Seyyed Majid Mir-Ahmadi said that a limited number of Afghanistan border guards in Zahak region between border posts number 56 and 57, disregarding their country's border limits had begun provocative moves during the past couple of days.

## Official Explains Zahak Border Clash With Taliban

"The Iranian border guards alertly and with high level management at the scene, prevented the escalation of the tension, and put an end to the dispute," he added.

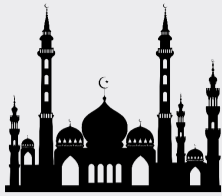
Mir-Ahmadi who is also the secretary of the National Security Council reiterated that unfortunately, today, too, in the same region Afghanistan's border guards began provocative moves, such as shooting at our border guards, which led to Islamic Republic of Iran border guards' shooting back at them.

clashes the dispute ended thanks to the management and full control of the Islamic Republic of Iran border guards.

The deputy interior minister for security affairs further stressed that the border guards of Afghanistan should be informed accurately about the geographical borders, and this point has been several times notified to Afghanistan's concerned officials, so that tension that is not favored by either side will be prevented in the future.

He added that at 1:30 pm, which was about an hour after the beginning of the two sides' armed





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:27
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:38
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:14

54. Say: "Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger. but if ye turn away, he is only responsible for the duty placed on him and ye for that placed on you. If ye obey him, ye shall be on right guidance. The Messenger's duty is only to preach the clear (Message).

Surah 24, Light (54)

## ICCIMA Ready for Cooperation on Barter With Pakistan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) says it is ready for setting up council for barter cooperation with Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI).**

A delegation from Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) met Iranian business activists at Iran Chamber of Commerce where they explored ways for boosting cooperation especially in fields of rice, agro products and LPG, and both sides presented capacities of their countries.

In the meeting, bilateral and multilateral relations manager of ICCIMA Ms. Niloofer Asadi highlighted some actions in the field of barter trade between Iran and Pakistan and announced readiness of ICCIMA for setting up council for barter cooperation with Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce Industry and other related bodies.

Asadi pointed to the close cooperation between ICCIMA and FPCCI and with specialized formations in this country for hosting different Pakistani trade delegations after lifting some COVID restrictions, and expressed hope that these exchanges of delegations would continue and could lead to boosting level of bilateral cooperation, noting that currently ICCIMA is working to dispatch a delegation to Pakistan.

She added that implementation of barter trade and also signing the free trade zone are two issues on the agenda of both countries for talks, and noted that implementing barter is important because it will reduce costs of forex exchange because currently banking transactions between the two states for transfer of money is a big hurdle and it costs dear, and barter will reduce those costs. She added that for this reason officials of both states have taken some actions on this regard and it is in the final stage and currently a delegation from REAP is in Tehran to talk on implementing this barter trade between the two states.



Asadi pointed to the necessity of a mechanism to be accepted by governments and central banks of the two countries and suggested a council in the private sector level to be launched for cooperation between chambers of commerce of the two countries for barter cooperation, and required data and information is provided for the economic activists of Iran and Pakistan.

Asadi went on to say that in the field of free trade zone, the list of proposed items of both countries is being discussed and if it bears fruit as soon as possible, then it will create new advantages for both countries.

Then Chairman of Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) Mr. Ali Hassam Asghar, for his part, pointed to \$2.5b rice export capacity of this association and said that Iran's share of this figure is considerable and noted that the association exports some 600,000 tons of rice to Iran and it is keen to increase the figure to one million tons.

He added that unfortunately there is no banking relation between the two countries and it is necessary barter of trade to be implemented as soon as possible because Pakistan rice is welcomed great by Iranians and it meets Iranians' taste.

He stated that on the barter of goods, several meetings between officials of the two countries have been held but barter mechanism has not been implemented yet. He reiterated that Pakistan has reformed some laws for implementing the barter and hurdles have been removed, and called for the launch of an executive committee for implementing barter between the two countries comprised of the related bodies in order to remove hurdles and launch required mechanism.

## Iran Share Increases In Global Market of Video Games

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Office of Vice President for Science and Technology says the country is among the top five in the region in producing video games.



The involvement of the Iranian knowledge-based companies in developing videogames, mingled with the support of the Office of the Vice President for Science and Technology, has led to the growth of the industry in the country.

Despite discrimination in cyberspace, Iranian video games have managed to enter the global markets, including Google Play, gaining global popularity.

The industry has a turnover of \$150 billion in the world and a turnover of \$500 million in Iran.

Mobile and computer games are among the innovative, income-generating, and job-creating industries in the world, where Iran's share has increased with the production of homemade products.

## Rasht-Astrakhan Flight Opens New Chapter in Iran-Russia Trade Ties

RASHT (IRNA) - Iran's consul-general in Astrakhan, Russia, said here on Sunday that Rasht-Astrakhan flight will help North-South Corridor and opens a new economic, cultural, academic, and diplomatic chapter between Iran and Russia.

Mehdi Akouchian who was participating for the maiden flight ceremony of Rasht-Astrakhan return flight, said that establishment of relations with Russia's Astrakhan city which dates back to 300 years ago is due to the existence of an Iranian Merchants Hall and an Iranian Caravanserai, which is also as old as that city.

He said that the Fars Folks Mosque, too, is another historical monument in Astrakhan, which is over 300 years old, and is the largest mosque which belonged to the Iranians in that region, and still has the same name.

Consul-General Akouchian focusing on the great significance of Iran-Astrakhan financial transactions, said that currently Astrakhan is the threshold for exporting Iranian goods to Russia, and importing that country's goods.

## Iran to Hold 2nd IEFF On Sustainable Economy

TEHRAN (MNA) – The second International Earth Film Festival is set to take place in Iran with the theme of a sustainable economy in the upcoming October.

Iran will host the second edition of the festival on 8-14 October 2022 in a bid to increase public awareness of the environment.

Entries for the competitive section of the festival must be submitted to the Festival's Executive Headquarters by August 25, 2022.

The cultural event aims to promote environmental issues and sustainable development.

The International Earth Film Festival has been established by the Green Civilization NGO, Ordibehesht Oudlajan Art and Cultural Complex, and Hashur, a platform providing video-on-demand (VOD) service.

19 features and 17 short documentary films were screened during the first edition of the festival, which ran online from May 15-21, 2021.

## Iran to Set Up Kish-Doha Shuttle Flights

TEHRAN (MNA) – The deputy director for airport operations at Imam Khomeini International Airport, Hassan Khoshkhou, has said that Iran has planned to launch Kish-Doha shuttle flights.

Khoshkhou said that Iran's aviation industry is ready to cooperate in holding the 2022 Qatar World Cup and establish shuttle flights from Kish to Doha.

According to the agreement between Tehran and Doha, the necessary facilities for the transfer of passengers have been taken into account, he noted.

There will be no restriction on the transfer of passengers during the event, he further noted.

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

## Venezuela's Flag Carrier Conviasa Starts Weekly Flights to Iran



TEHRAN (PresSTV) - Venezuela's flag carrier airline Conviasa has launched weekly flights between Caracas and the Iranian capital Tehran amid growing political and economic relations between two countries that have resisted U.S. sanctions for the past years.

A spokesman of Iran's largest international airport IKAC said that a first planned Conviasa flight from Caracas to Tehran had landed in the airport near the Iranian capital at midday on Sunday.

Javad Salehi said that senior government officials from Iran and Venezuela, including an Iranian deputy president, attended a ceremony to inaugurate the flight route.

Salehi said Conviasa will fly from Caracas to Tehran once weekly at mid-day Sundays local Iranian time and will return to Caracas at 2.45 AM on Tuesdays.

The flights come less than two months after a visit by Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro to Iran in which he signed major documents for expanding economic and political ties between the two countries.

