

IRAN NEWS Expresses Its Condolences Over the Martyrdom Anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), The Third Imam of Shiites. The Next Issue Will Hit the News-Stands On Tuesday, August 9

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From the COVID Pandemic In Iran Increased to **142,209 With **75** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

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2 DOMESTIC

Tehran Reaffirms Support for Palestinians Against Israel



> SEE PAGE 2

2 DOMESTIC

U.S. Sanctions Reduce Iran-Japan Trade By Almost 80%



> SEE PAGE 2

4 INTERNATIONAL

Pelosi in Taiwan, Voicing U.S. Solidarity as China Fumes



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Murray, Venus Defeated In Washington Open



> SEE PAGE 8

No Step Taken By Europe to Lift Sanctions

TEHRAN (IP) - The Secretary of the Human Rights Staff of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that the role of the Europeans in the sanctions should not be ignored, and they have not taken the minor step to lift the sanctions in the past years.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, pointed out that Iran has 25,000 victims of terrorism and added that this is even though the American regime has imposed the cruelest sanctions against the Iranian people.

He also referred to the report of Ms. Alena Douhan, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Islamic Republic of Iran, and said that Douhan has a vital sentence that she also expressed in her report and press conference, which is that "Sanctions have affected all dimensions of human rights of Iranian people."

At a press conference held at Iran's National Library on May 18, 2022, Alena Douhan underlined that the complex set of unilateral sanctions against Iran, coupled with secondary sanctions against third parties, over compliance and zero-risking policies by businesses and financial institutions, exacerbate existing humanitarian and economic challenges and negatively affect the lives of the people, in particular the most vulnerable.

3 Remote-Sensing Satellites In Line to Be Launched

TEHRAN (IFP) - The head of Iran's space agency elaborates on the country's "comprehensive plans" to promote its space industry, as part of which, he says, Tehran has three remote-sensing satellites in line to be launched.

Hassan Salarieh told IRIB that the Space Organization of Iran had been pursuing "very detailed and comprehensive plans, which have been constantly updated over the past years."

In the field of remote-sensing, communications and navigation satellites, "very precise and organized plans" have been drawn up, he added.

The remote-sensing applications of satellites include Earth observation, he explained, adding that this type of spacecraft can capture "highly up-to-date, accurate and real time images from the surface of the Earth."

"We have three remote-sensing satellites in line to be launched and hope that the launch will take place at the earliest," he said.

See Page 7

Iran Not to Shy Away From Any Action to Safeguard Its Rights



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran will not shy away from any action to safeguard its national rights against increasing pressures, Iran's nuclear chief has said, days after the country began to feed gas into cascades of new centrifuges as an immediate response to a fresh round of U.S. sanctions.

Speaking on the sidelines of a weekly cabinet session on Wednesday, Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), told reporters that all of the country's nuclear activities have been in accordance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and that Tehran will continue to honor the NPT.

On Monday, U.S. Treasury and State departments imposed sanctions on a total of six companies, four based in Hong Kong, one in Singapore, and one in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The US said the firms have helped Iran sell tens of millions of dollars in oil and petrochemical products to East Asian countries.

Later in the day, Iran said it was beginning to feed gas into hundreds of advanced IR-1 and IR-6 machines after notifying the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said the decision was made in line with "the Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions and Protect the Nation's Rights," a law passed by the parliament in 2020 to counter the sanctions imposed on the country over its nuclear program.

Eslami echoed those comments, saying Iran was making a tit-for-tat move against the new US sanctions.

"Implementing the Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions, we began to feed gas into advanced centrifuges in order to show to the Americans that Iran has a strong will to secure a removal of the sanctions," he said.

"[Iran] does not back away from taking any measure in line with safeguarding the Iranian nation's interests," the top Iranian official added.

In defiance of all the long-running diplomatic efforts to save the JCPOA, the US has continued to impose new sanctions against Iran while officially stating that the sanctions regime - introduced by former US president Donald Trump as the "maximum pressure" policy - has been an abject failure.

"The Americans repeatedly acknowledge the failure of the maximum pressure policy and have no hopes for this policy," Eslami said.

Nevertheless, he went on, their unwarranted pressures against the Islamic Republic lay bare their two-facedness.

The AEOI chief also explained that Iran signed the JCPOA and agreed to certain limits on its nuclear activities so as to reduce concerns and accusations that it was after developing nuclear weapons.

"But unfortunately, they (Americans) do not fulfill their own commitments, and instead, bring forth new excuses each and every day and repeat the old accusations on a magnified scale," he added.

Pakistan-Iran Trade Awaits Credible Payment Mechanism

PESHAWAR (Dispatches) - Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Senior Vice President, Muhammad Riaz Khattak said that Pakistan has a narrow export basket to Iran, as 63 percent of the exports comprised rice alone.

A preferential trade agreement (PTA) was signed with Iran in 2006. Tariff concessions were granted to Iran on 309 tariff lines whereas Pakistan was given concessions on 338 tariff lines. Major sectors covered under the PTA include rice, fruits, cotton, cotton yarn, pharmaceutical products and cutlery.

In 2017, both sides decided to finalize the proposed FTA by November that year. The trade negotiating committee of both countries held two rounds of discussions on the FTA when it was projected that the agreement would increase bilateral trade from \$300 million in 2016 to \$5 billion by 2021. However, unavailability of a payment mechanism casts a shadow on the viability of a much-awaited agreement.

While Iran has about 959 joint border crossings with Pakistan, it remains to be seen how many border crossings will be declared for trade. Under the existing trade regime, bilateral trade, as per statistics, was slightly in favor of Tehran.

Riaz Khattak briefed the media that now full-fledged barter trade between Pakistan and Iran may likely resume in December. He said according to official sources all barriers on the transit trade have been abolished, as an experimental trial, apple fruit from Iran would hit the market soon.

Through the trade mechanism Pakistan would export one million tons of rice to Iran. Pakistan also exports know and other products to Iran. He said due to various US/ international sanctions imposed on Iran, Pakistani banks have been reluctant in opening letters of credit (LC) for export to Iran despite the repeated appeal on the part of exporters and traders of the country.

The absence of a credible payment mechanism remains the major irritant in the way of Pakistan-Iran trade. International sanctions, particularly those imposed by the US and European Union in 2010, targeted Iran's banks. The sanctions prevented Pakistani banks from doing business with their Iranian counterparts including the opening of LCs, which is the most credible method for carrying out international trade transactions.

See Page 7

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Double Standard In Western Style

Western countries in recent centuries and especially in recent decades have openly taken and openly revealed their double standard approach regarding any issue which they benefit, and nuclear program in countries is one of those disputes which have exposed this double standard which makes the world people laugh.

On Monday once again some major Western countries in a statement took a stand against Iran's peaceful nuclear program which is another double standard policy regarding other countries.

The United States, France, and the United Kingdom on Monday reiterated their position that the Islamic Republic should never achieve the capability to build nuclear weapons.

In a ministerial statement released for the Tenth NPT Review Conference on Monday, the countries said the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has reduced the risk of a devastating nuclear war, and further reduction of that risk must be a priority for all NPT states parties and for this Review Conference.

Reiterating that Iran must never develop a nuclear weapon, the statement read, "We are committed to addressing regional proliferation crises wherever they arise."

They expressed regret that, despite intense diplomatic efforts, Iran has yet to seize the opportunity to restore full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), urging Tehran "to return to full implementation of the JCPOA and UNSCR 2231 and to cooperate on an urgent basis with the IAEA in resolving questions related to possible undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran as required under its NPT-required safeguards agreement."

"Nuclear weapons, for as long as they exist, should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war. We condemn those who would use or threaten to use nuclear weapons for military coercion, intimidation, and blackmail. Such actions are profoundly dangerous and contrary to the purposes of the NPT and the UN Charter."

All NPT Parties, nuclear-weapon States or non-nuclear-weapon States, have a duty both to demonstrate and to promote responsible behavior and restraint to advance all three pillars of the treaty: disarmament, nonproliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, science, and technology, they said.

With a short glance at this one-sided statement, one can realize this double standard policy of the West against Iran because Tehran has repeatedly said that it does not pursue nuclear bomb and its nuclear program is peaceful but the West insists on its own claim.

See Page 7

Iran-Oman Trade Sees 80% Growth

TEHRAN (IP) - The Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade of Iran announced the 80% trade growth between Tehran and Muscat in the last four months.

Iran Press/ Iran News: The relations between Iran and Oman in the last decades have always been based on mutual respect and interests despite the tensions in the Persian Gulf and US efforts to intensify Iranophobia.

Omani officials believe that close relations with Iran are based on realism and consider Iran a great neighbor. The two countries do not have any territorial and border disputes with each other. Iran's support for Oman has been positively and permanently imprinted in Oman's historical memory.

Alireza Peymanpak, Iran's deputy minister of industry, mine, and trade said at the conference on export opportunities and methods to Oman in Tehran that the trade exchanges between Iran and Oman have grown by 80% in the last four months, and exports have increased from \$145 million in the same period. Last year it reached 415 million dollars.

See Page 7

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Majlis Ratifies Prisoner Swap Deal With Belgium

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian lawmakers approved a treaty with Belgium that would allow prisoner exchanges between the two countries.

In an open session on Wednesday, Iranian MPs passed with 195 yeas a bill to legalize the treaty of exchanging prisoners between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Belgium.

The treaty was previously ratified in the Belgian Parliament, allowing the exchange of citizens convicted and imprisoned in the two countries.

