

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **142,944** With **55** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Women Volleyball Team Made It to the Final of the Islamic Solidarity Games in Turkey to Gain a Medal After 56 Years When It Defeated Azerbaijan 3-1 in the Semifinals

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Iran Raises September Oil Prices for Asian Buyers

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has increased its crude oil selling prices (OSP) for Asian buyers in September considering the global rise in oil prices, Shana reported.

NIOC's official selling price increase affected three grades of Iranian oil namely Light, Heavy and Forouzan.

The NIOC has set the September OSP of Iranian Light grade for Asia at \$9.5 a barrel above the Oman/Dubai average, up \$0.6 from the previous month.

The prices for Iranian Heavy and Forouzan grades are also set to be \$6.3 and \$6.4 above the Oman/Dubai average, respectively.

The September OSPs for heavy and Forouzan grades have increased by \$0.7 and \$0.75 compared to the prices for the previous month, respectively.

Iran has been shipping its oil into the global markets successfully despite the U.S. sanctions and over the past year, the export of Iranian crude oil increased significantly.

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Deterrence Power Prevents Enemies From Attacking Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Spokesman of the Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said that the enemies know very well that Iran's deterrence has grown too strong which makes them think twice before waging a war against Tehran.

The spokesman of the Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi made the comments in a ceremony held by the Iranian armed forces to commemorate national Journalist's Day in Tehran.

The chief spokesman of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic said that "We have developed a very high deterrent power for hard war," adding that, the enemies see this power and think twice for decide to wage a war against Iran.

"Otherwise they would not have waited for an hour and taken action," Gen. Shekarchi added.

Meanwhile, he said that the enemy has focused on the psychological warfare (soft war) after seeing that it is unable to wage a war in the hard field.

Language of Threat Against Iran Achieves Nothing



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has warned the United States against using the language of force when addressing the Iranian nation.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks in a late Saturday tweet in apparent reaction to recent accusations leveled against Iran by the US about a fictional plot to kill the former President Donald Trump's national security advisor John Bolton. "History ought to have taught the U.S. that language of threat against Iran and Iranians achieves nothing," Iran's top diplomat tweeted.

He added, "Futile attempts at deflection won't allow the U.S. to evade responsibility for the thousands of Iranian and other victims of its involvement in terrorist crimes in our region."

History ought to have taught the U.S. that language of threat against Iran and Iranians achieves nothing.

Futile attempts at deflection won't allow the US to evade responsibility for the thousands of Iranian and other victims of its involvement in terrorist crimes in our region.

The U.S. Department of Justice on Wednesday charged a man identified as Shahram Poursafi with trying to arrange the killing of Bolton in retaliation for the January 2020 U.S. airstrike that martyred Iran's legendary anti-terror commander Lieutenant Gen. Qasem Soleimani.

In the latest scenario, Poursafi has been cited as a member of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps who attempted to pay individuals in the United States in October 2021 a reward of \$300,000 to carry out the plot in either Washington, DC, or Maryland.

Iran has brushed aside the "baseless fiction" of the U.S. government, accusing an Iranian national of plotting to assassinate former President Donald Trump's notorious national security advisor John Bolton.

Sanctions against Iran can be lifted soon: Russian envoy

Meanwhile according to a Russian diplomat sanctions against Iran can be lifted soon, referring to the talks in Vienna for a possible return of the United States to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Permanent Representative of Russia to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said in a tweet on Sunday that sanctions against Iran can be lifted soon.

He wrote the tweet in response to a Twitter user who asked him if the West would finally decide to lift the sanctions against Iran, Russia, and other countries.

"I can't say the same about anti-Russian #sanctions," Ulyanov wrote, adding that anti-Russian sanctions are only partially associated with Ukraine.

"The West perceives independent policy of Russia as a strategic challenge and will hardly abandon the practice of sanctions," he said.

Iran and the P4+1 recently resumed talks in Vienna, with indirect participation of the US, to finalize an agreement to revive the 2015 nuclear deal based on a proposal from the EU.

Knowledge-Based Firms Active in Defense

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's vice president for science and technology says more than 700 private sector companies are now active in the field of defense in Iran and many others are ready to join in.

Sorena Sattari said in the third science and research congress of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran that innovation is a key issue in the defense sector.

"Our achievements in the field of defense are especially rooted in our innovations. We also invest much in the field of education but there is little outcome. That's because products in today's world are the outcome of investments by the private sector. But we have neglected this," he said.

Sattari added that innovation and manufacturing produce results faster when the private sector is involved and called for more reliance on the knowledge-based companies in the field of defense.

The vice president also underlined the significance of individuals as a factor in innovation for manufacturing.

"The defense sector is very significant for the knowledge-based economy. The defense sector can draw out a plan to demand output from the private sector and guarantee that it buys the products of these companies. The more the defense sector attracts money from the private sector, the greater it can promote innovation and this can be used to reduce the gap with the modern technology of the world," he said.

He also proposed the creation of a technological park and technology accelerators in the field of defense to get the goal of attracting knowledge-based companies to the defense sector.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



U.S. Benefits From War In Ukraine

Western powers and predominantly the U.S. have always claimed they are anti-war countries and support peace in the world but they have actually been behind all wars and even they have waged or ignited the wars in any part of the world and Ukraine is the best contemporary example for this war-mongering nature of the U.S. and its Western allies.

While the Russia-Ukraine war is approaching its eighth month after the outbreak, the U.S. and its allies fan the flame of the war and they do not try to stop it and they even send weapons to Ukraine and increase economic pressure on Russia in order that the war continues; and the Western arms sellers will be the ones which will benefit from the prolongation of this war and Ukrainian people are the real victims of this war which was because of the excessive demands of the West which fooled Ukrainian government to fall into the trap of the West.

According to reports the U.S. wants to increase its arms sale to Ukraine in order to strengthen the country against Russia. The Biden administration's next security assistance package for Ukraine is reportedly expected to be \$1 billion, one of the largest so far, and include munitions for long-range weapons and armored medical transport vehicles, three sources briefed on the matter told Reuters.

The package is expected to be announced as early as Monday and would add to about \$8.8 billion in aid the United States has given Ukraine since Russia's invasion on Feb. 24.

The officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that President Joe Biden had not yet signed the next weapons package. They cautioned that weapons packages can change in value and content before they are signed.