Iran and Venezuela have cooperated closely in recent years to defuse sanctions imposed by the United States on the two nations.

Iran has supplied fuel and refinery equipment as well as crude oil shipments to Venezuela to help the country cope with the impacts of the US sanctions on its oil industry.

Washington has sought to stifle the growing partnership between Iran and Venezuela through enforcing new sanctions or pressuring its allies to confiscate shipments exchanged between Tehran and Caracas.

A plane formerly owned by Iran's Mahan Airlines and sold to Conviasa's subsidiary Emtrasur Cargo was stopped in Argentina on June 12 while carrying Iranian aviation instructors.

Iranian authorities warned Argentina on July 19 that Buenos Aires will face consequences if it further delays the release of the Iranian crew of the Venezuelan plane.

## OPEC Chief Stresses Iran Role in Oil Market Stability

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The secretary general of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) said that Iran was one of the most important founding members of the entity with a significant role in stabilizing the oil market.

In an interview with Kuwaiti newspaper Al Ra'i on Sunday, Haitham al-Ghais said that Iran and Venezuela were among the most important founding members of OPEC and had a significant role in stabilizing the oil market.

Al-Ghais said that OPEC members need 500 billion dollars of investment per annum to keep its current production level of 100 million barrels per day, warning that the prices will go higher otherwise.

He also highlighted Russia's role in the global energy market, noting that OPEC was not in competition with the country.

## Iran Foreign Transit Increased This Year

TEHRAN (MNA) – Government Spokesman said that Iran's foreign transit surged in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year in 1401 (from March 21 to July 22).

Ali Bahadori Jahromi made the remarks on Sunday evening and put the volume of foreign transit of the country in this period at about 4.921 thousand tons, showing a 31 percent hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

In his twitter account on Sunday, he wrote that volume of foreign transit of country hit about 4.921 thousand tons in the first four months of the current year, showing a 31 percent increase as compared to the same period of last year.

## Iran One of Active, Influential Countries in IMO

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Deputy CEO of Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) for Maritime Affairs said that Iran has always been regarded as one of influential countries in meetings and specialized committees of International Maritime Organization.

Majid Ali-Nazi the Deputy CEO of PMO for Maritime Affairs emphasized the active role of Islamic Republic of Iran in specialized committees of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and stated that this active and influential presence in IMO must be preserved optimally.

Taking advantage of all capacities of elites, talented individuals and academics are one of the ways behind increasing and promoting Iran's effectiveness and influence in IMO, he underlined.

Also in the meeting, the Director-General of Seafarers Affairs, the PMO Specialized and International Organizations Ali Akbar Marzban expounded on the activities and performance of the General Directorate this year and emphasized the need for changing and improving the structure of the PMO General Directorate of Seafarers Affairs and Specialized and International Organizations.



## Cement Tops List of Trades on IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - According to a report by the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME)'s International Affairs and PR, 500 tons of sponge iron, 4,750 tons of 1000lb aluminum ingots, 320 tons of aluminum billets, 4,040 tons of copper cathodes, 1,500 tons of low-grade copper, 250 tons of aluminum hydroxide and 1,175 tons of zinc ingots were traded on the metals and minerals trading floor.

Next was the IME's oil and petrochemical trading floor with trades of 3,430 tons of polymeric products,

4,222 tons of chemicals, 650 tons of sulfur, 150 tons of bitumen, 1,140 tons of slack wax, 34,000 tons of lube cut and 299 tons of base oil.

Based on this report, the exchange saw trade of 34,000 tons of vacuum bottom and 30 tons of precious metals concentrate on its open auction trading floor.

It's worth noting as well that the IME's export ring played host to trades of 7,590 tons of bitumen and slack wax.

Last was the IME's side market which saw trade of 650 tons of aluminum oxide and polyethylene wax.



## Pro-Democracy Petition Garner 500,000 Signatures in Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - More than half a million people have signed a petition in "defense of democracy" in Brazil in response to President Jair Bolsonaro's attacks on public institutions and the electoral system.

With the presidential election just two months away, in which Bolsonaro trails former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in opinion polls, the petition launched by members of the faculty of law at the University of Sao Paulo had passed 546,000 signatures midway through Sunday.

"We are going through a moment of great peril for normal democracy, a risk for the republic's institutions and insinuations about not respecting the election results," the petition's authors wrote, without ever mentioning Bolsonaro.



## Pelosi Confirms Asia-Pacific Tour, Silent on Taiwan

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi will lead a congressional delegation to the Asia-Pacific region, her office confirmed today, with stops in Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan.

The statement made no mention of whether the six-member delegation would visit Taiwan, a flashpoint in conversations between China and the United States in the run-up to the trip.

"The trip will focus on mutual security, economic partnership and democratic governance in the Indo-Pacific region," Pelosi's office said in a statement.



## Putin Says U.S. Is Main Threat to Russia



ST PETERSBURG (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin signed a new naval doctrine which cast the United States as Russia's main rival and set out Russia's global maritime ambitions for crucial areas such as the Arctic and in the Black Sea.

Speaking on Russia's Navy Day in the former imperial capital of St Petersburg founded by Tsar Peter the Great, Putin praised Peter for making Russia a great sea power and increasing the global standing of the Russian state.

After inspecting the navy, Putin made a short speech in which he promised that what he touted as Russia's unique Zircon hypersonic cruise missiles, cautioning that Russia had the military clout to defeat any potential aggressors.

Shortly before the speech, he signed a new 55-page naval doctrine, which sets out the broad strategic aims of Russia's navy, including its ambitions as a "great maritime power" which extend over the entire world.

The main threat to Russia, the doctrine says, is "the strategic policy of the USA to dominate the world's oceans" and the movement of the NATO military alliance closer towards Russia's borders.

Russia may use its military force appropriately to the situation in the world's oceans should other soft powers, such as diplomatic and economic tools, be exhausted, the doctrine says, acknowledging that Russia does not have enough navy bases globally.

Russia's priority was to develop strategic and naval cooperation with India as well as wider cooperation with Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other states in the region, according to the doctrine.

"Guided by this doctrine, the Russian Federation will firmly and resolutely defend its national interests in the world's oceans, and having sufficient maritime power will guarantee their security and protection," the document said.

Putin's speech did not mention the conflict in Ukraine, but the military doctrine envisages a "comprehensive strengthening of Russia's geopolitical position" in the Black and Azov seas.

Relations between Russia and the West have undergone deepening strain during the five months of the Ukraine conflict.

The doctrine also sets out the Arctic Ocean, which the United States has repeatedly said Russia is trying to militarize, as an area of particular importance for Russia.

Russia's vast 37,650 km (23,400 mile) coastline, which stretches from the Sea of Japan to the White Sea, also includes the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

Putin said the delivery of Zircon hypersonic cruise missiles to the Admiral Gorshkov frigate would begin within months. The location of their deployment would depend on Russian interests, he said.

"The key thing here is the capability of the Russian navy... It is able to respond with lightning speed to all who decides to infringe on our sovereignty and freedom."

Hypersonic weapons can travel at nine times the speed of sound, and Russia has conducted previous test-launches of the Zircon from warships and submarines over the past year.

In Crimea, Sevastopol governor Mikhail Razvozhayev said Ukrainian forces struck the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in the Russian-held port city early on Sunday, wounding five members of staff. read more

## Morocco's King Reiterates Openness To Restoring Ties With Algeria

RABAT (Dispatches) - Morocco's King Mohammed VI used an address to "once again" reiterate his openness to restoring ties with Algeria, which broke off diplomatic relations with Rabat last year.

"We aspire to work with the Algerian presidency so that Morocco and Algeria can work hand in hand to establish normal relations between two brotherly peoples," Mohammed said during the traditional speech marking the anniversary of his accession to the throne.