Tehran Reaffirms Support for Palestinians Against Israel

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has reaffirmed the Islamic Republic's commitment to the Palestinian cause, saying Tehran will continue to support the oppressed Palestinian nation against the expansionist policies of the "apartheid" Zionist regime.

In a meeting with Secretary General of the Gaza-based Islamic Jihad movement Ziad al-Nakhala in Tehran on Tuesday evening, Amir-Abdollahian also called for unity and cohesion between Islamic countries in the face of the Israeli regime's acts of aggression against Palestinians.

Referring to the failures of Israel and the US against the Palestinian resistance, the chief Iranian diplomat expressed hopes that the enemies would be further undermined through increased harmony and unity among Islamic countries.

For his part, Nakhala appreciated Iran's support for the Palestinian people's resistance and lauded the country's constructive role in regional developments and its active diplomacy toward other countries.

Iran's achievements, in fact, belong to the entire Muslim community, he said.

Nakhala also regretted certain efforts in the region to exert pressure on the Islamic Republic and downplay the real threat the Israeli regime poses to the



Muslim community, Palestinians in particular.

Late in 2020, four Arab countries – the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco – inked normalization deals with the Israeli regime. The deals, also called the Abraham Accords, were pushed by former US president Donald Trump.

Palestinians and their regional and international supporters have denounced the agreements as a "stab in the back" of the Palestinian cause of liberation from Israeli occupation and aggression.

The Islamic Jihad leader, however, said the endeavors and stances of the Islamic Republic in confronting the world's hegemonic powers and supporting the oppressed nations against the occupiers and foreign powers herald blessings and strength for the resistant nation of Palestine and weakness for the enemies of the Muslim world.

He underlined the need for further unity between Palestinian groups, saying resistance is the only way to push out the occupiers from Palestine.

Internet Disruption Due to Non-Observance of Civil Defense Principle

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Information and Communication Technology attributed the internet disruption in the country to the non-observance of the civil defense principles.

In the recent week, the internet infrastructure was disrupted due to some incidents in the country, which left some damage to the subscribers. Issa Zarepour talked about two accidents in Mashhad, in northeastern Iran, and in Tehran, where one of the cable carrier channels in Tehran Telecommunications Company caught fire.

Zarepour called on the Telecommunication Company of Iran to compensate for the damage to the internet subscribers.

Still, he pointed to the violations occasionally occurring in ICT development platforms, adding that the administration called for the Judiciary's assistance to prevent the cases of violation more specifically.

Chabahar Port Must Turn Into Hub

TEHRAN (IP) - The Deputy Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) says Chabahar Port must turn into a hub so that different countries could benefit from its capacities.

Chabahar Port, southeast of Iran, is in a high position in the global economy due to its security and access to open waters, transit routes and cheap energy.

A Chabahar Day Conference, hosted by India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, was held in Mumbai, with the participation of the Indian companies' representatives and the ambassadors of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Jalil Eslami said in the conference that many discounts were allowed for the development of Chabahar Port in order to increase the transportation of goods between India and Iran. He highlighted the promising economic future of Chabahar Port, pointing to the successful transit of goods from the port to Afghanistan and from Uzbekistan to India as well as the beginning of logistic cooperation between Iran and other countries.

Iran Volume of Rail Transit Hits 1.9m Tons Last Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - Director-General of Commercialization Office of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development Amin Tarfa put the volume of rail transit in the country at 1.9 million tons last year in 1400 (from Mar. 21, 2021 to Mar. 0, 2022).

He said on Tuesday that the transit of goods and commodities via Iran has projected to increase to 20 million tons in the current year in 1401.

Given the country's high capacities and potential existing in rail and road sectors, it is planned that four and 16 million tons of which would be transported via rail and road respectively, Tarfa underlined.

The number of goods transited via Iran hit 9.1 million tons, he said, adding that this volume will reach the level of 20 million tons in the current year with the same infrastructures.

U.S. Sanctions Reduce Iran-Japan Trade by Almost 80%



TEHRAN (IFP) - Japan's Ambassador to Tehran Aikawa Kazutoshi says sanctions imposed by the United States have reduced bilateral trade between Tehran and Tokyo by almost 80 percent in the past several years.

Ambassador Kazutoshi told ISNA on Wednesday that bilateral trade between the two countries had fallen from almost one billion dollars several years ago to less than 200 million dollars currently as a result of the sanctions imposed by the United States.

The Japanese diplomat said that the two countries however continued to cooperate closely in such areas as health and natural disaster containment.

The United States has imposed numerous sanctions on Iran, including ones that target its trade with third countries, since 2018, when the then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from a multilateral nuclear deal with Iran, JCPOA. While incumbent Joe Biden has expressed willingness to return to the deal, he has kept all the sanctions in place.

Asked whether a new date had been set for a visit to Japan by Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, which was recently postponed, Ambassador Kazutoshi said the Iranian administration had to be contacted for information about a rescheduling but added that Tokyo welcomed visits by Iranian officials.

He also said that Japanese delegates had recently visited Iran and met with Iranian officials.

Defense Ministry Collaborating With 5k Knowledge-Based Firms

TEHRAN - The Defense Ministry is working with over 5,000 domestic knowledge-based companies, Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani says.

In remarks after opening the exhibition of the "Iranian Defense Ministry's capabilities in production and knowledge-based economy", held in Tehran on Tuesday, the defense minister said the ministry has focused its plans on manufacturing homegrown products, deepening knowledge and technology, and enhancing cooperation among various local sectors.

At present, the Defense Ministry is cooperating with more than 5,000 knowledge-based companies, he added.

Highlighting the ministry's efforts to "create power and boost the industrial and defense capabilities of Iran", the general stated the spillover of non-military products will be utilized to raise the level of industries in the country.

Brigadier General Ashtiani also noted that some 1,100 products used in various sectors have been put on display in the exhibition.

Passage of Time Not to Diminish Brilliance of Ashura Message

TEHRAN (IP) - The President described freedom, justice, and non-violence as the central philosophy of the Ashura movement and said, "The Islamic Revolution in the world today is the standard bearer of Ashura ideals, and every day the followers of this message are increasing all over the world."

Speaking on Wednesday at the cabinet session, while offering his condolences on the days of Imam Hussein's (AS) mourning, Ebrahim Raisi explained the philosophy of the Ashura uprising and said, "The central message of Ashura is the desire for justice and anti-tyranny, which the passage of time has not diminished its brilliance, but this message is becoming more widespread day by day."

Stating that seeking justice and rejecting tyranny are the innate tendencies of all human beings, the President said, "The secret of the durability of the Ashura uprising is its deep interweaving with human ideals such as freedom, justice and anti-tyranny."

After listening to a report on the implementation process of the "Daruyar" project by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Raisi said that a fair view is necessary to judge the big projects being implemented by the government and said, "The implementation of such projects requires coordination and delicacies that are sometimes neglected in comments and judgments."

He also said, "A great work has begun in the field of medicine, which may have some defects and shortcomings at the beginning, but today few people doubt the principle of implementing this plan."

Raisi believed that wise and responsible governance depended on the courage of the government in making decisions and said, "We should not shy away from the responsibility of major and necessary decisions for the country. The government is the manifestation of the will of the people and must take steps to ensure the public good and the interests of the people".

He described the success of implementing large projects like Daruyar to depend on comprehensive and accurate information and emphasized, "In the implementation of such projects, it is necessary to be sensitive to the ambiguities that arise in public opinion and quickly give the necessary information to the people."

Pelosi's Taiwan Visit to Cause Major Shocks at Int'l Level

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A top Iranian diplomat says US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's incendiary visit to Taiwan is a "turning point" in the already tense ties between China and the United States and will have reverberations across the world.

In a tweet on Tuesday night, Reza Zabib, the director general of the Iranian Foreign Ministry's Asia and Oceania Department, described the heightened tensions between Washington and Beijing as "Cold War II," which he said will bring about "major shocks" to international relations.

"Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan is a turning point in relations between China and America and it will affect international relations with the reverberations it creates," Zabib said.

"Until Cold War II is consolidated, international relations will experience major shocks," he warned.

Pelosi touched down in a military aircraft in Taiwan late on Tuesday, defying a series of increasingly stark warnings from China, which views Taiwan as its territory.

The US House speaker is the highest-profile elected American official to visit Chinese Taipei in 25 years.

Condemning the visit, Iranian Foreign Ministry

spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on Tuesday that it was part of US officials' interference in China's domestic affairs and will only foment tensions in the region.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran considers respect for the territorial integrity of countries to be among the principles of its foreign policy, and support for the One-China policy is unquestionable in line with this tenet," he said.

Necessity for Accelerating Barter of Bitumen for Reconstruction of Flood-Hit Roads

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of Iran Bitumen Association Mr. Mehrdad Hemmati has called for accelerating the barter of bitumen for reconstruction of roads which have suffered been damages during the recent floods.

Pointing to the damages inflicted on the roads in the underprivileged roads, Hemmati said that the law regarding distributing bartered bitumen by the executive organization has come not into effect for five months after its approval, adding that with waste of time, it is highly possible all existing infrastructures would be destroyed due rain and flood.

He then pointed to the direct connection between bitumen industry with the communication infrastructures and road transportation, noting that according to the officials of road maintenance organization, so far 71 communication axes have been affected by the recent rains. He added that destruction of these roads create many problems for the public in the mid-term especially most of these damages have happened in Sistan and Baluchestan, Kerman and Hormozgan provinces and the deprived areas of the country.

Hemmati reiterated that reconstruction of these roads cost a lot for the executive organs and correct implementation of approvals like barter of bitumen can be very effective in acceleration of it and reconstruction of roads.