However, if signed in its current form, it would be valued at \$1 billion and include munitions for HIMARS, NASAMS surface-to-air missile system ammunition and as many as 50 M113 armored medical transports.

The new package follows a recent Pentagon decision to allow Ukrainians to receive medical treatment at a U.S. military hospital in Germany near Ramstein air base.

A couple days before, the Pentagon announced a separate security assistance package for Ukraine valued at up to \$550 million, including additional ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS).

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Domestic Firms to Invest \$39b in Oil, Gas Industry

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) has said that contracts for \$29 billion of investment in the oil and gas industry projects have been concluded with domestic firms, and another \$10 billion worth of new investment deals will be concluded soon, Shana reported.

Masoud Mirkazemi said that over the past month various working groups and consortia have been formed in PBO which led to the signing of a \$7 billion contract for the development of the joint Azadegan oil field and a \$19 billion memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the construction of two petrochemical plants.

"We are also preparing another \$10 billion worth of projects to be awarded, so it is necessary to use different methods and initiatives to attract the necessary resources," Mirkazemi said.

Back in September 2021, Oil Minister Javad Owji said his ministry was making necessary arrangements and planning for attracting \$125 billion of foreign and domestic investment in the country's oil and gas industry within the next four to eight years.

Earlier this month, Oji reiterated that the oil ministry is seriously following the plans for funding the oil industry's development projects.

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021-44253335-39

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info@irannewsdaily.com

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Lake Urmia, One Step Away From Drying Up

TEHRAN (IFP) - The footsteps of the crisis began to be heard a long time ago. Lake Urmia is now on its last legs. The issue is no longer a matter of warning or risk.

The lake was once the 6th salt water lake of the world, the biggest salt water lake of the Middle East and the biggest lake of Iran.

It was the habitat of many migrant and indigenous animals like flamingos, pelicans, herons and ducks and attracted

thousands of tourists each year.

But now the lake is one step away from totally drying up.

Figures show that about 95 percent of Lake Urmia has already dried. Lake Urmia was to reach its ecological balance within 10 years from 2014 as per a plan put in place by its restoration headquarters.

Now 7 years on, the implementation of different structural plans and the cost thereof show a reverse trend in the restoration.

Israel Has Normalized Child Killing

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani says killing children has become the norm of how Zionists operate toward the Palestinian territories, noting that the practice exposes the Israeli regime's fear of the new Palestinian generation.

Bagheri Kani made the remarks during a meeting with Qatar's Deputy Foreign Minister for Regional Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulafai in Tehran on Saturday afternoon.

"Pesticide has become the norm of Zionist governance and it shows the Zionists' fear about the future," he said, stressing that killing children is condemned by any human criterion or standard.

Last Friday, Israel launched a devastating military onslaught against the besieged Gaza Strip, killing dozens of civilians, including at least 17 children, and injuring hundreds more with its airstrikes that lasted for three consecutive days.

On Thursday, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights raised the alarm over the rate by which the Israeli regime has been killing Palestinian children so far this year.

"Inflicting hurt on any child during the course of conflict is deeply disturbing, and the killing and maiming of so many children this year is unconscionable," Michelle Bachelet said.

Bagheri Kani further said that Israeli rulers are well aware of the potential of the emerging Palestinian generation who would pose a "strategic threat" to the occupiers in the occupied territories.

The governments in Muslim countries, the senior Iranian diplomat added that, should more than ever focus on supporting the Palestinian people in various dimensions.



Following their meeting, the Qatari foreign minister said in a tweet that the two sides also discussed the developments surrounding the talks to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement.

"I thank His Excellency Bagheri Kani for the warm welcome and hospitality. We discussed the latest developments in the regional and international sectors, in particular the developments of the ongoing negotiations on the return of the JCPOA," he wrote.

On-and-off negotiations have been held in the Austrian capital of Vienna since April last year to revive the JCPOA, which was unilaterally abandoned by the United States in 2018. The Iranian delegation at the talks is led by Bagheri Kani.

Khulafai also met on Saturday with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, who underlined the need to implement the agreements reached between Tehran and Doha during Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's latest visit to the Persian Gulf Arab country and the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani's trip to Iran.

During their meeting, the two sides exchanged views about the expansion of bilateral relations and topics of common interests.

The Qatari diplomat, for his part, stressed his country's resolve to boost bilateral ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Chief of Staff of Iranian Armed Forces Set to Visit Iraq

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chief of Staff of Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri is scheduled to visit Iraq, Deputy Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces said.

Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh made the remarks on Sunday in a meeting with the President of Iraqi Defense University for Higher Military Studies Staff Lt. Gen. Saad Mizher Mohsen Al-Alaq.

Referring to the favorable memorandum of

understanding which was signed yesterday between the Iraqi Defense University and Iran's Supreme National Defense University, Nasirzadeh added, "We have many religious commonalities with the people of Iraq, and on the other hand, both countries have special conditions in terms of geographical location, which makes the interactions between the two countries expand."

Stressing that the Iranian President considers the development of cooperation with Iran's neighbors as

one of the priorities of his foreign policy, the Iranian official called for the expansion of cooperation between the two mentioned universities.

"The unity and brotherhood of two nations can create emerging power in the region, which can be realized by exchanging thoughts and ideas at all levels," Nasirzadeh added.

According to Nasirzadeh, Major General Mohammad Bagheri is set to visit Iraq in near future in line with the development of cooperation between the two countries.

Knowledge-Based Companies, Iran's Priority

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Science says Iran is determined to generate knowledge-based companies through the capacities of the 'knowledge-based production surge' law.

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has named the current Iranian calendar year, 1400, as the 'Production: Knowledge-Based and Job-Creating', aiming to create a tangible change in people's lives.

The 1400 year's slogan focuses on a new aspect of production, which refers to adopting a scientific and technological approach.

Mohammad Ali Zolfigol told reporters that in the last year, the employment rate in the country's technology parks grew to 40 percent, with 12 new research and development centers established.

Yet, Zolfigol stressed the completion of the half-finished projects, saying that it was not reasonable to establish new projects when there were still half-finished projects in the country.

He said that 5.700 billion tomans were allocated to completing the construction projects with more than 50 percent progress in their realization.

Naming the years in the last decade shows that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution has specifically emphasized the word production five times.