"I stress once again that the borders that separate the Moroccan and Algerian brothers will never be barriers preventing their interaction and understanding."

He urged Moroccans to "preserve the spirit of fraternity, solidarity and good neighborliness towards our Algerian brothers". Morocco and Algeria have long been at odds over the disputed territory of Western Sahara, where the Algiers-backed Polisario Front is seeking independence from Rabat's rule.



## Russia Pummels Ukraine's Mykolaiv

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russian strikes hit the southern Ukrainian port city, killing the owner of one of the country's largest grain-producing companies, the local governor says.

Heavy Russian strikes have hit the southern Ukrainian port city of Mykolaiv, killing the owner of one of the country's largest grain-producing and exporting companies, the local governor has said.

Oleksiy Vadatursky, founder and owner of agriculture company Nibulon, was killed along with his wife in their home, Mykolaiv Governor Vitaliy Kim said on Telegram. With its headquarters in Mykolaiv, a strategically important city that borders the mostly Russia-occupied Kherson region, Nibulon specialises in the production and export of wheat, barley and corn, and it has its own fleet and shipyard.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described Vadatursky's death as "a great loss for all of Ukraine", saying the businessman had been in the process of building a modern grain market involving a network of transshipment terminals and elevators.

Three people were also wounded in the attacks on Mykolaiv, the city's Mayor Oleksandr Senkevych told Ukrainian television, adding that 12 missiles had hit homes and educational facilities. He earlier described the attacks as "probably the most powerful" on the city of the entire five-month-old war.

Up to 50 grad rockets hit residential areas in the southern city of Nikopol on Sunday morning, Dnipropetrovsk Governor Valentyn Reznichenko wrote on Telegram. One person was wounded.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian forces hit Russia's Black Sea Fleet headquarters in Russian-held Sevastopol early on Sunday, the Crimean port city's Governor Mikhail Razvozhayev told Russian media. Five staff members were wounded in the attack when what was presumed to be a drone flew into the courtyard at the headquarters, he said.

The battlefield reports could not be independently verified.

## Hundreds of Protesters Continue Camp at Iraq Parliament

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Supporters of powerful Iraqi Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr have erected tents and are preparing for a long sit-in at Iraq's parliament, deepening a months-long political standoff.

On Saturday, supporters of the firebrand al-Sadr forced their way into the legislative chamber for the second time in days, after October elections failed to lead to the formation of a government.

"The demonstrators announce a sit-in until further notice," al-Sadr's movement said in a brief statement to journalists carried by state news agency INA.

Nearly 10 months after October elections, Iraq is still without a new government despite intense negotiations between factions.

Government formation in the oil-rich country has involved complex negotiations since the 2003 invasion led by the United States toppled Saddam Hussein.

Supporters of al-Sadr, who once led a militia against the US and Iraqi government forces, oppose a rival, pro-Iran Shia bloc's pick for prime minister - Mohammed Shia al-Sudani.

The post conventionally goes to a figure from Iraq's Shia majority. "We don't want Mr al-Sudani," said one protester, Sattar al-Aliawi, a 47-year-old civil servant.

He told AFP news agency he was protesting against

"a corrupt and incapable government" and would "sleep here" in the gardens of parliament.

"The people totally refuse the parties that have governed the country for 18 years," he said.

On Sunday morning, the demonstrators marked the Muslim month of Muharram with religious chants and collective meals.

"We were hoping for the best but we got the worst. The politicians currently in parliament have brought us nothing," Abdelwahab al-Jaafari, 45, told AFP.

Volunteers distributed soup, hard-boiled eggs, bread and water to the protesters.

Some spent the night inside the parliament with blankets spread out on the marble floors. Others took to the gardens, on plastic mats under palm trees.

Al-Sadr's bloc emerged from elections in October as the biggest parliamentary faction, but was still far short of a majority, causing the longest political vacuum in the country since 2003. In June, al-Sadr's 73 legislators quit their seats in a move seen as an attempt to pressure his rivals into fast-tracking the formation of a government.

That led to a pro-Iran bloc, the Coordination Framework, becoming the largest in parliament, but still there was no agreement on naming a new prime minister, president or cabinet.



## UN Force Admits Deadly Shooting at DR Congo Border Post



BENI (Dispatches) - UN chief Antonio Guterres said he was "outraged" after two people were killed and several others injured when UN peacekeepers opened fire during an incident in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on the Uganda border.

The UN force MONUSCO, admitted that some of its peacekeepers had opened fire "for unexplained reasons", adding that arrests had already been made.

Guterres was "saddened and dismayed" to learn of the shooting, a UN statement said. "The Secretary-General stresses in the strongest terms the need to establish accountability for these events.

"He welcomes the decision of his special representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to detain the MONUSCO personnel involved in the incident and to immediately open an investigation," it added.

Video of the incident, shared on social media showed men, at least one in police uniform and another in army uniform, advancing towards the immobilized UN convoy behind a closed barrier in Kasindi.

The town is in eastern DR Congo's Beni territory on the border with Uganda. After a verbal exchange, the peacekeepers appeared to open fire before opening the barrier and driving through while people scattered or hid.

"During this incident, soldiers from the intervention brigade of the MONUSCO force returning from leave opened fire at the border post for unexplained reasons and forced their way through," the UN mission in Kasindi said in a statement earlier on Sunday.

"This serious incident caused loss of life and serious injuries."

The Democratic Republic of Congo "strongly condemns and deplores this unfortunate incident in which two compatriots died and 15 others were injured according to a provisional roll," government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said in a statement.

The government said it launched an investigation with MONUSCO to establish who was responsible, why the shooting took place and would ensure "severe penalties" are given.

The UN envoy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bintou Keita, said she was "deeply shocked and dismayed by this serious incident", according to the mission's statement.



## Drought Threatens Spain's Green Gold Harvest

JAEN (Dispatches) - In the scorching heat, Felipe Elvira inspects the branches of his olive trees, planted as far as the eye can see on a dusty hillside in southern Spain.

"There are no olives on these. Everything is dry," the 68-year-old said.

He and his son own a 100-hectare (250-acre) olive farm in the southern province of Jaen in sun-drenched Andalusia, a region which produces the bulk of the country's olive oil.

But a severe drought gripping much of Spain threatens to shrivel their harvest this year.

"We are used to a lack of water, but not to this point," said Elvira.

The region used to get 800 litres (210 gallons) of rainfall per square metre, but is set to get around half that amount this year, he said.

"Every year it's worse," Elvira said.

Global warming is hitting Spain harder than most European nations.

The country has suffered three intense heatwaves since May, damaging crops already grappling with an unusually dry winter.

"Olive trees are very resistant to water scarcity," said Juan Carlos Hervas, an expert with the COAG farmers' union.

But when droughts become extreme, the trees "activate mechanisms to protect themselves. They don't die but no longer produce anything," he added.

Hervas predicts the olive harvest from unirrigated land will come in at less than 20 per cent of the average of the last five years.

The harvest from irrigated land will be just 50 to 60 per cent of this average, he said.

But water reserves are dwindling.

The Guadalquivir river, which provides Andalusia with a large part of its water, is in "an absolutely dramatic situation" due to the lack of rain, said Rosario Jimenez, a hydrology professor at the University of Jaen.

Reservoirs fed by the river are at just 30 per cent of their capacity, according to Spain's ecological transition ministry.

"Some are even at 10 per cent capacity — that is practically dried up," said Jimenez.

Farmers have also noticed changes in recent years.

"Not only does it rain less, but when it falls, it does so torrentially. The water flows without penetrating the earth," said Hervas.