He stated that despite unyielding need of the country to bitumen supply for advancing the plans for maintenance and development of roads, unfortunately this important supportive tool, regarding it, is barter of bitumen and its law is in limbo despite its approval.

Hemmati added that five months after the approval of the law it has not come into effect and warned that the first half of the year is the best time for reconstruction activities in most areas and with waste of time, it is highly possible the existing infrastructures to be damaged due to rains and flood.



Iranian Scientist Develops World's Strongest Antifungal

MASHHAD (IRNA) - A faculty member of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences in northeastern Iran has developed one of the strongest antifungal medications in the world.

The antifungal named "fungizone®" removes the most resistant fungi from the skin surface within 2-3 days, said Dr. Omid Rajabi.

He said that fungizone has been able to quickly cure the skin of lifeguards who have been exposed to moisture in indoor swimming pools for a long time.

The medication has been officially authorized and its production will begin next month with initial capacity of 10,000 units monthly, according to Dr. Rajabi.

The company that is producing fungizone, as said by Dr. Rajabi, has produced another spray medication named "Ozoped®" which kills head lice, their eggs and even the embryo inside the eggs.

Ozoped which could also be used to cure surgical injuries will begin production with 3,000 units per month at the same time with fungizone.

Deputy Shiraz Mayor: Exchange of Protomes of Cao Xueqin, Saadi Shirazi, an Opportunity to Boost Tourism Exchanges



The Deputy Mayor of city of Shiraz stated that the two cities of Shiraz and Nanjing have called their citizens to learn more about each other's culture and literature through the exchange of their two prominent writers and poets, and said: "The exchange of these two valuable protomes (busts) is an opportunity for a better understanding and a deeper connection between the people of the two cities and naturally It will be an inspiration and platform for strengthening tourism exchanges."

According to the Shiraz Municipality website, the unveiling ceremony of the statue of Cao Xueqin and protome of Saadi Shirazi in Jahan-Nama Garden with the presence of Mohammad Taghi Tazarvi, Vice Chairman of the Islamic City Council of Shiraz, Arash Farajzadeh, Deputy Mayor of Shiraz, Abbas Birgdar, Head of the Representative Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Fars Province, Abdul Ali Qasr al-Dashti, the artist and creator of protome of Saadi Shirazi, and a group of managers and personnel of Shiraz Municipality.

Deputy Mayor of Shiraz Arash Farajzadeh said in this ceremony, "Not only can Shiraz and Nanjing, as the important literary and cultural centers of their countries and the civilizational capitals of their lands, promote the development and strengthening of comprehensive



relations between the two nations and can be a complementary platform for the official diplomacy of their respective countries, but also they have the capacity to create an ideal model of dynamic and constructive intercultural relations for other Asian cities.

He stated that these two cities have called the citizens to



learn more about each other's culture and literature with the exchange of their two prominent writers and poets' protomes, and clarified, "The exchange of these two valuable protomes is an opportunity for a better understanding and a deeper bond between the people of the two cities and it is naturally inspiring and will be a platform for strengthening tourism exchanges."

The deputy mayor of Shiraz said, "In the field of city-to-city communication in the international arena, and regarding the emphasis of the Islamic City Council of Shiraz for employing all existing capacities in line with using urban diplomacy, economic development and attracting investors and tourists and increasing the quality of life of citizens, urban management policy is a pragmatic and project-oriented view in this field.

Farajzadeh clarified, "Naturally, considering the intersectional nature and the existence of various activists and stakeholders, any deep and fruitful movement requires interaction and synergy within and outside the



organization. In this regard, in addition to the General Directorate of Communications and International Affairs and other municipality subdivisions are also obliged to cooperate and synergize in this regard, so that by adopting a transnational perspective, in addition to exploiting the existing opportunities, we create opportunities for our city." He stated, "In the field of outsourcing, the cooperation and interaction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Fars Province, related government bodies and the private sector play a significant role in the efficiency and optimal use of the potential capacities of city of Shiraz and Fars Province, and we hope that by using the intellectual and executive power of all activists, we could take effective measures in the international arena in terms of comprehensive introduction of the city, helping to promote Iranian-Islamic culture and values and the development and progress of Shiraz in all fields.

Reza Javidi, Director General of Communications and International Affairs of Shiraz Municipality, also said in this ceremony: "The approach of this General Administration, considering the task that the sixth term of the Islamic Council of the city has drawn for this area, is to expand urban diplomacy beyond current issues by exchanging technical knowledge and To pursue engineering and utilization of the capacities of sister cities."

Stating that Shiraz is the tourist destination of many tourists in the world, he clarified: for the cultural exchanges and diplomacy of Shiraz and the big cities of the world,



considering the color and cultural, historical and literary capacity of Shiraz, as well as the existence of the third shrine of Ahl al-Bayt (PBUH), it should be possible With the efforts of the city administration, it expanded these exchanges in all dimensions and expanded the rich birth certificate of Shiraz according to its worthy name. The Director General of Communications and International Affairs of Shiraz Municipality discussed the history of this cultural exchange and stated: "The signing of the sisterhood agreement between the two cities of Shiraz and Nanjing began in May 2017 and after that the bronze statue of Cao Xueqin, the famous writer from Nanjing of China and the creator of the novel Dream of the Red Hall, was sent. One of the four outstanding classical works of Chinese literature from Nanjing to Shiraz was put on agenda to cultural exchanges between the two cities. Javidi stated: "In return, Saadi's bronze protome along with the stone-made base was sent from Shiraz to Nanjing to be placed in the Nanjing International Friendship Park, which was built by Abdul Ali Qasrul-Dashti, the famous artist of Shiraz, as Nanjing is the sister city of Shiraz in China. Deputy Mayor of Nanjing Mr. Yang Xuepeng said in a video message at the unveiling ceremony of the Cao Xueqin statue, "Since the signing of the sisterhood agreement between the two cities of Shiraz and Nanjing in 2018, the two cities have increased their



friendly exchanges and cooperation in areas such as economy, trade, Culture, education and tourism are in line with the development needs and show the distinct characteristics of the parties." Stating that both Shiraz and Nanjing have a rich cultural heritage and literary atmosphere, he added: "Not long ago, your city gifted the famous Persian-language poet Saadi's protome to Nanjing, and this protome is now placed in the Nanjing International Friendship Park and the citizens of Nanjing by understanding the value of this statue, can understand the ancient heritage of Iranian culture and strengthen their knowledge about Iran and Shiraz.

The Executive Deputy Mayor of Nanjing stated: "In this new historical moment, we sincerely hope that our cities will look at this unveiling ceremony as an opportunity, support the concept of a community with a common future for humanity, and the perspective of acceptance and win-win cooperation, together, relations Develop the sisterhood in a deep, practical and mutually beneficial way and contribute to the friendly cooperation between Iran and China."

Lebanon Allows Departure of Seized Ship

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - (Reuters) - Lebanon's top prosecutor has lifted his seizure order on a ship accused by Ukraine of carrying stolen flour and barley, allowing it to sail after finding "no criminal offence committed", a senior judicial source told Reuters.

The ship, the Laodicea, remains unable to sail for the time being due to another seizure order issued by a judge in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, where the ship is docked, on Monday, the source said.

That seizure order was only valid for 72 hours, the judge who issued it previously told Reuters.

An official at the Ukrainian Embassy in Beirut said he could not immediately comment, and that the embassy would hold a news conference on Wednesday.



Congo to Reassess U.N. Withdrawal Plan

KINSHASA (Dispatches) - Democratic Republic of Congo's government will re-evaluate the withdrawal plan of the United Nations peacekeeping mission after deadly anti-U.N. protests last week, it said late on Monday, suggesting it may ask the force to leave sooner than expected.

The U.N. peacekeeping mission, known as MONUSCO, said on Tuesday that it supports the government's decision and is also ready to reassess its withdrawal plan, which currently has it staying for at least two more years.

Thirty-six people, including four U.N. peacekeepers, were killed last week during violent demonstrations in the country's east, the government said.



Pelosi in Taiwan, Voicing U.S. Solidarity as China Fumes



TAIPEI (Dispatches) - U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi arrived in Taiwan late on Tuesday on a trip she said demonstrates American solidarity with the Chinese-claimed self-ruled island, but China condemned this first such visit in 25 years as a threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Pelosi and the rest of her delegation disembarked from a U.S. Air Force transport plane at Songshan Airport in downtown Taipei after the nighttime landing on a flight from Malaysia to begin a visit that risks pushing U.S.-Chinese relations to a new low. They were greeted by Taiwan's foreign minister, Joseph Wu, and Sandra Oudkirk, the top U.S. representative in Taiwan.

"Our congressional delegation's visit to Taiwan honors America's unwavering commitment to supporting Taiwan's vibrant democracy," Pelosi said in a statement shortly after landing. "America's solidarity with the 23 million people of Taiwan is more important today than ever, as the world faces a choice between autocracy and democracy."

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen will meet with Pelosi, who is second in the line of succession to the U.S. presidency and a long-time critic of Beijing, on Wednesday morning and then have lunch together, the presidential office said. Pelosi, travelling with six other American lawmakers, is the first U.S. House speaker to visit Taiwan since 1997.

China immediately condemned Pelosi's visit, with the foreign ministry saying it seriously damages peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, "has a severe impact on the political foundation of China-U.S. relations, and seriously infringes upon China's sovereignty and territorial integrity." The ministry said it lodged a strong protest with the United States.

Chinese warplanes buzzed the line dividing the Taiwan Strait before her arrival. The Chinese military has been put on high alert and will launch "targeted military operations" in response to Pelosi's visit, the defense ministry said.