For some years, the Leader supported it without mentioning the word production. In the Iranian year 1397 motto, which was "Support for Iranian Products," the name had the support of production in itself.

The 'knowledge-based production surge law' passed by the parliament aims to boost knowledge-based production through granting business licenses.

When Iran faces foreign illegal sanctions and pressure, knowledge-based production can provide the ground for neutralizing these sanctions and pressures.

To overcome dependence on raw materials sales, it is necessary to use knowledge, creativity, and innovation in the field of the economy.

Pakistan Independence Day Marked in Tehran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - An official ceremony to mark the 75th anniversary of Independence of Pakistan was held at Pakistan House Tehran, on Sunday. Members of Pakistani community in Iran, officials of the Embassy, staff of Pakistan Embassy International School, journalists and media representatives attended the ceremony.

The ceremony commenced with the playing of national anthem & hoisting of the national flag by Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi. It was followed by reading out of Messages of President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

Ambassador of Pakistan Rahim Hayat Qureshi paid rich tributes to the founding fathers of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Dr. Allama Iqbal and other leaders who led the Pakistan movement and offered sacrifices for the creation of an independent Muslim state.

While congratulating the Pakistani diaspora on Pakistan's Independence Day, Ambassador urged them to serve the country with dedication. Since independence, Pakistan has faced multiple challenges, but by the grace of Almighty Allah and with the dedication and hard work of our citizens, the nation has continued its forward march as a modern and progressive state.

The Ambassador underscored that Pakistan and Iran are

two brotherly and fraternal nations whose relations are rooted deeply in historical, cultural and religious affinity.

The participants also expressed solidarity with the oppressed people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), who continue to suffer from systematic persecution and human rights violations by the Indian occupation forces. Ambassador Qureshi called upon the international community to take measures for the peaceful resolution of IIOJK dispute as enshrined in the relevant resolutions UN Security Council. The Ambassador appreciated the support of Iranian leadership to the just cause of the oppressed Muslims of Kashmir and Palestine.



Ambassador of Pakistan Rahim Hayat Qureshi hoisting Pakistan National Flag on Independence Day ceremony in Tehran on August 14, 2022

IRGC Navy Seize Vessel Carrying Smuggled Fuel in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN (MNA) - Chief Justice of Hormozgan Province Mojtaba Ghahremani has said that 22,000 liters of smuggled fuel were seized in the Persian Gulf.

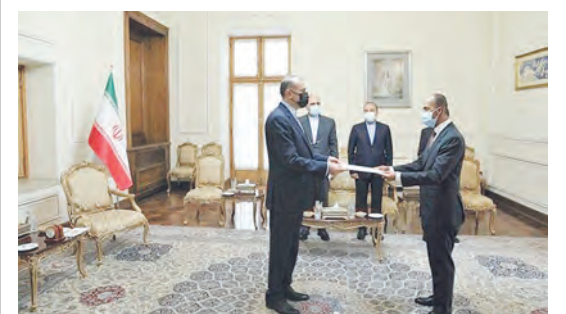
The IRGC Navy seized the vessel carrying smuggled fuel in the Persian Gulf waters after the detection operation, Mojtaba Ghahremani said.

The authorities continue combating organized fuel trafficking decisively and will not hesitate to protect the interests and assets of the Iranians, he further noted.

Recently on April 24, 14, and 9, IRGC Navy seized three foreign vessels carrying 200,000 liters, 250,000 liters, and 220,000 liters of smuggled fuel in the Persian Gulf respectively.

Subsidized fuel in Iran is seen as an opportunity for smugglers to draw huge benefits. Iran, however, re-imposed using fuel cards and rationed gasoline back in November 2019 which was aimed in part to take the smuggling under control.

Kuwaiti Ambassador Submits Credentials to FM



TEHRAN (MNA) – The new ambassador of Kuwait to Iran submitted a copy of his credentials to Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Saturday evening.

Badr Abdullah al-Munikh Kuwaiti new ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran submitted a copy of his credentials to Iranian foreign minister in the beginning of his diplomatic mission in Tehran.

In addition, Venezuelan ambassador to Iran met and held talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Saturday evening at the end of his diplomatic mission in Tehran.

Strategic Cooperation Between Iran-Iraq Armed Forces Necessary



TEHRAN (MNA) - President of Iran's Supreme National Defense University Brigadier General Esmail Ahmadi-Moghaddam said that strategic cooperation between the armed forces of Iran and Iraq is 'necessary'.

He made the remarks in his meeting with the President of Iraqi Defense University for Higher Military Studies Staff Lt. Gen. Saad Mizher Mohsen Al-Alaq in Tehran on Saturday.

During the meeting, Brigadier General Ahmadi Moghaddam said that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was inked between Iranian and Iraqi National Defense universities in line with strengthening bilateral cooperation in relevant fields.

The security between the two countries of Iran and Iraq are intertwined, he said, adding that the presence of foreign forces in the region and spread of ISIL terrorists have created many problems for neighboring Iraq, so that this issue can also create serious problem for Iran and cooperation of armed forces of the two countries is essential.

President of Iraqi Defense University for Higher Military Studies, for his part, said that people of the two countries of Iran and Iraq have established very close and amicable relations with each other for a long time.

Staff Lt. Gen. Saad Mizher Mohsen Al-Alaq pointed to signing and sealing a Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries of Iran and Iraq in order to take advantage of experiences of the two sides within the framework of joint cooperation and also to expand bilateral cooperation on pertinent issues.

The two countries of Iran and Iraq have established very close cooperation in various fields including fighting against ISIL terrorist groups, he added.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:08
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:13
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:52
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:24

63. Deem not the summons of the Messenger among yourselves like the summons of one of you to another: Allah doth know those of you who slip away under shelter of some excuse: then let those beware who withstand the Messenger's order, lest some trial befall them, or a grievous penalty be inflicted on them.

Surah 24. Light (63)

Iran, Mauritius Sign MoU On Bilateral Cooperation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – During the first Iran-Mauritius Trade Forum at Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Iran and Mauritius signed a memorandum of understanding and both sides called for resolving the problems of transportation and removing banking hurdles.

A trade delegation from Mauritius, led by Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Cooperation Mr. Jaya Krishna, visited Tehran to attend the first joint trade forum to explore ways of boosting economic cooperation.