Parts of Portugal and Spain are the driest they have been in a thousand years due to an atmospheric high-pressure system driven by climate change, according to a study published this month in the journal Nature Geoscience.

The phenomenon is set to increase, jeopardising crops like olives and grapes.

At stake is a key export: Spain supplies nearly half of the world's olive oil. Its exports of this "green gold" are worth some €3.6 billion per year.

Olive oil has been an essential part of the Mediterranean diet for thousands of years and olive trees cover many hillsides in southern Spain, which are often unsuitable for other crops.

"Many villages here depend entirely on olive trees. Without olives, there is no more revenue," said Hervas.

Seven out of 10 hectares of olive farmland in Spain are not irrigated, according to the COAG farmers' union.

With the rise in temperatures, 80 per cent of Andalusia's unirrigated olive tree plantations may no longer be suitable to grow olives, or at least some varieties of the crop, it added.



## MacBook Air M2 Is a Svelte, Powerful Redesign

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - There is something breathtaking about tech and how it moves so fast. Change is not something to react to, but part of the mission. It's been a few years of waiting and change has finally come to the MacBook Air M2 with a tweaked design to remind us just who made ultraportable objects of desire.



What you'll notice first is that the laptop has somehow gotten even thinner and that includes the bezels. At 1.24kg the weight is distributed fairly evenly around its thin chassis and feels like hardly anything on your lap. The highlight is of course the thin-bezelled display, a 13.6-inch IPS screen that is LED-backlit.

While I didn't really find the new notch where the webcam is placed obtrusive on the MacBook Pro M1, I find it a little harder to ignore on the Air. Let's hope Apple figures out how to shrink the camera so it can merge into the bezels because I personally find it irksome though not enough to not recommend the laptop.

We like the new design—the previous wedge shape was outstanding in its time but design sensibilities have evolved as should Apple's. Apple bringing back a MagSafe charger is also a good choice as no other adapter connection experience comes close and the braided cables are so much more durable.

What Apple still can't find itself doing is adding more ports. There's the charging port, two Thunderbolt/USB 4 ports and the audio jack (surprisingly Apple still hasn't dropped it). That's it.

The finish is gorgeous—nothing like that glossy aluminium sheen and this time you get to choose between Midnight (deep blue), Starlight (gold), Space Grey (dark grey) and Silver.

What we don't get is why Apple is not just giving us the black model we all know will sell. The Midnight is currently the "it" colour of the season but other reviewers are reporting it is a fingerprint magnet so the other shades should be a safer bet. Starlight, which is the colour of my review unit, always puzzles me. Who asks for gold laptops? What is the proportion of the population that wants a colour you can spot from the moon?

Our suggestion for people who like the Air but like none of the colours: get a casing in a shade you actually like or a transparent one and go crazy with stickers.

Transferring my old test setup to the new one is of course easy with Apple's peer-to-peer wireless transfer. You could also transfer between Macs with a cable, but here's a tip: you need a fast transfer Thunderbolt cable and not the cable that comes with your older Type-C adapter as it only has USB 2.0 speeds.

Our job involves using the same apps and doing the same processes over and over, so differences between speeds of tasks is something I will notice.

We did find the MacBook M2 to be slightly faster, even when compared with the MacBook Pro M1 as I found response times improved very slightly. The thing is though, the performance isn't quite enough that you have a reason to upgrade from an M1 model.

Still it was fun to see how much I could do on the MacBook Air M2. A few years ago, a MacBook Air was something made for word processing and not much else. With the M2, I could load Blender, a 3D creation suite in the shortest time, record and edit video, and run multiple high resource apps at the same time without seeing a noticeable lag.

Vtubing or streaming as a virtual character is currently a popular trend so I tried it on the MacBook Air M2 as an experiment.

Using a 3D avatar in a web browser-based program, I opened up The Sims 4 as well as the OBS streaming software and recorded a video. Each operation similarly would not tax most systems but running them all together would require a fairly intense CPU load.



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# Bitcoin Rises 3.4% to \$24,584

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bitcoin rose 3.36% to \$24,584.24, adding \$798.93 to its previous close.

Bitcoin, the world's biggest, best-known cryptocurrency, is up 39.7% from the year's low of \$17,592.78, hit on June 18.

Ether, the coin linked to the ethereum blockchain network, rose 0.61% to \$1,734.08 on Saturday, adding \$10.46 to its previous close.



## Turkey's Tourism Revenues Nearly Triple

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's tourism revenues nearly tripled in the second quarter while first-half foreign visitor numbers surged close to 2019 levels, data showed, recovering from a coronavirus-driven fallout.

Revenues surged 190% from a year earlier to \$8.72 billion in the April-June period, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) data showed.

In June, the number of foreign visitors arriving in Turkey leaped 145% from a year earlier to more than 5 million, with first-half numbers hitting 16.37 million, up 186% from a year ago, the Culture and Tourism Ministry said.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine was expected to impact the arrivals from Turkey's top tourist sources, just as the sector recovered from the outbreak. Culture and Tourism Minister Mehmet Ersoy on Thursday said Turkey aimed for \$37 billion in tourism revenues and 47 million tourists this year, raising its targets from \$35 billion and 45 million.

The data showed some 83.8% of income in the second quarter was obtained from foreign visitors and 16.2% from Turkish citizens residing abroad.

In 2021, tourism revenues doubled to almost \$25 billion, recovering from the worst of the COVID-19 impact, but remaining well below the level recorded in 2019.

Following the lifting of tight restrictions at the height of the pandemic, the rebound has been vital for the country's crucial industry as the government aims for a current account surplus.

The data showed that Germans made up the largest chunk of foreign visitors in January-June with over 2 million arrivals, nearly fourfold compared to a year ago.

Russians followed with 1.5 million, Britons with 1.3 million, and Bulgarians with 1.2 million in the first six months.

Istanbul, Turkey's largest city by population and a top tourist draw, welcomed 41.3% of all foreign visitors, or 6.8 million, in the first half.

The famed Turkish resort city of Antalya ranked second with 24.7% or more than 4 million tourists. Edirne in northwestern Turkey, bordering both Bulgaria and Greece, followed with a 10.7% share or 1.8 million visitors.

The number of foreign visitors soared 94.1% to 24.71 million last year when COVID-19 measures were eased compared to 2020.

Russians and Ukrainians were the country's first and third biggest sources of visitors, respectively, in 2021. Russians accounted for 19% of foreign visitors, with 4.7 million people, while Ukraine was the third-largest at 8.3%, with 2.1 million people.

Officials had hoped tourism this year could replicate or exceed the numbers from 2019, when some 52 million visitors – including about 7 million Russians and 1.6 million Ukrainians – brought in \$34 billion in revenue.

Yet, data points to a more subdued trend among domestic tourists amid soaring inflation that runs at a 24-year high of nearly 79%.

Official data showed that domestic tourist trips with overnight stays rose just 6.1% to 8.8 million in the first quarter, with inflation doubling trip costs. Last year the number of such trips jumped 23.2%.

## Zambia Debt Relief Pledge Clears Way for \$1.4b Program

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Zambia's creditors pledged to negotiate a restructuring of the country's debts, a move IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva welcomed as "clearing the way" for a \$1.4 billion Fund program.

The creditor committee, co-chaired by China and France, said in a statement released by G20 chair Indonesia that it supported Zambia's "envisaged IMF upper credit tranche program and its swift adoption by the IMF Executive Board".

In 2020, Zambia became the first African country in the pandemic era to default. The restructuring of its external debt, which amounted to more than \$17 billion at the end of 2021, is seen by many analysts as a test case.