The People's Liberation Army Eastern Theatre Command announced that it will conduct joint air and sea drills near Taiwan starting on Tuesday night, and test-launch conventional missiles in the sea east of Taiwan.

Pelosi is on a tour of Asia that includes announced visits to Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan. Her stop in Taiwan was unannounced but widely anticipated.

In a Washington Post opinion piece released shortly after she landed, Pelosi outlined her reasons for visiting, praising Taiwan's commitment to democratic government while criticizing China as having dramatically increased tensions with Taiwan in recent years.

"We cannot stand by as the CCP proceeds to threaten Taiwan - and democracy itself," Pelosi said, referring to the Chinese Communist Party.

Pelosi also cited China's "brutal crackdown" against political dissent in Hong Kong, as well as its treatment of Muslim Uyghurs and other minorities, which the United States has deemed genocide.

As Pelosi's motorcade approached the hotel, escorted by police cars with flashing red and blue lights, scores of supporters cheered and ran towards the black vehicles with their arms outstretched and phone cameras on. The motorcade drove straight into the hotel's parking lot.

Sadrists Told to Quit Parliament But Keep Protesting

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - A top official from Iraq's Sadrist movement called on followers who have occupied parliament for four days to move their protest outside, as calls mount for dialogue between political rivals.

Supporters of powerful preacher Moqtada Sadr -- whose political bloc in October won the largest share of seats in elections -- stormed parliament on Saturday to protest against a rival Shiite faction's pick for prime minister.

Nearly 10 months on from the elections, the oil-rich country still has no government and no new prime minister or president. A standoff pits the two key factions of the Shiite political scene, between the populist Sadr with a devoted following of millions, and the powerful pro-Iran Coordination Framework.

While Sadr's bloc resigned in June ostensibly in a bid to unblock the impasse, the situation has only deteriorated since then. Mohamed Saleh al-Iraqi, a senior Sadr loyalist, called on protesters to "leave parliamentary headquarters" and join fellow Sadrists at an "encampment in front of and around the building".

The announcement caused confusion in parliament, where some officials said the instructions were to only leave the main chamber and another meeting room, but that protesters could stay on in the large entrance hall.

Italy's Center-Left Sees Open Electoral Race

ROME (Dispatches) - Italy's Democratic Party (PD) formed an alliance with a smaller centrist group on Tuesday in a move seen as boosting the center-left's chances of preventing a right-wing triumph in an election next month.

The ballot is set for Sept. 25 and polls show a conservative alliance is on course for victory, with the far-right Brothers of Italy set to be the largest single party. Italy's election law favors parties that form broad alliances.

The PD, the largest party on the center-left, has agreed to team up with the Azione party in an effort to make up ground on the rival alliance.

PD leader Enrico Letta told a news conference that the alliance made the election an open race and said the PD was open to drawing in other groups in Italy's fragmented political landscape.

"We believe that it is unthinkable that our country, after the government of (Prime Minister Mario) Draghi, will be led by a rightist government," Letta said.

The conservative alliance led by Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy includes the rightist League and the more moderate Forza Italia party of former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi. It is currently polling at around 45%, while the PD and Azione are close to 30% together.

Azione and its existing +Europa ally poll only around 5-7% in surveys, but two senior members of Berlusconi's Forza Italia defected to Azione last week, saying Italy's conservative bloc had become too extremist.

The PD and Azione pledged to stick to the foreign policy of Prime Minister Draghi in support of Ukraine and to meet targets required to access billions of euros in funding from the European Union.

"The elections will be a choice between an Italy that is one of the great countries of Europe and an Italy allied with (Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor) Orban and (Russian President Vladimir) Putin," Azione leader Carlo Calenda said.

Berlusconi and League leader Matteo Salvini have been very close to Putin in the past and Italian newspapers last week reported that both their parties have had contacts with the Russian embassy in recent weeks despite the war in Ukraine.



Russia Accuses U.S. of Direct Ukraine War Role

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Russia accused the United States of direct involvement in the Ukraine war while the first ship carrying Ukrainian grain to world markets since Moscow's invasion headed towards Lebanon without problems.

Russia said it was responding to comments by Vadym Skibitsky, Ukraine's deputy head of military intelligence, about the way Kyiv used U.S.-supplied long-range HIMARS rocket-launch systems based on what he called excellent satellite imagery and real-time information.

Skibitsky told Britain's Telegraph newspaper there was consultation between U.S. and Ukrainian intelligence officials before strikes and that Washington had an effective veto on intended targets, though he said U.S. officials were not providing direct targeting information.

Russia's defense ministry, headed by a close ally of President Vladimir Putin, said the interview showed that Washington was entangled in the conflict despite repeated assertions that it was limiting its role to arms supplies because it did not want a direct confrontation with Moscow.

"All this undeniably proves that Washington, contrary to White House and Pentagon claims, is directly involved in the conflict in Ukraine," the Russian defense ministry said in a statement.

"It is the Biden administration that is directly responsible for all Kyiv-approved rocket attacks on residential areas and civilian infrastructure in

populated areas of Donbas and other regions, which have resulted in mass deaths of civilians."

There was no immediate reaction to the ministry's allegations from the White House or Pentagon.

Ukraine and the West accuse Russia of carrying out devastating missile attacks on civilian targets on an almost daily basis. Both sides deny deliberately targeting civilians.

Deliveries of sophisticated long-range weapons systems from Western nations to Ukraine are seen as vital if Kyiv's forces are to turn the tide of the war, in which Russia relies heavily on long-distance bombardments of urban areas.

Russia's verbal attack on Washington came after Turkey said that the first ship carrying Ukrainian grain since Russia's invasion blocked exports more than five months ago was on track to arrive safely in Istanbul on Tuesday night.

The vessel, the Sierra Leone-flagged Razoni, was sighted in the southern Black Sea off Turkey's coast, a Reuters witness said, and was expected to enter the Istanbul straits around 9 p.m. (1800 GMT), the Turkish Defense Ministry said.

The Razoni's departure on Monday from the Ukrainian port of Odesa for Lebanon via Turkey under a July 22 safe passage deal has raised hopes of further such departures, which could help ease a burgeoning global food shortage.



UK PM Hopeful Sparks Anger With Jibe at Scottish Leader



LONDON (Dispatches) - Scotland's ruling nationalists on Tuesday angrily rounded on British Conservative frontrunner Liz Truss, after she accused their leader Nicola Sturgeon of being a pro-independence "attention seeker".

The foreign secretary's provocative remarks came as her Tory leadership race against Rishi Sunak apparently tightened.

Previous polling had put Truss ahead of Sunak by more than 20 points among Conservative members. But according to a new poll reported by The Times on Tuesday, her lead has narrowed to just five points: 48-43 percent.

Truss waded into debate about the UK's constitutional future at a Tory hustings event in Exeter, southwest England, late Monday.

"I think the best thing to do with Nicola Sturgeon is ignore her," she said. While the comments won loud cheers from the party members present, they drew criticism for undermining the UK's devolved system when she is also clashing with the European Union over post-Brexit trade in Northern Ireland.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) is pressing for a second referendum on independence for Scotland.

Asked if she could back such a vote, Truss echoed a famous speech by her idol Margaret Thatcher in replying: "No, no, no."

John Swinney, Sturgeon's deputy as first minister of Scotland, called the remarks "obnoxious" and contrasted the roughly 200,000 Tory members with the 2.4 million votes won in elections last year by the SNP.

"Nicola Sturgeon has far more democratic legitimacy than Liz Truss is going to have if she becomes the prime minister," he told BBC television. "And I think Liz Truss has absolutely no right or foundation to make these remarks," Swinney said, arguing Truss's "silly, intemperate intervention" had made the case itself for Scotland to go its own way.

Truss was speaking at the second of 12 hustings as Tory members decide between her and former finance minister Sunak as the successor to Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Iceland's Majestic, Untamed, Unblemished Far North



BERLIN (Dispatches) - A 250-kilometer (155-mile) circuit in the far north of Iceland leads past some of the North Atlantic island's most stunning sights and landscapes. From volcanic lakes to spots for whale-watching and the most powerful waterfall in Europe, the Diamond Circle has more to offer than your average road trip.

In 2021, the residents of Husavik rolled out the red carpet for themselves. Symbolically, of course. It started above the whaling museum and stretched down to the harbor, tracing the route that Will Ferrel ran down in playing the role of Lars in the Netflix comedy "Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga."

The locals painted the red carpet on their streets after the film song "Husavik - My Home Town" was nominated for an Oscar. The town mayor himself filmed charming YouTube promo films and the whole town was in a state of excited anticipation.

In vain, it turned out, because the song did not win. But at least, Gunnar Jóhannesson now uses the red-painted path to lead visitors along the "Fire Saga" trail through the small town. He has photographs from the on-location filming and many anecdotes to tell about the Hollywood stars who descended on this spot in the extreme north of Iceland, including Pierce Brosnan who had a major role in the film.

Normally, life is pretty quiet in Husavik. The town is known for whale-watching and is often dubbed the "whaling capital" of the island. And, it's the main attraction along the Diamond Circle, a new 250-kilometer circuit leading past foul-smelling mud holes and gigantic waterfalls.

From Reykjavik, it's a good five hours drive via the Ring Road - the large highway which goes once around the entire island - before reaching the Diamond Circle. It's a little faster - but only about half an hour - to catch a domestic flight to Akureyri and proceed by car from there.

The charm of the Diamond Circle is that one can start the tour at any given point. Lake Myvatn, for example, is a great place to begin as it lies directly on the Ring Road. The lake, created by a volcanic eruption more than 2,000 years ago, lies idyllically between craters and hills.