Addressing the event, Head of ICCIMA Mr. Gholam-Hossein Shafei emphasized the strategy of the chamber and Iran's government for broadening economic relations with African states and noted that Iran is determined to pave the ground for the road for access to the 1.2-billion-dollar market Africa for Iranian traders.

He said Mauritius is one of the 23 members of Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC) and it enjoys having one of the most crucial geopolitical positions of IORARC. He added that this can lead to broadening cooperation of Iran with Mauritius and other members of IORARC. Shafei noted that the strategy and distinguished geopolitical position of Iran in the West Asia for access to a 400-million people market of the region will definitely provide a good opportunity for traders and companies of Mauritius in trade with Iran.

He then pointed to potentials of Mauritius as the gateway to Africa, adding that banking services, insurance and marine transportation are of the major potentials for cooperation between the two states. He added that Mauritius purchases over one billion dollars of fuel and oil products annually and it can be another ground for cooperation between the two countries.

Shafei pointed to the \$7,000 per capita GDP of Mauritius and expressed hope that Iran can take advantage of capacities of Mauritius for broadening tourism, providing consumer goods, transportation, bank and insurance. He reiterated that despite existing capacities, the trade volume of both countries is very low and disappointing, emphasized that both states should take new steps for broadening economic cooperation through removing hurdles.

He said that lack of acquaintance to the trade capacities as well as transportation problem and lack of shipping line especially Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line



to Mauritius, lack of monetary ties and joint economic commissions are the major hurdles in way of broadening trade between the two states and reiterated this problem should be solved through cooperation of governments and support of private sectors.

Shafei expressed hope that the ties between the two countries in all grounds would improve in the future.

Then Mauritius official Krishna, for his part, expressed interest of his country for broadening economic ties with Iran, adding that Mauritius is a good destination for investment for countries and currently the country has trade partners from countries like the U.S., Europe, China and India and it is interested in having more cooperation with Iran. He added that any producer can sell and export its products with the label of Made in Mauritius even to the U.S., adding that fortunately, Mauritius government revoked visa issuance for Iran about two months ago because the country is keen to expand cooperation especially in the field of tourism and agriculture.

Krishna further said that currently 1500 products are produced in Mauritius and exported to 140 countries, emphasizing that his country is keen to enter Iran. He added that products like textile and jewelry as well as medical equipment will be interesting for Iranians while Mauritius needs to import gas and oil and this tie can be a win-win one.

Then Deputy Foreign Minister of Mauritius Mr. Dillum, for his part, pointed to signing of the MoU for cooperation between the chambers of commerce of both states, adding that this can be the first outcome of this meeting and a prelude to broadening cooperation.

He emphasized importance of direct flight between the two countries and announced that Mauritius is ready to launch direct flights between the two states, adding that both countries are good destinations for investment and Mauritius is ready for more cooperation.

He added that Mauritius Trade Promotion Council is to launch an office in Tehran for providing facilities for traders of both countries.

IRISL Transporting Over 13,000 Tons of Goods Transit Via North-South Corridor

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – According to the plans by the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL) Group for operationalizing the North-South Corridor in accordance with the 13th government plans, the transit goods via this corridor are delivered in just one-thirds of the normal time and according to the statistics, over 3,000 tons of goods and 114 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) containers have been shipped via this corridor between May 22 and July 23 by IRISL.



According to reports, since April 4, IRISL group has formed an operational workgroup for developing the North-South Corridor and accordingly some plans have been devised and the transit goods are delivered via this route in one-thirds of normal time.

The dispute between Russia and Ukraine as well as Iran's good geopolitical position in the region has provided ground for revival of the North-South Corridor and it has created a good trade opportunity for Iran while Russia due to its current condition has realized the importance of this route and expressed its interest for using it.

The senior management of IRISL is fully aware of importance of this national project and positive effects of it whose implementation can have on the national economy. Therefore all companies which have been active in the shipping in this corridor and could play a role have immediately entered this field and boosted activities.

IRISL transport cargos from Central Asian countries to the Caspian Sea and the goods are transhipped by rail or trucks to southern ports and then the goods can be transported to the destinations by IRISL. The transit time for transporting the cargo on routes of the Black Sea and Suez Canal is between 45 to 60 days while the transport of that cargo via the North-South Corridor will take some 15 days which is one-thirds of the normal time.

Tourists From the Netherlands, Germany Visit Imam Reza's Shrine



MASHHAD (IP) - A group of 14 tourists from the Netherlands and Germany paid a visit to Imam Reza's holy shrine, enjoying special services of the Office for Foreign Pilgrims' Affairs.

After being warmly welcomed upon entry to the holy shrine, the group was directed to the office of the Department of Tourists and Religions of the Office for Foreign Pilgrims' Affairs and enjoyed special programs arranged for them.

When they finished their programs at the department office, the group visited the carpet at the central museums of Imam Reza's holy shrine while accompanied by a guide fluent in English. Giving a chance for discussion with the religious expert of the office and showing an introductory video clip on Imam Reza's shrine were some services rendered to the group. Also, the Department of Tourists and Religions provided the mostly old-aged tourists with some cultural gifts as memorials.

During the discussion, almost all the men and women in the group gave interactive and friendly give. They took with the office's religious expert on different areas such as misunderstandings on Islam and its relations with other divine religions.

Members of the foreign group described the Iranian nation as very friendly and warm people and said the huge crowd of pilgrims inside the holy shrine was "very magnificent."

It is worth mentioning that to fulfill inter-faith dialogue and understanding among religions' followers, Imam Reza holy shrine's Office for Foreign Pilgrims' Affairs plans many different yearly and occasional programs for a large number of arriving foreign visitors and tourists to Imam Reza holy shrine.

UNICEF, Farabi Cinema Foundation Cooperate on Movies for Kids



TEHRAN (IP) - Farabi Cinema Foundation's CEO and the UNICEF representative in Iran emphasized cooperation on movies for kids.

Robin Nandi, the representative of UNICEF in Iran, met with Mehdi Javadi, the CEO of Farabi foundation, here in Tehran on Saturday.

They agreed to improve the knowledge of cinematographers in kids' movies. Saying that Iran is one of the leading countries in children's rights, Farabi's CEO said: "One of the foundation's missions is reviving children's cinema."

Javadi also said: "We are eager for UNICEF to accompany film producers in Iran from the beginning to the end of the film production procedure."