"Very pleased the Official Creditor Committee for Zambia has provided its financial assurances clearing the way for a Fund program," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said in a tweet. "The delivery of these financing assurances will enable the IMF Executive Board to consider approval of a Fund-supported program for Zambia and unlock much needed financing from Zambia's development partners," Georgieva said in a statement released by the IMF after her tweet.

Zambia reached a staff-level agreement with the IMF on a \$1.4 billion three year extended credit facility in December, conditional upon its ability to reduce debt to levels the Fund deems sustainable.

Zambia's government welcomed the creditors' pledge and its unlocking of IMF support.

"Zambia remains committed to implementing the much needed economic reforms, being transparent about our debt and ensuring fair and equitable treatment of our creditors," finance minister Situmbeko Musokotwane said.

On Friday, the finance ministry said it was cancelling \$2 billion in undisbursed loans.



## Saudi GDP Climbs Nearly 12% in Q2 on Oil Gains

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia's year-on-year economic growth hit nearly 12 per cent for the second quarter, led by a surging oil sector, the government's statistics agency said.

The Middle East's largest economy has benefited from a spike in oil prices triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and has largely resisted appeals from Western countries to raise output in order to bring prices down.

Growth in the second quarter was 11.8 per cent compared to the same period last year, according to initial "flash" estimates published by the General Authority for Statistics.

"This dynamic growth was mainly due to the increasing in oil activities by 23.1 per cent," the agency said. Non-oil economic activities grew by 5.4 per cent and government services grew by 2.2 per cent compared to the second quarter of 2021, it said.

The Ukraine war and the resulting rise in crude prices has been a boon to oil-producing states like Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter whose gross domestic product is expected to grow by 7.6 per cent in 2022, according to the International Monetary Fund. As the war got underway, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates stressed their commitment to the OPEC+ oil alliance, which Riyadh and Moscow lead, underscoring Riyadh's and Abu Dhabi's increasing independence from long-standing ally Washington.

US President Joe Biden, who once vowed to make Saudi Arabia a "pariah" over human rights abuses, visited the kingdom earlier in July, drawing criticism from human rights activists for greeting Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman with a fist bump.

## Foreign Investors Turn Net Buyers of South Korean Stocks in July

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Foreign investors were net buyers of South Korean stocks in July, reversing their selling spree for the last six months over recession worries and looking to step in and buy on the cheap amid signs of a market bottom.

According to the Korea Exchange on Sunday, foreigners purchased net 2.3 trillion won (\$1.7 billion) worth of shares on the benchmark Kospi, the highest monthly volume since a 3.3 trillion-won inflow in

December last year. The main board rose to 2,451.50 Friday, up 5.1 percent from 2,332.64 on the last trading session in June.

The jump was 12th-largest among 20 major economies, with Argentina topping the list at 38.52 percent, followed by Australia at 9.45 percent, the US at 9.11 percent, France at 8.87 percent and India at 8.54 percent in the same period.

Chip giants Samsung Electronics and SK hynix, battery makers LG Energy Solution and Samsung SDI and carmaker Hyundai Motor were the five companies whose shares overseas investors had bought the most. Samsung Electronics shares worth 546.1 billion won were sold -- the largest volume among the five.

Analysts warned that the July stock bounce could be a bear market rally, referring to projections by local brokerages, which said the Kospi would see short-lived gains and stay between 2,500 and 2,600 in August.

"Despite inflation and recession worries, US stocks extended their summer rebound. Soaring prices and steep rate hikes are not news anymore," said Kim Hyoung-ryoul, head of research at Kyobo Securities. Kyobo expects the Kospi to rise to 2,650 -- the highest projection among six securities firms betting on a bear market rally.

A price slowdown and government fiscal support to prevent a downturn would all help back the rally, Kim added.

"But a slowing US economy is something we should take into consideration," said Seo Sang-young, head of media contents department at Mirae Asset Securities. "A weakening won does not bode well for foreign investors here."

The US Commerce Department said last Thursday that the economy contracted for a second quarter straight, a day after the Federal Reserve raised interest rates by 75 basis points for the second time since June to bring down inflation.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said declining economic output in the last two quarters did not necessarily mean a recession was taking place in the world's largest economy, which she said still maintains strength, especially in jobs.

## Pakistan Imports Fall Sharply in July

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan imports fell by more than a third in July after a ban on non-essentials, the finance minister said on Sunday, adding the improved trade situation will reduce pressure on the struggling rupee.

July imports fell to \$5 billion, down 35% from June's record monthly high of \$7.7 billion, Miftah Ismail told a news conference in Islamabad.

The central bank and Pakistan statistics bureau is yet to post its July data.

"This is very welcoming," Ismail said, adding it was the result of his government's ban on all non-essential imports. "It will remove pressure on rupee," he said.

The rupee traded up slightly at 239.37 to the dollar on Friday, after shedding about 5% last week and more than a quarter of its value this year.

The ban on the import of non-essential goods was lifted last week, except for automobiles, cell phones and home appliances.

Ismail said his government has resolved to bring down the current account deficit significantly and to post a surplus in a year or two.

The South Asian nation has fast-depleting foreign reserves and is struggling to finance a widening current account deficit, which saw a \$2.3 billion surge in June, mainly due to rise in oil imports.

The deficit for the financial year ending June 30 stood at \$17.4 billion against \$2.8 billion the previous year.

Earlier in July, Pakistan reached a staff level agreement with the IMF for the disbursement of \$1.17 billion under a resumed payment of a bailout package.



## China's July Factory Activity Weakens on Soft Demand



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's manufacturing activity logged a surprise drop in July, official data showed today, on the back of weak demand and as strict zero-Covid restrictions continue to cast a pall on growth.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a key gauge of manufacturing activity in the world's second-biggest economy, came in at 49.0 in July, down from 50.2 June and below the 50-point mark separating growth from contraction, National Bureau of Statistics data showed.

While sweeping Covid curbs have eased in major cities such as Shanghai and Beijing, sporadic lockdowns around the country have kept businesses and consumers worried.

"In July, the manufacturing PMI dropped... due to factors such as the traditional off-season for production, insufficient release of market demand, and decline in prosperity of high-energy-consuming industries," said NBS senior statistician Zhao Qinghe in a statement.

Zhao added that sharp price fluctuations of raw materials had led some companies to adopt a wait-and-see approach, "weakening purchasing intentions".

The proportion of firms saying there was insufficient market demand had also increased for four consecutive months, he said, noting this was the "main difficulty" among manufacturers.

But officials show few signs of relaxing strict pandemic curbs, with policymakers appearing to emphasise zero-Covid over growth in a Politburo meeting this week, where they vowed to strive for "the best outcome" rather than to meet economic and social targets.

"In acknowledging the difficulties, the government has finally become flexible towards this year's growth target," ANZ Research analysts said in a note.

Chinese leaders had originally set a full-year GDP growth target of around 5.5 per cent, but with economic expansion of just 0.4 per cent in the second quarter, analysts believe it is unlikely to hit that goal.

China's non-manufacturing PMI dropped to 53.8 points as well in July, down from 54.7 in June, NBS data showed today.

This follows policies to boost consumption and with a pick-up in construction activities, the NBS statement said.



## “Far Away” Wins Award At Serbian Film Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian animation “Far Away” by Behrouz and Shirin Soleimani Nazir and Farnaz Moazen won the grand prize of the International Animated Film Festival “Constantine’s gold coin” in Serbia. The 10th International Animated Film Festival “Constantine’s gold coin” was held on 18 to 22 July. The 7-minute animation “Far away”, which has been produced with glass painting techniques, won the grand prize of this Serbian film festival. Other animations from France, Russia, and China were respectively awarded in this event.



## NASA Criticizes China Following Booster Rocket’s Uncontrolled Return to Earth

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A Chinese booster rocket made an uncontrolled return to Earth on Saturday, leading US officials to chide Beijing for not sharing information about the potentially hazardous object’s descent.