The clouds are reflected in the huge, usually quiet lake, but the idyll is quickly over once the driver opens the car door. Swarms of tiny black insects - midges - will attack anything that moves. They don't bite or sting, but they fly everywhere - into one's eyes, the nose, the mouth. So it's better to keep quiet when they are around.

In the summer, these pests number 300,000 - per cubic meter. In bygone times, starving Vikings were said to have eaten them. "Lots of protein," jokes tour guide, Trausti Bergland. Folks here have a sense of humor.

Another kind of spectacle is awaiting travelers a few kilometers further on. In the barren lunar landscape of Hverir, bubbles and steam rise up from countless grey mud holes. The air smells like rotten eggs - the odor of the sulfur from the Earth's interior.

Here you can experience the geothermal forces which supply warm water and electricity to the North Atlantic island. In some parts of Hverir, the paths are built atop stilts, and hikers are advised not to leave them under any circumstances - for you never know how firm the ground is here and how hot the mud beneath it.

A few kilometers north of this bizarre landscape awaits an F-Road, a road that isn't suitable for standard vehicles. The pavement is loose and there might be a river running across it. The road is not part of the Diamond Circle, but it is great for a day excursion from Mývatn and best done with a guide.

Following one F-Road after the other, starting on number 88, you eventually end up at a geological rarity, a crater-inside-a-crater.

How to Jazz Up Your Water to Stay Hydrated in Hot Spells



LONDON (Dispatches) - While the world is grappling with a global heat wave, it is essential to stay hydrated to enjoy good health and avoid heat-related illnesses according to experts. But it sometimes gets boring and bland to drink plain old water. Therefore, you can flavor your water in an easy and fun way: by infusing it with fruits, vegetables and herbs.

Experts say we should be drinking 1.5 liters of water every day, warning that anything below 1 liter a day is insufficient to replace our needs, particularly when the weather is warm or for those doing strenuous physical activity like sport.

If you want to jazz up your carbonated water or tap water, there are many flavors that will deliver an additional kick.

Try using fruit or herbs - that way you can quench your thirst without any additional sugar or additives that you find in flavored water from the shop.

That helps people who don't generally enjoy drinking water trick themselves into making it an appealing experience, says water sommelier Andre Uhlig.

Flavored water helps people make sure they drink the recommended quantity on a daily basis and some blogs also say there are further benefits including "detox effects." Scientists point out however that research has yet to prove this.

But adding fruit, herbs and vegetables to your jug of water will provide variety and enjoyment, even if you only wind up consuming a fraction of the vitamins and minerals they contain.

When looking to add fruit or vegetables, it makes no difference whether you use tap or bottled water, as both will absorb the aromas and flavors to the same degree.

But bear in mind that if you opt for mineral waters, if it's highly mineralized, that might dominate the taste, overpowering the fruit flavor, says Uhlig. Go for a moderate degree of mineralization, is his recommendation.

Try out adding fruit, pieces of vegetable or herbs depending on what is in season, from oranges to strawberries, then blueberries or apples.

Thoroughly wash the fruit, vegetables or herbs then place them in a jug or carafe filled with water. Slice up any larger fruit or vegetables or pop smaller items like berries straight in as they are.

The longer you leave the fruit and herbs in the water, the stronger the taste and flavor.

Apples, pears, lemons, limes, oranges, peaches, nectarines, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, kiwis, cherries, kumquats, mangoes and melons can all be very tasty additions to water.

Meanwhile if you are considering herbs, why not consider mint, basil, parsley, rosemary, sage or lavender.

However, if you prefer vegetables, consider cucumbers, carrots, celery or beetroot. Meanwhile ginger root adds a lemony, spicy freshness.

There are many more bold combinations you can try, such as cucumber and basil, blueberries with lime and mint, cucumber and rose petals and rose water, if you have it.

Or consider blueberries and rosemary, or mango and ginger. Try peach with vanilla, or lemon with blueberries and mint. You can give your drink an unexpected taste by adding rose petals, vanilla or cinnamon sticks.

Be careful if you are thinking of adding peel, however, use organic fruit as regular fruit is often sprayed with pesticides that you cannot simply wash off. It is also better if you take citrus fruit that has not had wax applied, which extends shelf life.

If you are adding flavors to your water, then it's best prepared fresh and consumed cool shortly afterward. Don't leave it standing for longer than necessary.



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BP's Second-Quarter Profit Triples to \$9.3b

LONDON (Dispatches) - British oil giant BP returned to profit in the second quarter on the back of soaring energy prices, following a big loss due to its exit from Russia over the war in Ukraine, company results showed.

The company reported a net profit of \$9.3 billion — a threefold increase from the same three-month period last year — following a \$20.4-billion loss in the first quarter. BP is the latest energy firm to post bumper earnings as oil and gas prices have soared following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



U.S. Job Openings at Nine-Month Low

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. job openings fell by the most in just over two years in June as demand for workers eased in the retail and wholesale trade industries, but overall market conditions remain tight, allowing the Federal Reserve to continue raising interest rates.

Despite the larger-than-expected decrease in vacancies reported by the Labor Department in its Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, or JOLTS report, on Tuesday, the jobs market still favors workers. At least 4.2 million workers voluntarily quit their jobs in June and layoffs declined.

Job openings are among several metrics being closely watched by Fed officials. The U.S. central bank has been delivering hefty interest rate hikes in its war against inflation, pushing the economy to the brink of a recession.

"The labor market may be cooling off, but the temperature decline is far from a plunge," said Nick Bunker, director of economic research at Indeed Hiring Lab in Washington. "The outlook for economic growth may not be as rosy as it was a few months ago, but there's no sign of imminent danger in the labor market."

Job openings, a measure of labor demand, were down 605,000 to 10.7 million on the last day of June, the fewest since September 2021, the JOLTS report showed. June's decline was the largest since April 2020, when the economy was reeling from the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Job openings have been declining since scaling a record high of 11.9 million in March. Still, job openings are nowhere the low levels seen during the Great Recession 13 years ago.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 11.0 million vacancies. The Fed is trying to dampen demand for labor and the overall economy to bring inflation down to its 2% target.

The central bank last week raised its policy rate by another three-quarters of a percentage point. It has now hiked that rate by 225 basis points since March.

The government reported last week that the economy contracted 1.3% in the first half of the year. Wild swings in inventories and the trade deficit tied to snarled global supply chains have been largely to blame, though overall economic momentum has cooled.

"The JOLTS report on the whole is one of many labor market indicators that don't look 'recessionary' despite more downbeat signals coming out of some other economic indicators," said Daniel Silver, an economist at JPMorgan in New York.

Job openings decreased by 343,000 in the retail trade sector. The wholesale trade industry had 82,000 fewer vacancies, while state and local government education reported a reduction of 62,000 in openings.

Hiring slipped to 6.4 million from 6.5 million in May. In June, there were 1.8 jobs for every unemployed person.

About 4.2 million people quit their jobs in June, down from 4.3 million in May. The quits rate was unchanged at 2.8%. It is viewed by policymakers and economists as a measure of job market confidence. The high quits rate suggests wage inflation will likely persist for a while.

The government reported last week that wages and salaries surged 1.4% in the second quarter after rising 1.2% in the January-March period. They accelerated 5.3% on a year-on-year basis, the largest rise since the current series began in 2001.

Maersk Sees Global Supply Chain Woes for Longer

COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Maersk raised its 2022 profit guidance for a second time on Tuesday after beating quarterly revenue expectations as congested global supply chains that have boosted freight rates persist longer than expected.

The shipping industry has seen record profits in recent quarters due to a surge in consumer demand and pandemic-related logjams holding up containers in key ports in China, Europe and the United States.

"Congestion in global supply chains leading to higher freight rates has continued longer than initially anticipated," Maersk said in a statement.

It now expects underlying earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) of around \$37 billion versus the \$30 billion it forecast earlier. Maersk had initially expected full-year EBITDA at \$24 billion.

The new guidance is based on a gradual normalisation in ocean container shipping in the fourth quarter of this year. Its previous guidance was based on that happening early in the second half of the year.

The Copenhagen-based company is often seen as a barometer for global trade as it transports goods for retailers and consumer companies such as Walmart, Nike and Unilever.

Electrolux, Europe's biggest home appliances maker, last month missed second-quarter profit expectations in part due to supply chain problems, but said the supply chain situation looked better for the third and fourth quarters.

German shipping company Hapag-Lloyd last week also raised its earnings outlook for 2022.

Maersk, one of the world's biggest container shippers with a market share of around 17%, said in June that the



cost of shipping goods was unlikely to abate anytime soon due to array of inflationary pressures.

Revenue in the second quarter stood at \$21.7 billion, it said, above the \$19.7 billion forecast by analysts in a poll gathered by the company.

Underlying EBITDA was \$10.3 billion, compared to the \$8.2 billion forecast by analysts.

"The strong result is driven by the continuation of the exceptional market situation within ocean (container shipping)," the company said.

Maersk is due to publish a full set of results for the second quarter on August 3.

Hong Kong's Economy Seen Contracting in 2022

HONG KONG (Dispatches) - Economists downgraded their forecasts for Hong Kong's economy, predicting it could contract for the third time in four years, after data showed growth is being weighed down by Covid restrictions and a slump in trade.

Goldman Sachs Group Inc expects gross domestic product to decline 0.5% in 2022, down from an earlier prediction of 0.3% growth. Bloomberg Economics now sees GDP shrinking 0.6% compared with a previous projection of 0.7% expansion. The downgrades follow Monday's worse-than-expected data showing the economy contracted 1.4% in the second quarter from a year earlier.