In the meeting, the representative of UNICEF also emphasized the cooperation with the Farabi Foundation and said: "We have a five-year plan, after completion, we will hold joint and annual workshops."

Iran to Facilitate Transit Relations With CIS States

TEHRAN (IP) - In a meeting of Iranian private sector representatives and a joint delegation from Russia and Tajikistan, ways for facilitating transit between Iran and Commonwealth and Independent States (CIS) were discussed.

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The joint trade delegation of Russia and Tajikistan was headed by the Head of the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Council of Road Administration of the CIS Nations, Buri Karimov.

The meeting, which was held in the Iranian capital of Tehran, was organized by the International Department of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA). During the meeting, the two sides explored avenues for further cooperation on transportation, road construction, and facilitation of transit routes between Iran and the CIS countries. They also called for reducing the entry fees of cooperating countries, further scientific interactions and the exchange of students in the area of transportation, and the cancelation of visa requirements.

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Pasargad Oil Company Sets New Record



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Pasargad Oil Company (POC) says the production of the company in last Iranian calendar month of Tir exceeded 139,000 tons which has been unprecedented in recent three years.

Announcing this achievement, Mr. Masoud Esfandiar said that achieving such promising record in production in Pasargad Oil Company has happened due the empathy and endeavors of all staff of the company in its plants which can stabilize pick-up of production in the upcoming months.

He went on to say that in line with materializing the Supreme Leader's demands and considering the emphasis of shareholders, the company produced over 139,000 tons of bitumen last month.

Esfandiar added that it is worth noting that since July 2019 when the company set production record of 168,000 tons, the company has been unable to repeat that record but the statistics show that this July the production has increased unprecedentedly.

He noted that according to the report, collective production of the company has been over 335,000 tons which shows considerable growth comparing to the same period last year.

Pasargad Oil Company due to attaining advanced technology and knowhow, skillful, expert and committed staff with 6 plants and 2 export terminals is the biggest bitumen producer and exporter of Iran and it exports its products to several countries worldwide.

North Korea Lifts Mask Mandate After Covid Victory

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea has lifted a mask mandate and eased other virus restrictions, state media said Saturday, days after leader Kim Jong Un declared “victory” over Covid-19.

The announcement comes after Pyongyang earlier this week blamed Seoul for causing the Covid-19 outbreak in the North and threatened to “wipe out” the South Korean authorities, if necessary.

Virus restrictions were eased as “the public health crisis created in the country was completely defused and its whole territory was turned into a clean one free from the malignant virus in the shortest period,” Pyongyang’s official Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.



Colombia to Restart Peace Talks With ELN Rebels

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Colombia’s government gave the green light to resume peace talks with the country’s largest remaining rebel force, a key electoral promise that brought leftist President Gustavo Petro to power earlier this week.

Colombian government officials on Friday met with members of the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Havana, where they have been based since 2018, with Bogota saying it officially recognizes the “legitimacy of dialogue... in the search for peace.”

“Both parties agree on the need to restart a dialogue process with facts that show Colombian society and the world that this will be real,” High Commissioner for Peace Danilo Rueda said.



FBI Recovered Top Secret Documents From Trump’s Home



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The FBI recovered documents that were labeled “top secret” from former President Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, according to court papers released after a federal judge unsealed the warrant that authorized the unprecedented search this week.

A property receipt unsealed by the court on Friday shows FBI agents took 11 sets of classified records from the estate during a search on Monday. The property receipt is a document prepared by federal agents to specify what was taken during a search.

The FBI search on Trump’s residence was partly based on suspicions of violations of the US Espionage Act related to the illegal retention of sensitive defense documents, the warrant showed.

The seized records include some that were marked as classified and some top secret. The court records did not provide specific details about the documents or what information they might contain.

“Top secret” is the highest level of classification of U.S. government documents. US law prohibits making public or mishandling classified documents.

Scott Lucas, professor of American studies at the University of Birmingham, said Trump is vulnerable to prosecution under the Espionage Act if it transpires that he took those documents – whether he did it by mistake or intentionally.

“One of the provisions of the Espionage Act is that no one should take classified material for their own private possession, especially if they have no permission from government agencies,” Lucas told Al Jazeera from Birmingham, UK.

“What the FBI found is the set of documents are not only marked “top secret”, they are marked “secured compartments – which means you can only look at those documents in a highly secured government facility”.

On Friday, Trump claimed that the documents seized by agents at his Florida club were “all declassified”, and argued that he would have turned over the documents to the Department of Justice if asked.

“Number one, it was all declassified. Number two, they didn’t need to ‘seize’ anything. They could have had it anytime they wanted without playing politics and breaking into Mar-a-Lago,” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

While incumbent presidents have the power to declassify information, that authority lapses as soon as they leave office and it was not clear if the documents in question have ever been declassified.

Trump also kept possession of the documents despite multiple requests from agencies, including the National Archives, to turn over presidential records in accordance with federal law.

Opposition Leader Odinga Ahead in Kenya’s Presidential Race



NAIROBI (Dispatches) - Veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga led Kenya’s presidential race, official election results showed, pushing Deputy President William Ruto into second place.

With just over 26% of votes counted, Odinga had 54% and Ruto had 45%, according to results provided by the Kenyan election commission and displayed on a large screen at a national tallying center in the capital, Nairobi.

East Africa’s wealthiest nation and most vibrant democracy held presidential, parliamentary and local elections on Tuesday.

Ruto and Odinga are in a tight race to succeed President Uhuru Kenyatta, who has reached his two-term limit. Kenyatta fell out with Ruto after the last election and has endorsed Odinga.

Official vote tallying has been proceeding slowly, fueling public anxiety. read more

Moscow Warns of End to Russia-U.S. Relations If Assets Seized

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Any possible seizure of Russian assets by the United States will completely destroy Moscow’s bilateral relations with Washington, TASS quoted the head of the North American Department at the Russian foreign ministry as saying.

Russia’s relations with the West have deteriorated sharply since Moscow sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, calling it a “special military operation”. The West responded with unprecedented economic, financial and diplomatic sanctions, including freezing around half of Russia’s gold and foreign exchange reserves that stood near \$640 billion before Feb. 24.

Top Western officials, including European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, have suggested seizing the frozen reserves to help fund the future reconstruction of Ukraine.