US Space Command “can confirm the People’s Republic of China (PRC) Long March 5B (CZ-5B) re-entered over the Indian Ocean at approx 10:45 am MDT on 7/30,” the US military unit said on Twitter.

“We refer you to the #PRC for further details on the reentry’s technical aspects such as potential debris dispersal+ impact location,” it said.

In a statement posted to its official WeChat profile, the China Manned Space Agency later gave coordinates for an impact area in the Sulu Sea, about 35 miles (57 kilometers) off the east coast of the Philippines’ Palawan Island.

“Most of its devices were ablated and destroyed during re-entry,” the agency said of the booster rocket, which was used last Sunday to launch the second of three modules China needed to complete its new Tiangong space station.

Malaysia’s space agency said it detected rocket debris burning up on re-entry before falling in the Sulu Sea northeast of the island of Borneo.

“The debris of the rocket caught fire while entering the Earth’s airspace and the movement of the burning debris also crossed Malaysian airspace and could be detected in several areas including crossing the airspace around the state of Sarawak,” it said.

NASA administrator Bill Nelson criticized Beijing on Twitter, saying the failure to share details of the rocket’s descent was irresponsible and risky.

The People’s Republic of China did not share specific trajectory information as their Long March 5B rocket fell back to Earth.

“All spacefaring nations should follow established best practices, and do their part to share this type of information in advance,” Nelson wrote, “to allow reliable predictions of potential debris impact risk, especially for heavy-lift vehicles, like the Long March 5B, which carry a significant risk of loss of life and property.”

He added: “Doing so is critical to the responsible use of space and to ensure the safety of people here on Earth”.

The Tiangong space station is one of the crown jewels of Beijing’s ambitious space



program, which has landed robotic rovers on Mars and the Moon, and made China only the third nation to put humans in orbit.

The new module, propelled by the Long March 5B, successfully docked with Tiangong’s core module on Monday and the three astronauts who had been living in the main compartment since June successfully entered the new lab.

When China launched its first Tiangong module in April 2021, there was a similar frenzy around the possibility of damage caused by an unpredictable booster reentry.

Objects generate immense amounts of heat and friction when they enter the atmosphere, which can cause them to burn up and disintegrate. But larger ones such as the Long March-5B may not be destroyed entirely.

In 2020, debris from another Chinese rocket fell on villages in the Ivory Coast, causing structural damage but no injuries or deaths.

China has poured billions of dollars into space flight and exploration as it seeks to build a program that reflects its stature as a rising global power.

### Return to Implementation...

FROM PAGE 1

Kanaani also described Iran’s cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency as significant.

He said Iran has fulfilled its responsibilities and expect the agency to act on issues related to Iran professionally, fairly and away from political suspicions, and play the role of the facilitator in the negotiations.

He also talked about the fuel crisis in Lebanon, noting that Iran is ready to hold talks with officials in Beirut on fuel supplies, if there is an official request from the Lebanese government.

Elsewhere in the remarks, the foreign ministry spokesman said a “positive will” is seen in Iran and Saudi Arabia to begin a new round of talks, with “our brothers in Iraq” playing a positive role. He said, however, that the timing for the next round of the talks is yet to be decided.

Kanaani also talked about what he called the positive stance of the UAE officials, stressing that the Emiratis have decided to send their ambassador to Tehran.

“In relation to the UAE, things are moving forward and we predict that we will see our relations improve,” he said.

The spokesman also addressed some reports on sales of Russian Sukhoi aircraft to Iran.

He said the two countries enjoy comprehensive ties and a “movement toward growing cooperation” in different fields is taking shape.

Speaking about the recent developments in Iraq and the storming of supporters of the Sadrist Movement led by Muqtada al-Sadr to the parliament building on Saturday, Kanaani said, “Iraq is our big and important neighboring country. We monitor Iraq’s developments closely, and with concern. Iran stresses that Iraq’s stability and security are important to the region.”

“We consider the current developments, which seem to be caused by internal political differences, to be part of Iraq’s internal affairs, and we believe that Iraqi political movements, parties and organizations can deal with the current situation in a peaceful way and with mutual respect within the framework of the country’s constitution and legal mechanisms,” he added.

Answering a question about the visit of the Iranian Minister of Energy to Afghanistan regarding Iran’s water share in the Helmand River, the spokesman said, “President Raisi has repeatedly stressed that the diplomatic apparatus must follow Iran’s water rights. Helmand River’s water rights are a vital issue to us, and the Afghanistan interim governing body is tested on its commitments to mutual agreements.”

“Iran Foreign Minister Amirabdollahian discussed Helmand River’s water rights with the acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, stressing that with recent rains, it is expected the Taliban interim governing body would adhere to the Iran-Afghanistan Water rights agreement,” Kanaani added, saying that Iran’s expectations from Taliban have not been fulfilled yet.

### IRGC...

FROM PAGE 1

The fact that the Americans escaped from Afghanistan and have reacted passively to the Russian attack on Ukraine reveals that the US’ power has been on the wane, the general stated.

He also said that the Islamic Revolution’s “soft power” has surrounded the Zionist regime, adding that a number of the Israeli officials acknowledge that their regime is confused and is crumbling away from within.

In comments earlier in July, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri warned about a tough and complicated hybrid warfare that the enemies have waged against the Islamic Republic, stressing the need for the constant enhancement of the country’s deterrent power.

He also noted that the Iranian military units are among the few military forces in the world that encounter hard military threats and security threats at the same time.

The Iranian military officials have given assurances that the armed forces are ready to give a decisive and crushing response to any threat at any level in such a way that the enemies of Iran would regret taking hostile actions.

### Tehran Ready to...

FROM PAGE 1

“As Iran, we stand ready to conclude the negotiations in a short order, should the other side be ready to do the same,” Bagheri Kani added.

Iran and the five remaining parties to the JCPOA – Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China – have held several rounds of negotiations in the Austrian capital of Vienna since April last year to restore the agreement.

## Gaming Time Has Little Effect On Short-Term Mental Health



LONDON (Dispatches) - The short-term mental-health impact of playing video games “is probably too small” to be noticeable, according to a major study by the University of Oxford published Wednesday.

“Our study finds little to no evidence of connections between gameplay and well-being,” said Andrew K. Przybylski, a researcher at the university’s Oxford Internet Institute.

The study surveyed 38,935 players from the English-speaking world, asking them to rate their mental well-being and comparing it with the amount of time they spent gaming in the previous two weeks.

“Many have warned about video games’ possible addictive qualities and their potential harm to players’ well-being, leading to far-reaching and widely contested health policy decisions,” said the study, published by the Royal Society. In China, children are only allowed to game for one hour each day on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

“Our results show that the impact of time spent playing video games on well-being is probably too small to be subjectively noticeable and not credibly different from zero,” the study said.

Game publishers including Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo provided researchers with the time each respondent spent playing, with their consent.

It followed players of seven titles — Animal Crossing: New Horizons, Apex, Legends, Eve Online, Forza Horizon 4, Gran Turismo Sport and The Crew 2 — over a six-week period, taking surveys at two-week intervals.

The study’s authors said that more work was needed to identify the causal effects over a longer time period. “Although we studied the play and well-being of thousands of people across diverse games, our study barely scratched the surface of video game play more broadly,” they said. “Our conclusions regarding the causal nature of the observed associations are tentative.

“Studies with both a higher measurement resolution and a longer overall time span are needed to detect potential more transient or slower effects,” the authors said.