While some relief is expected for Hong Kong in the second half, the recovery is uncertain given the drag on demand and trade from Covid restrictions locally and in mainland China. Growth momentum is also coming under pressure as Hong Kong raises interest rates in line with the hawkish Federal Reserve to maintain the local dollar's peg to the US dollar.

The economy shrank in 2019 when the city was engulfed by political protests, and in 2020 amid the outbreak of the pandemic.

Hong Kong's weaker-than-expected 2Q GDP results highlight the challenges still facing the economy: A quicker recovery requires further reopening, but rising Covid cases have complicated that. Slowing external demand and higher interest rates aren't helping either. Given the weakness of the 2Q numbers, we now see GDP shrinking 0.6% in 2022 -- worse than the 0.7% expansion we forecast earlier.

Financial Secretary Paul Chan said on Sunday that the city would "inevitably revise down" its full-year growth forecast of 1%-2% in the middle of the month. A city spokesperson said on



Monday that the recovery had been held back by factors including disruptions to cargo between Hong Kong and mainland China, a resurgence in Covid-19 cases, tightening monetary policy, and inflation in advanced economies.

Citigroup Inc economists lowered their full-year growth forecasts for Hong Kong by a full percentage point, predicting expansion of just 0.5%. Domestic demand is expected to be curbed in the second half by growing Covid cases and continued uncertainties around the timing of Hong Kong's border reopening with mainland China and fears of global recession, they wrote in a note.

Hong Kong is one of the last places in the world that has stuck to social distancing measures for Covid and quarantine restrictions for inbound travelers, which has held back tourism and travel to the city. While some restrictions in the city have been eased from April, retail sales and exports have been slow to bounce back.

Power, Gas Supply Disruptions Slam Venezuela's Oil Exports in July

HOUSTON (Dispatches) - Outages disrupting Venezuela's power and gas supplies to state-run energy firm PDVSA hit July oil exports, contributing to a 27% fall from the previous month, according to Refinitiv Eikon vessel tracking data and the company's internal documents.

Oil sales from the OPEC-member country have zigzagged this year despite receiving supplies of diluents from ally Iran, as PDVSA's aging infrastructure, lack of investment and U.S. sanctions have continued to limit output and exports.

In July, a power outage and a gas pipeline explosion cut service to PDVSA's crude-blending facilities and the Jose terminal complex, forcing the shutdown of two heavy-oil upgraders and reducing production of exportable crude blends, the documents showed.

A total of 29 vessels departed from Venezuela carrying 460,323 barrels per day (bpd) of crude and refined products and 252,000 metric tons of petroleum coke and methanol, according to the data. The figures imply a 27% fall from the previous month and a 38% decline versus July 2021.

Most shipments were bound for China directly or through trans-shipments hubs such as Malaysia, the Eikon data showed.

Low inventories of Venezuela's lightest oil grades, mechanical issues at upgraders and the prolonged use of the Jose terminal's berths for taking Iranian imports also affected exports.

The disruptions came amid the country's first oil shipments to Europe in two years, following U.S. authorizations in May to Italy's Eni and Spain's Repsol.

G7 Mulls Options to Restrict Russian Oil Profits

LONDON (Dispatches) - The Group of Seven (G7) wealthy nations is looking at blocking the transportation of Russian oil among other options to deprive Moscow of bumper revenues amid its invasion of Ukraine, unless it heeds a price cap.

In a statement released by Britain, G7 foreign ministers said they were considering "a comprehensive prohibition of all services that enable transportation of Russian seaborne crude oil and petroleum products globally, unless the oil is purchased at or below a price to be agreed

in consultation with international partners."

"In considering this and other options, we will also consider mitigation mechanisms alongside our restrictive measures to ensure the most vulnerable and impacted countries maintain access to energy markets including from Russia."

The G7 is made up of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United States.

Many countries have imposed sanctions on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine, which Moscow calls a "special military operation", but key oil consumers China and India have stepped up imports of discounted Russian barrels to record levels.

Despite Russia's oil exports hitting their lowest levels since last August, its export revenue in June increased by \$700 million month on month due to higher prices, 40% above last year's average, the International Energy Agency said last month.

Western leaders have proposed addressing that through an oil price cap to limit how much refiners and traders can pay for Russian crude - a move Moscow says it will not abide by and can thwart by shipping oil to states not obeying the price ceiling.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen pitched the idea of the price cap to Asian leaders on a foreign tour last month and told Reuters she had held "encouraging" talks with India.

Some traders and oil market analysts have expressed doubts a price cap would work as Russia has found ways to ship its oil to Asia without the use of Western ship insurance. Moscow could also stop exports of some oil altogether, leading to a further spike in energy prices.

G7 members have scrambled to find ways to plug energy shortages and tackle soaring prices while sticking to their climate commitments amid the tensions with Russia.

"As we phase out Russian energy from our domestic markets, we will seek to develop solutions that reduce Russian revenues from hydrocarbons, support stability in global energy markets, and minimize negative economic impacts", the G7 statement said.

Central Bank and Firms Clash Again On Turkey's New Loan Rules



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's central bank governor dismissed criticism of recent loan regulations from a second business group, arguing the measures create favorable financial conditions for exporters.

Companies have been complaining about Turkish authorities' steps to limit loans to firms unless they are net exporters -- part of an economic plan to try to flip the country's big current account deficit to a surplus.

Tuesday's meeting with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) was the second time Governor Sahap Kavcioglu has been forced to defend the measures in less than a week.

Kavcioglu clashed with members of the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO) on Friday. Last week Reuters reported that Ankara was intent on continuing with the policies despite companies' complaints about accessing affordable finance.

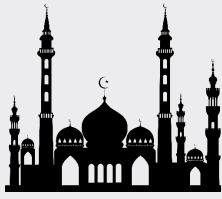
Rifat Hisarciklioglu, head of TOBB, called on banks to extend affordable loans, saying interest rates were rising and loans were being limited.

"Commercial loans at some banks have an interest rate of 30-50%, while the policy rate is at 14% and deposit rates are 20%. Some don't issue loans at all," he said.

He said authorities needed to be "sensitive" to the "side effects" of the measures and consider the rising needs for capital due to high inflation and rising input costs.

Speaking after Hisarciklioglu, Kavcioglu again dismissed criticism and advocated targeted loans.

"What all of us need to do is to ensure these (re-discount) loans are targeted and reach the healthiest and the right firms. This is our effort. We have partially succeeded in this," he said.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:25
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:40
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:15

56. So establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and obey the Messenger that ye may receive mercy.
57. Never think thou that the Unbelievers are going to frustrate ((Allah's Plan) on earth: their abode is the Fire, - and it is indeed an evil refuge!

Surah 24. Light (56 - 57)

Natural Disaster Losses Hit \$72b in First Half 2022

ZURICH (Dispatches)- Total economic losses caused by natural disasters hit an estimated \$72 billion in the first half of 2022, fuelled by storms and floods, Swiss reinsurance giant Swiss Re estimated Tuesday.

Though the figure is lower than the \$91 billion estimate for the first six months of 2021, it is close to the 10-year average of \$74 billion, and the weight is shifting towards weather-induced catastrophes.

"The effects of climate change are evident in increasingly extreme weather events, such as the unprecedented floods in Australia and South Africa," said Martin Bertogg, Swiss Re's head of catastrophe perils.

The Zurich-based group, which acts as an insurer for insurers, said the losses were also propelled by winter storms in Europe as well as heavy thunderstorms on the continent and in the United States.

So-called secondary natural disasters like floods and storms -- as opposed to major disasters such as earthquakes -- are happening more frequently, the reinsurer said.

"This confirms the trend we have observed over the last five years: that secondary perils are driving insured losses in every corner of the world," Bertogg said.

"Unlike hurricanes or earthquakes, these perils are ubiquitous and exacerbated by rapid urbanisation in particularly vulnerable areas," he said.

"Given the scale of the devastation across the globe, secondary perils require the same disciplined risk assessment as primary perils such as hurricanes."

Swiss Re said floods in India, China and Bangladesh confirm the growing loss potential from flooding in urban areas.

Man-made catastrophes such as industrial accidents added on a further \$3 billion of economic losses to the \$72 billion from natural disasters, taking the total to \$75 billion -- which is down on the \$95 billion total for the first half of 2021.

Total insured losses stood at \$38 billion: \$3 billion worth of man-made disasters and \$35 billion worth of natural catastrophes -- up 22 percent on the 10-year average, said the Swiss reinsurer, warning of the effects of climate change.

February's storms in Europe cost insurers \$3.5 billion, according to Swiss Re estimates.



Australia's floods in February and March set a new record for insured flood losses in the country at so far close to \$3.5 billion -- one of the costliest natural catastrophes ever in the country.

Severe weather and hailstorms in France in the first six months of the year have so far caused an estimated four billion euros (\$4.1 billion) of insured market losses.

The Swiss group also mentioned the summer heatwaves in Europe, which resulted in fires and drought-related damage, without providing estimates at this stage.

A warming climate is likely to exacerbate droughts and thereby the likelihood of wildfires, causing greater damage where urban sprawl grows into the countryside, Swiss Re said.

"Climate change is one of the biggest risks our society and the global economy is facing," said the group's chief economist Jerome Jean Haegeli.

"With 75 percent of all natural catastrophes still uninsured, we see large protection gaps globally exacerbated by today's cost-of-living crisis."

Double Standard...

FROM PAGE 1

The most interesting thing is that these countries which blame Iran have all A-bombs but try to stop other countries to avoid having A-bombs or even pursuing peaceful nuclear programs.