“We warn the Americans of the detrimental consequences of such actions that will permanently damage bilateral relations, which is neither in their nor in our interests,” Alexander Darchiev told TASS in an interview.

It was not immediately clear which assets he was referring to.

The United States and its European allies have also frozen \$30 billion of assets held by wealthy individuals with ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, including yachts, helicopters, real estate and art, according to the Biden administration.

The U.S. Department of Justice was seeking broader authority from Congress to seize Russian oligarchs’ assets as a means to pressure Moscow over its actions in Ukraine, a prosecutor said in July.

Darchiev also said that Russia warned the United States that diplomatic ties would be badly damaged and could even be broken if Russia is declared a state sponsor of terrorism. Speaking about the situation in Ukraine, Darchiev said that the U.S. influence on Kyiv had increased to the degree that “Americans are increasingly becoming more and more a direct party in the conflict”.

U.S. to Boost Taiwan Trade, Conduct Air, Sea Transits

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States will boost trade with Taiwan in response to China’s “provocative” behavior, the White House said, as it insisted on the right of air and sea passage through the tense strait.

A new trade plan will be unveiled within days, while U.S. forces will transit the Taiwan Strait in the next few weeks, said Kurt Campbell, White House coordinator for Asia-Pacific issues and an adviser to President Joe Biden.

The statement came after Beijing raged at last week’s trip by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, launching its largest-ever military drills around the self-ruled island.

Taiwan has accused China of using the visit by Pelosi, the highest-ranking elected American official to visit in decades, as an excuse to kickstart drills that Taipei called a rehearsal for invasion.

China views Taiwan as its own territory to be seized one day, by force if necessary.

Campbell said Pelosi’s visit was “consistent” with Washington’s existing policy and that China had “overreacted.”

Beijing used the pretext to “launch an intensified pressure campaign against Taiwan to try to change the status quo, jeopardizing peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the broader region,” he said.

“China has overreacted and its actions continue to be provocative, destabilizing and unprecedented.”

In response to China’s drills, the United States is reasserting its involvement in the area, while reiterating its policy of “strategic ambiguity” -- diplomatically recognizing China while simultaneously supporting Taiwan’s self-rule.

Campbell said the administration would continue to “deepen our ties with Taiwan, including through continuing to advance our economic and trade relationship.”

“For example, we’re developing an ambitious roadmap for trade negotiations which we intend to announce in the coming days,” he said.

Campbell said that the United States would also reassert its right to use international air and sea space between Taiwan and China.

U.S. forces “will continue to fly, sail and operate where international law allows, consistent with our long-standing commitment to freedom of navigation.”

“That includes conducting standard air and maritime transits through the Taiwan Strait in the next few weeks,” he told reporters.

Campbell did not confirm what kind of deployment would be made to support the maneuvers, saying he had no “comments about either the nature of our crossings or the timings across the Taiwan Strait.”

Taiwan’s foreign ministry thanked Washington for its “firm support” in a statement on Saturday that pointed to Washington’s “concrete action to maintain security in the Taiwan Strait and peace in the region”.

Criticizing China’s decision to halt cooperation with Washington on issues including the fight against climate change, Campbell said “we have and will continue to keep lines of communication open with Beijing.”

The official noted that Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping have asked staff to arrange an in-person summit, but he declined to comment on reports that this could take place during the G20 group meeting in Bali this November.

“We don’t have anything further in terms of details on time or location,” he said.



Taliban Fighters Violently Disperse Women Rallying for Freedom



KABUL (Dispatches) - Taliban fighters beat women protesters and fired into the air as they violently dispersed a rare rally in the Afghan capital, days ahead of the first anniversary of the hardline Islamists’ return to power.

Since seizing control on August 15 last year, the Taliban have rolled back the marginal gains made by women during two decades of US intervention in Afghanistan.

About 40 women -- chanting “bread, work and freedom” -- marched in front of the education ministry building in Kabul, before the fighters dispersed them by firing their guns into the air, an AFP correspondent reported.

Some women protesters who took refuge in nearby shops were chased and beaten by Taliban fighters with their rifle butts.

The demonstrators carried a banner which read “August 15 is a black day” as they demanded rights to work and political participation.

“Justice, justice. We’re fed up with ignorance,” they chanted, many not wearing face veils.

“Unfortunately, the Taliban from the intelligence service came and fired in the air,” said Zholia Parsi, one of the organisers of the march. “They dispersed the girls, tore our banners and confiscated the mobile phones of many girls.”

Some journalists covering the protest -- the first women’s rally in months -- were also beaten by the Taliban fighters, an AFP correspondent saw.

After seizing power last year, the Taliban promised a softer version of the harsh Islamist rule that characterized their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001.

But many restrictions have already been imposed, especially on women, to comply with the movement’s austere vision of Islam.

Tens of thousands of girls have been shut out of secondary schools, while women have been barred from returning to many government jobs.

Women have also been banned from travelling alone on long trips and can only visit public gardens and parks in the capital on days separate from men.

In May, the country’s supreme leader and chief of the Taliban, Hibatullah Akhundzada, ordered women to fully cover themselves in public, including their faces -- ideally with an all-encompassing burqa.

Winter Diesel Shock Looms as Tanks Dry Up

LONDON (Dispatches) - Europe is heading into winter with seasonally low levels of diesel in storage tanks, with major implications for the continent's industries and drivers in the run-up to EU sanctions on Russian crude oil and refined product supplies.

Diesel, along with other distillate fuels such as heating oil and gasoil, are the lifeblood of industry with uses ranging from powering factories to heating homes, in addition to being used as a motor fuel.

When Russia, which supplies Europe with about 60% of its import requirement, invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, the diesel market went into shock as it priced in a possible cutoff of those supplies.

The six-month spread in European diesel futures went into a record backwardation of nearly \$600 a ton.

In a backwardated market, current prices trade at a premium to prices for future deliveries, which makes it uneconomical for traders to put diesel into storage and book a profit.

The result has been that European distillate stocks held by refiners are trending much lower than their historical averages.

Stocks of diesel and gasoil in commercial sites in the Amsterdam-Rotterdam-Antwerp (ARA) hub are also well below their historical average, data from Dutch consultancy Insights Global shows.

The spread currently stands at about \$100 a ton, still well above levels for this time of year.