## Cyprus Tourism Rebounds Despite Sanctions-Hit Russia Plunge

AYIA NAPA (Dispatches) - Beside sparkling Mediterranean waters at the Cypriot resort town of Ayia Napa, the bars are bouncing with foam dance parties as tourist numbers rebound following two tough years of pandemic.

But one key nationality is effectively missing: Russian visitors, as the once lucrative market has been hit by European Union sanctions imposed after Moscow invaded Ukraine.

“This year, we expected 800,000 Russian tourists,” said Haris Loizides, head of the Cyprus Hotel Association.

The Russian market “was wiped out from one day to the next,” said Christos Angelides, head of the Pancyprion Association of Hotel Managers. “Nobody was prepared for this huge change.”

The key tourism sector, which had contributed €2.68 billion in 2019, 15 per cent of GDP, is still counting the cost of the disastrous years of Covid travel chaos.

In 2019, before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, a fifth of tourists were Russian — 782,000 out of 3.9 million — making it the holiday island’s second largest market after Britain.

Last year, despite tough Covid travel restrictions, that share rose to more than 25 percent, with arrivals from Russia totalling nearly 520,000 out of 1.93 million.

Operators had hoped this summer would see Russian numbers return to pre-pandemic levels. Some 18,000 Russians are resident in Cyprus, many in the seaside town of Limassol — dubbed by some “Moscow on the Med.”

But, with EU sanctions on Russia continuing and with no let-up in the bloodshed on Ukraine’s battlefields, just 17,000 Russian tourists came to Cyprus between January and June.

“Our hotel is doing well, but others — who had 100 per cent Russian clientele — are not,” said Angelides, who is also manager of the Napa Mermaid Hotel.

Nicosia and Moscow have close political and cultural ties, but when Russia sent troops into Ukraine, the Cypriot parliament unanimously passed a resolution condemning the invasion.

Cyprus, the EU’s most easterly member, backed the



bloc’s actions on Moscow, including a flight ban and sanctions barring some Russian banks from the SWIFT financial system.

The tourism ministry says fewer Russian visitors could mean some US\$600 million (RM2.67 billion) in potential lost earnings.

Overall, tourist arrivals in Cyprus are bouncing back, thanks to strong demand in other key markets following the lifting of coronavirus restrictions.

From January to June, Cyprus recorded 1.2 million visitors, nearly five times the level last year, and the white sand beaches at Ayia Napa are crowded with sunseekers and partygoers.

But that is still 25 per cent down on the same period of 2019, when 1.63 million tourists came to Cyprus.

“We have somewhat limited the damage, but it is impossible to replace this huge number of customers,” Angelides added.

In the first half of this year, British tourists made up nearly two-fifths of visitors, followed by Israelis, making up 7 per cent of visitors, then Poland, Germany and Greece.

“There have been many attempts by several sectors to encourage tourists from other markets, such as the German, Polish, Italian and French markets,” said Charis Papacharalambous, spokesman of the Association of Cyprus Travel Agents (ACTA).

But it was still “very difficult to fill the big gap” left by Russian tourists, he added, with industry experts fearing the impact may still worsen, since many Russians previously preferred to visit later in the year.

For Loizides, from the island’s Hotel Association, the war in Ukraine has also provided another problem.

Surging global costs of fuel sparked by the conflict have driven electricity prices higher.

With tourists turning air conditioning on full blast to counter the sweltering heat of Cyprus, hotels are struggling with “astronomical bills”, Loizides said.

“The EU must remedy this situation and help companies, especially at a time when inflation is raging,” he added.

### U.S. Reviews Sanctions on...

FROM PAGE 1

Corporate documents reviewed by the Wall Street Journal, as well as maritime shipping data and statements from people with knowledge of the matter, indicate that those involved in the network have tried to circumvent Western sanctions against Iranian oil by imprisoning “Mixed Iranian Oil” as Iraqi oil.

U.S. officials believe the person behind the operation is a British Iraqi citizen named Salim Ahmed Saeed, according to people with knowledge of the operation. Also, the companies owned by Saeed are shared with the postal and electronic addresses of a number of companies, including shipping services and oil trading with the abbreviation “FZE” and the oil transport and trade company “AISSOT”.

Former and current administration officials have told the Wall Street Journal that, however, targeting such suspected sanctions operations has put Joe Biden’s administration on a crossroads.

The two paths include the Biden administration’s willingness to rein in Iran’s nuclear program, and the other, the bureau of inflation caused by international sanctions against Russia as one of the world’s oil export giants.

Russia’s oil exports have faced severe Western sanctions since shortly after the country’s military invasion of Ukraine began, with major global companies refusing to provide services to Russia and refusing to transport its oil.



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

## Watson Latest Major

### Champion to Join LIV Golf

LONDON (Dispatches) - Two-time Masters champion Bubba Watson became the latest big name to join the lucrative Saudi-backed LIV Golf.

The American, who collected green jackets in 2012 and 2014, has 12 wins on the PGA Tour and reached a career-high second in the world rankings. The 43-year-old will serve as a non-playing team captain at LIV's event in Boston in early September as he continues to recover from a torn meniscus.

## Jake Paul Bout Cancelled Due To Rahman's Weight Issues

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jake Paul's boxing match at Madison Square Garden next week has been cancelled due to a weight issue with his opponent Hasim Rahman Jr., his promotional team said in a statement.

According to Paul's Most Valuable Promotions (MVP), Rahman had signed an agreement on July 6 to fight at 200 pounds (90.72 kg) and weighed at 216 pounds the following day but vowed to make the weight for the Aug. 6 bout.

# Verstappen Wins Hungarian GP To Extend Lead

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - World champion Max Verstappen took full advantage of another Ferrari implosion to increase his lead in this year's title race with a measured victory for Red Bull at the Hungarian Grand Prix.

Just a week after his win at the French Grand Prix, the 24-year-old Dutchman grabbed his first success at the Hungaroring from 10th on the grid to finish 7.8 seconds clear of Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton and George Russell.

His win lifted him 80 points clear in the championship as nearest rival Charles Leclerc, unexpectedly given hard compound tyres when he appeared to be the fastest driver, came home sixth behind Ferrari team-mate Carlos Sainz and Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull.

It was a crushing disappointment for Leclerc and Ferrari after their recent resurgence as Verstappen took his eighth win of the season and the 28th of his career.

"When we woke up this morning who would have thought we would win this race?," said Verstappen.

Lando Norris finished seventh for McLaren ahead of two-time champion Fernando Alonso and his Alpine team-mate Esteban Ocon and retirement-bound four-time champion Sebastian Vettel of Aston Martin.

Hamilton, who was bidding for an unprecedented ninth victory in Hungary, praised his team for his fifth podium finish in succession. "It's special for us today and we are clearly closing the gap. It's great to go into the summer break with this performance."

Russell, who led for 30 laps from pole position, said: "I really struggled on the medium tyres and in the latter stages, but Lewis did a great job. I tried to eke it out and I'm pleased with a podium."

The race began amid forecasts of intense rain, a few spots creating apprehension on the grid.

But Russell made light of any worries, or nerves, with a smooth start from his maiden pole position to lead into Turn One where he resisted a forceful challenge from Sainz.

Behind them, Hamilton swept past both Alpines to take fifth.



By lap five, Russell led Sainz by two seconds with Leclerc third ahead of Norris and Hamilton as Verstappen began to climb after starting down in 10th.

By lap 10, the world champion was up to sixth behind Hamilton, on mediums, and running 11 seconds off Russell, who was 2.2 seconds clear of the Ferraris.

Hamilton swept inside Norris on lap 12 at Turn One to take fourth with Verstappen following him at Turn Two, both men using their Drag Reduction System (DRS).

Released into clear air, Hamilton pulled clear as Verstappen reported engine issues and Leclerc asked Ferrari if Sainz could go faster - a coded suggestion that he wanted to pass him.