This comes at the time while everybody in the world knows Israel has many A-bombs in its arsenals but international bodies are quiet and even these Western countries do not try to take any action against this fake regime.

On Monday UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, warned that the world is in danger with humanity being only one misstep away from "nuclear annihilation."

"Today, humanity is just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation," Guterres warned at the opening of the 10th review conference of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) at the UN's headquarters in New York which was held after a two-year delay due to the COVID pandemic.

The UN chief urged all nations to "put humanity on a new path towards a world free of nuclear weapons." "Eliminating nuclear weapons is the only guarantee they will never be used," the UN chief insisted.

But so far no UN chiefs ever has tried to stop Israel from its nuclear program and arsenals to show the world that Israel enjoys immunity against any condemnation because of its offences.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported the slogan of world free of A-bombs and its envoys in the UN have repeatedly asked for it but unfortunately its proposals have gone unnoticed by the UN and especially by the West.

A couple of days ago Iran said the Israeli regime's advanced atomic military program poses a serious threat to international security and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), urging the UN nuclear agency to fulfill its responsibility in this regard.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said in a series of tweets, "The advanced atomic military program of the apartheid Israeli regime and the regime's continued objection to placing its nuclear facilities under the Safeguards Agreements [of the International Atomic Energy] Agency and not joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty are serious threats to international security and the non-proliferation regime."

The IAEA is expected to fulfill its responsibility in this regard in accordance with its statute, he added.

But it seems efforts of some independent countries like Iran are in vain and the UN and its agency IAEA are indifferent against Israel and they have just focused on Iran to put pressure on it under any pretext but they should know that Iran's peaceful nuclear activities are based on its NPT obligations and it has not committed any offence and the country or countries which should be blamed are Israel and Western countries which have A-bombs in their arsenals and they are not ready to tolerate other countries to have even peaceful nuclear programs.

The West is better to stop its double standard policy and its blame game against Iran because Iran will continue its nuclear program based on its NPT commitments and as its Supreme Leader has reiterated the country does not seek making A-bomb.



Ship Carrying Ukrainian Grain Reaches Turkey

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The first ship carrying grain from Ukraine's Odessa port has reached the Turkish coast on Tuesday, according to an AFP team on site.

The Sierra Leone-flagged Razoni is due to be inspected near Istanbul by a team that includes Russian and Ukrainian officials before delivering its cargo of 26,000 tons of maize to Tripoli, Lebanon.

A coordination center in Istanbul is responsible for inspection of grain shipments from three Ukrainian ports to world markets, part of a recent deal struck between Ukraine and Russia along with the United Nations and Turkey.

The ship is scheduled to undergo an inspection today by a joint control team, according to Turkish officials.

Internationally praised for its mediator role, Turkey has coordinated with Moscow and Kyiv to open a corridor from the Ukrainian port city of Odessa to resume global grain shipments that are stuck due to the Russia-Ukraine war, now in its fifth month.

In July, Turkey, the United Nations, Russia and Ukraine signed a deal in Istanbul to reopen three Ukrainian ports -- Odessa, Chernomorsk and Yuzhny -- to release grain that had been stuck for months because of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, which is now in its sixth month.

Russia has been accused of blocking the exports and weaponizing hunger amid a looming food crisis. Moscow denies it is responsible for soaring food prices, instead blaming Western sanctions on Russia.

More than 20 million tons of grain from last year's harvest are still awaiting export, according data from Ukraine.

Food from Ukraine is urgently needed on the world market - especially in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The U.N. recently warned of the biggest famine in decades.

Iranian Scientist Develops World's Strongest Antifungal

MASHHAD (IRNA) - A faculty member of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences in northeastern Iran has developed one of the strongest antifungal medications in the world.

The antifungal named "fungizone®" removes the most resistant fungi from the skin surface within 2-3 days, said Dr. Omid Rajabi.

He said that fungizone has been able to quickly cure the skin of lifeguards who have been exposed to moisture in indoor swimming pools for a long time.

The medication has been officially authorized and its production will begin next month with initial capacity of 10,000 units monthly, according to Dr. Rajabi.

The company that is producing fungizone, as said by Dr. Rajabi, has produced another spray medication named "Ozoped®" which kills head lice, their eggs and even the embryo inside the eggs.

Ozoped which could also be used to cure surgical injuries will begin production with 3,000 units per month at the same time with fungizone.

German State Acts to Cut Energy Use

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The German state of Bavaria has agreed ways to cut energy use by 15% between August and the end of March, including turning down thermostats in public buildings, as Europe's biggest economy braces for possible further cuts in Russian gas supplies.

The measures are in line with a European Commission proposal for a 15% reduction across the European Union, which could be made legally-binding if, as feared, Russia turns off the gas.

Germany, which, before Moscow invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, had relied on Russia for more than half of its gas, is particularly vulnerable to disruption and has already experienced a drop in supply.

According to a five-point program approved by Bavaria's cabinet on Tuesday, public offices should be heated to a maximum temperature of 20 degrees Celsius (68°F) and water in bathrooms will not be heated in winter.

The government will switch off lights in the corridors of



public buildings and outside them or will adjust them to operate at certain times.

Business trips should be avoided or made by public transport and employees will be allowed to work from home if possible. Public employees and building technicians will be given training on how to reduce energy use.

The aim of the measures in the southeastern region is

to help fill the country's gas storage facilities to protect against shortages during the peak demand winter, the state chancellor said in a statement.

"Unfortunately, energy is running out. The state government will therefore save even more," Bavaria's premier Markus Soeder tweeted on Tuesday.

Soeder said the country still needed nationwide ideas to find alternatives to Russian fossil fuels, adding the ruling coalition in Berlin was taking too long.

Last month, Germany's government unveiled energy-saving measures after the country in June moved to the second of three stages of its supply emergency plan.

Euro Zone Factory Activity Contracted in July as Recession Fears Grow

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manufacturing activity across the euro zone contracted last month with factories forced to stockpile unsold goods due to weak demand, a survey showed, adding to concerns the bloc could fall into a recession.

S&P Global's final manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 49.8 in July from June's 52.1, just ahead of a preliminary reading of 49.6 but its first time below the 50 mark separating growth from contraction since June 2020.

An index measuring output, which feeds into a composite PMI due on Wednesday and seen as a good gauge of economic health, sank to a more than two-year low of 46.3. In June it was 49.3.

"Euro zone manufacturing is sinking into an increasingly steep downturn, adding to the region's recession risks. New orders are already falling at a pace which, excluding pandemic lockdown months, is the sharpest since the debt crisis in 2012, with worse likely to come," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global.

"Lower than anticipated sales, reflected in accelerating rates of decline of new orders and exports, have led to the largest rise in unsold stocks of finished goods ever recorded by the survey."

The new orders index fell to 42.6 from 45.2, its lowest since May 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic was starting to grip the world, indicating scant chances of a turnaround anytime soon.

S&P Global said production was falling in all countries surveyed other than the Netherlands and that the rate of decline was of particular worry in Germany, France and Italy - the bloc's three biggest economies.

The U.S. economy unexpectedly contracted last quarter, raising the risk the world's largest economy was on the cusp of a recession.

Still, last month the European Central Bank raised interest rates by more than expected as concerns about runaway inflation trumped worries about growth.

Euro zone inflation rose further from the ECB's 2% target to a record high of 8.9% in July, preliminary official data showed last week. While the input and output prices indexes fell in the PMI survey they remained high.

Iran-Oman...

FROM PAGE 1

Peymanpak stated that Oman has a long-standing cultural and political relationship with Iran, and the serious determination of the governments in the field of economic activities has facilitated trade and provided conditions for development.

Emphasizing that the strategy of the 13th administration of the Islamic Republic is to develop trade with neighboring countries, the Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade of Iran stated that various measures had been taken in the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran to facilitate and accelerate trade in the past year.

Since the 13th administration of Iran took office on August 3, 2021, by announcing the establishment of balance in foreign policy, the expansion of cooperation with neighbors and countries in the region has been the priority of its foreign programs.

3 Remote-Sensing Satellites...

FROM PAGE 1

Generally, the official said, the space technology has various applications in different fields, including monitoring natural hazards, evaluating the lands under cultivation for agricultural purposes, keeping watch on borders, road traffic, seas and ports, and keeping water resources in check.

Salarieh said the country has been making efforts to develop its space industry on its own as it hardly gets to benefit from the relevant experiences of other countries due to the tough sanctions in place against the Islamic Republic.

Pakistan-Iran...

FROM PAGE 1

Trade was conducted through alternative payment mechanisms of limited scope, such as cash and to a certain extent through barter.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during his visit to Tehran had made serious efforts so that the two countries come closer to resolve one of the major obstacles in the expansion of bilateral trade through operationalising the barter trade mechanism.

Foreign Minister Bilawal emphasized the need for formulation of the cross-border exchanges through opening of new border crossings.

PBF SVP further said the promotion of trade through border marketplaces were the measures of the shared commitment to provide opportunities for enhanced economic and commercial activities between two countries.

Portugal to Host 2023 MotoGP Season Opener

PARIS (Dispatches) - The 2023 MotoGP season will open in Portugal rather than its usual starting point in Qatar, the International Motorcycling Federation (FIM) announced. Since 2007, the season has started with a night race in Qatar but the Losail circuit, which also hosts a Formula One Grand Prix, is scheduled for renovation. It is expected to host its MotoGP race later in the season. The Portuguese Grand Prix will be held at Portimao in the Algarve on March 26. The track will also host a winter test session in the week before the Grand Prix.