Compounding the situation further, extremely hot and dry weather in Europe has led to unseasonably low water levels on the Rhine river, a key waterway for moving barges carrying fuel from the massive oil refineries and tank farms in ARA to Germany, France and Switzerland.

Water levels at the gauge point of Kaub in Germany currently stand at 42 cm, and Germany's electronic waterway information service for inland shipping, or ELWIS, forecasts levels to drop further to 34 cm in the coming days.

According to consultants FGE Energy, 240,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil products traversed the Rhine to be unloaded in Germany in 2021, more than 10% of the country's oil demand.

At current levels, barge owners are opting to load their vessels at about a quarter or less of their 2,000-3,000 ton capacity to avoid grounding into the riverbed.

This has created major bottlenecks along the route and has raised barge freight rates in some areas to record highs.

While oil products also move through pipeline and by rail into Germany, those are already operating at full capacity, FGE says. Trucking is an option, but high fuel costs make this option uneconomical, they added.

The market is already tight due to refinery outages in Austria, which along with Germany and Switzerland will be looking to build heating oil stocks ahead of winter.

Soaring natural gas prices which are encouraging a switch to oil products for power generation could also tighten the market further, FGE said.

The International Energy Agency on Thursday raised its forecast for oil demand growth for this year by 380,000 bpd to 2.1 million bpd citing the gas-to-oil switch.

The European Union will stop buying all seaborne Russian crude oil from early December and will ban all Russian refined products two months later.

Europe continues to rely heavily on Russia to satisfy its diesel demand, with 60% of Europe's seaborne diesel imports originating from the country in July, according to data from Energy analytics firm Vortexa.

And with no evidence that companies are stockbuilding ahead of sanctions, traders expect Europe to be in for a winter shock.



Five Chinese State-Owned Companies To Delist From NYSE

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - Five Chinese state-owned companies, including oil giant Sinopec and China Life Insurance, said they would delist from the New York Stock Exchange, amid economic and diplomatic tensions with the United States.

The companies, which also include Aluminium Corporation of China (Chalco), PetroChina and a separate Sinopec entity, Sinopec Shanghai Petrochemical Co, each said they would apply to delist their American Depository Shares this month.

The five, which in May were flagged by the U.S. securities regulator as failing to meet its auditing standards, will keep their listings in Hong Kong and mainland Chinese markets.

Beijing and Washington are in talks to resolve a long-running audit dispute which could potentially result in Chinese companies being banned from U.S. exchanges if they do not comply with U.S. rules.

Washington has long demanded complete access to the books of U.S.-listed Chinese companies, but Beijing bars foreign inspection of audit documents from local accounting firms, citing national security concerns.

There was no mention of the auditing dispute in separate statements by the Chinese companies outlining their moves, which come amid heightened tensions after last week's visit to Taiwan by U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"These companies have strictly complied with the rules and regulatory requirements of the U.S. capital market since their listing in the U.S. and made the delisting choice for their own business considerations," the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) said in a statement.

The agency added that it would keep "communication open with relevant overseas regulatory agencies."

The oversight row, which has been simmering for more than a decade, came to a head in December when the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) finalized rules to potentially prohibit trading in Chinese companies under the Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act. It said 273 companies were at risk.

Some of China's largest companies including Alibaba Group Holdings, JD.com Inc (9618.HK), and Baidu Inc are among them. Alibaba said last week it would convert its Hong Kong secondary listing into a dual primary listing which analysts said could ease the way for the Chinese e-commerce giant to switch primary listing venues in the future.

In trading on Friday, U.S.-listed shares of China Life Insurance and oil giant Sinopec fell 3.06% and 3.26% respectively. Aluminium Corporation of China dropped 3.14%, while PetroChina shed 2.85%. Sinopec Shanghai Petrochemical Co shed 3.54%.

A spokesperson for NYSE declined to comment. A spokesperson for the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, the audit watchdog overseen by the SEC, did not immediately provide comment.

Market-watchers were split over what the delistings might mean for the audit deal, with some saying it was a bad sign.

"China is sending a message that its patience is wearing thin in the audit talks," said Kai Zhan, senior counsel at Chinese law firm Yuanda, who specializes in U.S. capital markets.

The companies said their U.S. traded share volume was small compared with those on their other major listing venues.

Still, volume for the U.S.-listed shares for the five companies on Friday was at least three times their 10-day average.

PetroChina said it had never raised follow-on capital from its U.S. listing and its Hong Kong and Shanghai bases "can satisfy the company's fundraising requirements."



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Malaysia Records 8.9% Q2 GDP Growth

KUALALUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 8.9 per cent in the second quarter of 2022 compared to the previous quarter, Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Mohd Uzir Mahidi announced.

According to Uzir, the GDP increased from 5.0 per cent in the last quarter, due to improved domestic demand and labour conditions, in addition to continued resilience to external demands, as the country transitions towards endemicity.

Unemployment claims had also fallen significantly, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) governor Tan Sri Nor Shamsiah Mohd Yunus said in the joint press conference at Sasana Kijang here.

However, Shamsiah said that improvements in some segments continued to lag behind others, and that 20 per cent of the economy still remains below pre-pandemic levels, pointing to the construction sector as an example, due to labour shortage and higher input prices.



Russia Could Buy Yuan, Rupees, Turkish Lira for Rainy Day Fund

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia is considering buying the currencies of "friendly" countries such as China, India and Turkey to hold in its National Wealth Fund (NWF), having lost the ability to buy dollars or euros due to sanctions, the central bank said.

The bank said it was sticking to the policy of a free-floating rouble exchange rate but highlighted that it was important to reinstate a budget rule which diverts excess oil revenues into the country's rainy day fund.

In a report on its monetary policy for 2023-2025, the central bank said various options on how to return to the fiscal rule and replenish the NWF are now being discussed, taking into account the Western sanctions against Russia over its actions in Ukraine.

"The Russian Ministry of Finance is working on the possibility of implementing an operational mechanism of the budget rule mechanism for the replenishment/spending of the NWF in currencies of friendly countries (yuan, rupees, Turkish lira and others)," the central bank said.

Experts have voiced concerns about insufficient liquidity in such currencies and about the possible risks. Inflation in Turkey, for example, jumped to nearly 80% in June, a 24-year high.

Alexei Zabotkin, the central bank first deputy governor who presented the monetary policy report on Friday, said the parameters of the new budget rule were still under consideration. He pointed out that liquidity in yuan-rouble trading has approached the levels of the euro-rouble currency pair on the Moscow Exchange.