Norris then pitted, re-joining 16th, before Russell took mediums, re-joining sixth ahead of Alonso while Verstappen also pitted and returned eighth. Sainz pitted a lap later, re-joining sixth after a slow stop.

All this allowed Leclerc to lead ahead of Hamilton with Russell rising swiftly to third before inheriting second when he also pitted, returning seventh.

Leclerc led by 19 seconds before he came in on lap 22 for more mediums and Russell led again with the Monegasque second, two seconds adrift, but ahead of team-mate Sainz and the threatening Verstappen.

By lap 27, Leclerc was close enough to attack Russell, which he did without success for four laps before passing on lap 32.

Russell had defended stoutly after leading more laps for Mercedes in one race than the team had enjoyed all year, but by mid-race, lap 35, Sainz had closed on him and Verstappen was on his tail before pitting on lap 39.

Red Bull's 'under-cut' caused both Leclerc, unexpectedly taking hards, and Russell, mediums, to stop again, leaving Sainz leading Hamilton as Verstappen and Russell pursued Leclerc.



PRAGUE (Dispatches) - Eighth-seeded Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic won her first career WTA Tour title in a convincing 6-0, 6-3 triumph over seventh-seeded Anastasia Potapova in the final of the Prague Open.

Bouzkova, 24, didn't drop a set in the tournament to join countrywomen Karolina Pliskova, Lucie Safarova, Petra Kvitova and Barbora Krejckova as winners on their home soil.

Bouzkova broke Potapova's serve seven times to win her match in 71 minutes and improve to 1-3 in WTA tournament finals, including 1-1 this year. She lost to former U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens in Guadalajara, Mexico, in February.

Potapova, a 21-year-old Russian, committed five double faults and had 44 unforced errors in 15 games.

Fifth-seeded Caroline Garcia of France captured her ninth career title, defeating unseeded Ana Bogdan of Romania 6-4, 6-1 in the tournament final in Warsaw.

The championship was the second in five weeks for Garcia, who won on the grass courts at Bad Homburg, Germany.

Garcia won 72 percent of her first-service points to topple the first-time finalist in 81 minutes.

## Africa Cup of Nations Qualifiers Postponed

CAPE TOWN (Dispatches) - The next round of Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers in September have been postponed to allow the continent's five World Cup-bound teams the opportunity for better preparatory matches before the tournament in Qatar, the Confederation of African Football said.

The postponement had been muted for weeks, especially after the date for the next Cup of Nations finals in the Ivory Coast was put back from June next year to January 2024.

Senegal coach Aliou Cisse was among the more vocal critics of the fixtures, which meant his country would have had to play two Cup of Nations qualifiers, home and away against Mozambique, in the final window of opportunity in September when they wanted to play against opposition from other continents ahead of the World Cup.

Senegal are expected to announce alternative fixtures soon.

Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco and Tunisia are the other African teams who will be playing at the World Cup finals.

The Cup of Nations qualifiers, which started with two rounds of matches in June, still have four rounds remaining.

CAF said match day three and match day four qualifiers have been moved to March 20-28 next year, the fifth round to June 12-20 2023 while match day six will be played on Sept. 4-12 2023.

## FA Investigates After Flares Let Off During Community Shield

LONDON (Dispatches) - England's Football Association (FA) has launched an investigation after flares were let off during Liverpool's 3-1 win over Manchester City in the Community Shield.

Goals from Trent Alexander-Arnold, Mohamed Salah and Darwin Nunez helped Liverpool win the season's curtain-raiser at Leicester's King Power Stadium, where red smoke covered the field of play at times.

# Sinner Rallies Past Alcaraz to Umag Crown



ZAGREB (Dispatches) - It may have been a long time coming, but Jannik Sinner has an ATP Tour title in 2022.

The Italian prevailed in a heavyweight #NextGenATP championship match clash against Carlos Alcaraz with a 6-7(5), 6-1, 6-1 victory at the Plava Laguna Croatia Open Umag on Sunday.

Sinner has been one of the most consistent players on Tour this season and had reached six four-level quarter-finals in 2022 prior to the clay-court ATP 250 event this week in Umag. The second seed had to be at his resilient best against Alcaraz, especially after the Spaniard had clinched a tight opening set in a tie-break to edge ahead. Yet the Italian began to dictate the baseline exchanges and saved nine from nine break points to complete a two-hour, 26-minute victory.

"I am obviously very happy," said Sinner after the match. "I have [had] a tough year until now, I had some unfortunate moments, but we worked every time to play better, to be a better player, to be a better person. So, I'm very happy to be finally lifting a trophy

this year, but I know that I still have a lot of things to improve... It's all about the process."

The win was Sinner's second against Alcaraz in the space of four weeks, after the Italian was a four-set winner in the pair's fourth-round clash at Wimbledon.

A vital hold of serve in the second game of the second set was crucial to Sinner's victory. The Italian fended off six break points to frustrate Alcaraz, going on to break the Spaniard's serve immediately in the next game.

"That was a crucial point [of the match]," said Sinner. "I knew I had to stay there. He made some unforced errors, and I was very happy that I won this game. Then I returned well and raised my level a little bit, and I think I found a solution then."

It was Alcaraz's second championship match loss in as many weeks after he fell to Lorenzo Musetti in Hamburg last Sunday. Despite the disappointment of defeat, the Spaniard's run in Umag this week will lift him above Stefanos Tsitsipas to a career-high No. 4 in the Pepperstone ATP Rankings on Monday.

## Neymar, Messi Secure Champions Trophy for PSG

PARIS (Dispatches) - Neymar scored twice with Lionel Messi also on target as Paris Saint-Germain defeated Nantes 4-0 in the Champions Trophy in Tel Aviv in new coach Christophe Galtier's first match in charge.

After an underwhelming first season in French football, Messi struck 22 minutes into the traditional curtain-raiser, being played in Israel for the second year in a row.

Neymar, whose future at the club has been the source of much speculation this summer, doubled the lead just before the break with a magnificent free-kick.

Sergio Ramos added a third and Neymar bagged his second late on from the penalty spot as PSG, the reigning Ligue 1 champions, eased to victory over last season's French Cup winners. It is the ninth time in 10 seasons PSG have lifted the Champions Trophy. They lost 1-0 to Lille at the same venue a year ago.

Galtier became PSG's seventh different manager since the Qatari takeover of 2011 when he was appointed on a two-year deal in early July as the replacement for Mauricio Pochettino.

The club won a protracted battle with Real Madrid in May to convince Kylian Mbappe to stay, but Galtier was without the France star for his first official match due to suspension.



## Real Madrid Down Juventus 2-0 in Friendly

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Karim Benzema converted an early penalty and Marco Asensio added a second-half insurance goal as Real Madrid beat Juventus 2-0 in a pre-season friendly at California's Rose Bowl.

With his eye on Real Madrid's European Super Cup clash with Eintracht Frankfurt in 10 days, coach Carlo Ancelotti started the same lineup that beat Liverpool in the Champions League final in May.

They produced the first victory of Real Madrid's United States tour, after a 1-0 loss to La Liga rivals Barcelona in Las Vegas and a 2-2 draw against Mexico's Club America in San Francisco.

Spectators were still trickling into the stands when French star Benzema had a goal disallowed just eight seconds into the contest, Uruguay's Federico Valverde's through ball catching him offside.

Juventus had their best chance of the match in the 13th minute, but Leonardo Bonucci's direct free kick hit the crossbar.

Benzema opened the scoring with a penalty in the 19th, crisply firing into the bottom left corner after Juventus' Danilo brought down fellow Brazilian Vinicius Junior with a sloppy move in the penalty area.