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Jota Extends Liverpool Stay With New Deal

LONDON (Dispatches) - Diogo Jota has signed a "new long-term deal" with Liverpool, the Premier League giants announced. Neither the exact length of the contract, nor its worth, were not disclosed. British media reported the Portuguese forward, who joined Liverpool from English rivals Wolves in 2020 would be staying at Anfield until at least 2027. The 25-year-old has become an important figure at Liverpool, scoring 34 goals in 85 appearances.

Murray, Venus Defeated In Washington Open

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray of Britain crashed out in the opening round of the ATP and WTA Washington Open, falling to Sweden's Mikael Ymer.

The 35-year-old Scotsman fell to 115th-ranked Ymer 7-6 (10/8), 4-6, 6-1 after two hours and 50 minutes at the US Open tuneup tournament.

"I'm excited," said Ymer, who saved four set points in the first set. "A lot left to do but it's a very good start of the American swing." World number 50 Murray, the 2012 and 2016 Olympic champion, is trying to earn a seeding at the US Open, which he won a decade ago. "It's still possible," Murray said. "I would just need to have a good run in Canada or Cincinnati really. It's pretty straightforward if I was to make a quarterfinal or a semifinal, which right now — after a loss like that — doesn't seem realistic."

"I do feel like if I play very well that I could do that. But I'll need to certainly play better than I did today." Seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams, playing her first singles match in nearly a year, was also eliminated in the opening round, falling to Canadian qualifier Rebecca Marino 4-6, 6-1, 6-4.

"It was nice to have the crowd behind me," Williams said. "Definitely a great experience. It's my first match so I didn't think I played well a lot of times."

"Just trying to shake off some rust. That's just to be expected. All I can do is just play another tournament and play better." Williams had not played a WTA singles match since falling to Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei 49 weeks ago in Chicago.

Ymer, who lost his only career ATP final last August in Winston-Salem, will next face 15th seed Aslan Karatsev.

Ymer won 75 percent of his first-serve points, 49-of-65, and smashed 37 winners past Murray, who made only 25 with 35 unforced errors, five more than Ymer.

Red Bull, Honda Extend Engine Development Deal

PARIS (Dispatches) - Austrian Formula One team Red Bull said it is extending its agreement with Honda for engine development until 2025.

Honda officially left F1 at the end of last season but signed a deal running until the end of the 2022 season to continue providing technical assistance for engine development to Red Bull and its sister team Alpha Tauri.

The powertrains are now manufactured and developed primarily by Red Bull who currently leads the constructors' championship while their world champion Max Verstappen again heads the drivers' standings.

"Red Bull's partnership with Honda has been an incredibly successful one and we are pleased that this will continue until the end of the current era of the FIA's power unit regulations in 2025," said Red Bull principal Christian Horner in a statement.

New engine rules for F1 are due to be decided shortly and will come into force from 2026.

According to unconfirmed information, Red Bull is currently in discussions with Porsche with a view to an agreement that could lead to the German manufacturer taking a stake in the Austrian F1 team and becoming a technological collaborator from 2026.

New Liga Sponsors EA Sports to Revolutionize Spanish Football

MADRID (Dispatches) - US video games giant Electronic Arts will replace Spanish bank Santander as the title sponsor of La Liga from summer 2023, the league announced.

The sponsorship will be in the name of the company's EA Sports division.

La Liga said in a statement that the deal would yield more than just increased revenue.

"Starting with the 23/24 season, the new agreement lays the foundations to revolutionise the football experience, seeks the integration of the physical and virtual worlds, involves improvements in broadcasting and the commitment of both companies to grassroots football," said La Liga on its web site.



Ronaldo, Maguire Most Abused On Twitter

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United duo Cristiano Ronaldo and Harry Maguire were the most abused players on Twitter last season, according to a new report published on Tuesday.

Nearly three quarters of Premier League footballers received abusive messages with some of them receiving daily abuse. The report, carried out by The Alan Turing Institute and Ofcom and using a new machine-learning technology, analyzed 2.3 million messages directed at Premier League players over the first five months of the 2021-22 season.

It found 60,000 posts deemed abusive, with 68% of players in the top flight receiving at least one message in that period.

One in 14 players received abusive tweets every day, according to the report, with half of all abusive messages being directed at 12 players who received on average 15 per day.

Ronaldo received 12,520 abusive tweets while Maguire had 8,954 and Marcus Rashford, also of Manchester United, had the third-highest total with 2,557.

Eight Manchester United players featured in the top 10.

tiebreak but Ymer smashed two forehand winners and a forehand volley winner to pull level at 7-7, prompting Murray to toss his racquet in frustration. Ymer, 23, took the set on a backhand volley winner.

"Had chances in the first set to close that out," Murray said. "Didn't get it. Yeah, frustrating." While Murray clawed back to force a third set, Ymer raced to a 4-0 lead, they exchanged breaks on double faults and Ymer ended the match on a backhand crosscourt winner.

Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep, coming off a Wimbledon semi-final run, beat Spanish qualifier Cristina Bucsa 6-3, 7-5.

"Always the first round is difficult when you change the surface," third seed Halep said. "I know it's going to take time to make the game more solid." US top seed Jessica Pegula cruised 6-2, 6-2, over US wildcard Hailey Baptiste.

Pegula won the most recent WTA Washington event in 2019 after two missed years due to Covid-19.

"It definitely feels weird," Pegula said. "It's great to be back." Britain's Kyle Edmund made a triumphant return to ATP singles after three left knee surgeries and a 20-month layoff by defeating Japanese qualifier Yosuke Watanuki 6-4, 7-6 (10/8).

Edmund, who next faces British 16th seed Daniel Evans, played in his first tour-level singles match since October 2020 at Vienna, a month before his first operation.

"I didn't find it easy today," said Edmund. "I hung in there and I got my reward in the end."



Woods Rejects \$700-800m LIV Offer

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Tiger Woods turned down an offer of about \$700-800 million to take part in the Saudi-funded LIV Golf series, the rebel circuit's chief Greg Norman said.

Fifteen-time major champion Woods has always made clear his opposition to the series which is threatening to tear golf apart and triggered accusations of Saudi "sportswashing".

Speaking in an interview on Fox News with Tucker Carlson, LIV chief executive Norman was asked if it was true that the American golf legend was offered "700, 800, a billion dollars" to join the breakaway circuit.

"That number was out there before I became CEO so that number's been out there, yes," Norman, a former world number one who is the public face of LIV Golf, said in the interview at Trump National in Bedminster, New Jersey, where the third LIV Golf

Invitational was held last weekend.

"And look, Tiger is a needle-mover, right? So of course you are going to look at the best of the best. They had originally approached Tiger before I became CEO, so yes, that number is somewhere in that neighborhood."

The 46-year-old Woods has consistently declared his loyalty to the PGA Tour and said he has no intention of following the likes of other major winners, such as Phil Mickelson, Bryson DeChambeau, Sergio Garcia and Dustin Johnson in jumping ship to the upstart LIV.

"I disagree with it," Woods said ahead of the British Open in St Andrews last month when asked about his fellow professionals who have been tempted to join the hugely lucrative but deeply controversial circuit.

"I think that what they've done is they've turned their back on what has allowed them to get to this position," Woods said.

"And who knows what's going to happen in the near future with world-ranking points, the criteria for entering major championships?"

Hamilton Takes Ownership Stake In NFL Broncos

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Seven-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton has joined the ownership group of the NFL's Denver Broncos, the team announced.

The Broncos entered into a sale agreement with the Walton-Penner family in June pending ownership approval of the deal, which is expected to come next Tuesday.

"Excited to join an incredible group of owners and become a part of the @Broncos story!!" Hamilton tweeted. "Honoured to work with a world class team and serve as an example of the value of more diverse leadership across all sports."

The 37-year-old Englishman posted a photo of his dog wearing a Broncos' scarf and shirt and added, "Roscoe already thinks he made the team".

Wal-Mart store heir Rob Walton, his daughter Carrie Penner and son-in-law Greg Penner paid \$4.65 billion, the largest sale price for any North American sports team, to purchase the Broncos.

Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was added to the ownership group last month and Hamilton, a record 103-time F1 race winner, is the latest high-profile investor.

"We're delighted to welcome seven-time Formula One world champion Sir Lewis Hamilton to our ownership group," Walton said in a statement.

"He's a champion competitor who knows what it takes to lead a winning team and a fierce advocate for global equality, including in his own sport."

"With over 100 race wins, Lewis is considered the most successful F1 driver of all time. His resilient spirit and standard of excellence will be an asset to the ownership group and the Broncos organization."



Lewandowski Bids Farewell To Bayern Staff

MUNICH (Dispatches) - New Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski said farewell to his former Bayern Munich team mates and club staff during a brief visit to the Bundesliga champions' headquarters, despite his rocky departure and spat with Bayern bosses.

The Poland forward, who scored 344 goals for Bayern in 375 games during his eight years at the club, joined Barca in a deal worth €45 million (RM205 million) last month after forcing a move from the German club.

The 33-year-old and Bayern bosses have criticised each other over the way they handled the transfer, with Lewandowski saying there had been lot of "politics" from the side of the club who were "trying to find an argument" to sell him.

Bayern in turn said the situation had been caused by the player who asked to leave despite having a contract to 2023.

"Everything is fine. I met everyone and thanked them," Lewandowski told Sky television from his car before driving away from the club offices. "I will never forget what I received here and what I experienced."

"That is the most important thing for me," he said. "Last week was a bit complicated but sometimes this is part of football."