In the first half of 2022, average daily trade turnover for the yuan rose more than 12-fold, according to the exchange.

Under the budget rule, Russia previously bought dollars and euros for the NWF, but not the other currencies. It stopped daily purchases of forex for the fund in early 2022 amid increased volatility in the rouble.

The NWF is managed by the finance ministry but is part of the central bank's international reserves, which also include yuan. These totalled around \$640 billion as of February, of which nearly half was frozen under Western sanctions.

The Russian economy will return to growth in 2024 after two years of contraction, according to the central bank.

"Economic contraction in Russia will bottom out in the first half of 2023," Zabotkin said.

Inflation will slow to the 4% target in 2024, allowing the central bank to bring the key rate down to the 5%-6% range in 2025, the bank said, compared with the current 8%.

"Further developments in the Russian economy are characterized by substantial uncertainty... The main challenge in the coming years is to create the conditions for a successful transformation of the economy," the bank said.

The key interest rate, the main instrument of central bank monetary policy, will average 6.5%-8.5% next year and will gradually decline to 6%-7% in 2024 and 5%-6% in 2025, the bank forecasts in its base case scenario.

The central bank also said it saw no strong reason to keep capital controls in place once the risks to the country's financial stability subside.

Russia introduced capital controls after Feb. 24, when it began what it calls a special military operation in Ukraine. The controls were aimed at limiting the risks to financial stability, including by imposing a limit on withdrawals of foreign currency funds from bank accounts.

UK Economy Closes in on Recession

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's economy shrank in the second quarter, official data showed Friday, as the country heads towards recession under a new prime minister.

UK gross domestic product dropped 0.1 per cent in the April-June period after a rise of 0.8 per cent in the first quarter, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

The Bank of England (BoE) expects the economy to enter a year-long recession by the end 2022 as Britons endure a cost-of-living crisis with inflation at its highest level in decades.

"With May's growth revised down a little and June showing a notable fall, overall the economy shrank slightly in the second quarter," said ONS director of economic statistics Darren Morgan.

"Health was the biggest reason the economy contracted as both the (Covid) test and trace and vaccine programmes were wound down, while many retailers also had a tough quarter," Morgan said this was "partially offset by growth in hotels, bars, hairdressers and outdoor events across the quarter, partly as a result of people celebrating the Platinum Jubilee" that marked Queen Elizabeth II's 70 years on the throne.

The ONS added that the UK economy slumped 0.6 per cent in June.

Following Friday's data, finance minister Nadhim Zahawi said he was "determined to work with the Bank of England to get inflation under control and grow the economy".

But Prime Minister Boris Johnson will not make "major fiscal interventions" before leaving office next month, his spokesman said on Monday amid calls for immediate government action to tackle Britain's cost-of-living crisis.

India's July Inflation Eases to 6.71% as Some Commodity Prices Fall

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's consumer inflation dipped to 6.71% in July, easing for the third month in a row, helped by a slower increase in food and fuel prices and adding to expectations that the central bank may rein in the pace of its policy rate hikes next month.

The year-on-year figure, published on Friday by the National Statistics Office, was marginally lower than the 6.78% forecast by economists in a Reuters poll. But it remained above the central bank's 2-6% tolerance band for a seventh month in a row.

After months of eye-watering inflation readings across much of the world, policymakers are wondering if they may

have seen the peak of price pressures given recent evidence of moderation in Japan, China and the United States.

However, few are willing to make definitive calls with the Ukraine war and pandemic continuing to tie up supply lines.

Economists said they expect the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to raise its policy rate by at least 25 basis points next month as inflation was likely to remain above its tolerance band through this calendar year.

The MPC will meet from Sept. 28-30.

The decline in global commodity prices and return of foreign investors to the stock markets could allow greater policy leeway to the MPC to undertake less aggressive hike in interest rates, said Garima Kapoor, economist at Elara Capital.

"We expect MPC to hike policy repo rate by another 25 to 35 bps before they pause to assess the impact of 140 bps hike," she said.

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee has lifted the key repo rate (INREPO=ECI) by 140 basis points since May, including by 50 bps this month, while the government imposed restrictions on export of crops including wheat and sugar while cutting fuel taxes.

Government officials expect a fall in prices of food items like edible oil, vegetables and pulses, helped by good rainfall and recent restrictions on foodgrain exports.

Food inflation, which accounts for nearly half the CPI basket, was 6.75% in July, also easing for the third month in a row. Prices of edible oil and some metals fell.

"Inflationary pressures have eased," a government source said on Thursday, adding that the government and central bank would continue to take steps to bring retail inflation below 6%.

Core inflation, excluding volatile food and energy prices, was estimated at 5.79-5.80% in July, lower than 5.96-6.2% estimates in June, said two economists, after the data release.

India does not release core inflation data.

U.S. Inflation Outlook Brightens as Import Prices Drop

LONDON (Dispatches) - U.S. import prices fell for the first time in seven months in July, helped by a strong dollar and lower fuel and nonfuel costs, while consumers' one-year inflation outlook ebbed in August, the latest signs that price pressures may have peaked.

Import prices, which exclude tariffs, fell 1.4% last month after rising 0.3% in June, the Labor Department said on Friday.

That was the largest monthly drop since April 2020 and exceeded the 1.0% decline expected by economists in a Reuters poll. In the 12 months through July, import prices gained 8.8% after a 10.7% rise in June, marking the annual rate's fourth straight monthly decline.

The report followed other tentative indications earlier this week that inflation was finally coming off the boil. U.S. consumer prices were unchanged in July due to a sharp drop in the cost of gasoline, after advancing 1.3% in June, although underlying price pressures remained elevated. Producer prices also declined last month on the back of lower energy costs.

"Declining import prices and producer prices support the ... thesis that the economy is past headline peak inflation," said Jeffrey Roach, chief economist at LPL Financial.

The Federal Reserve is mulling whether to raise its benchmark overnight lending rate by 50 or 75 basis points at its next policy meeting on Sept. 20-21, as the U.S. central bank battles to cool demand across the economy and bring inflation back down to its 2% goal. The Fed has raised its policy rate by 225 basis points since March.

Richmond Fed President Thomas Barkin reiterated following Friday's data that he and his fellow policymakers will not let up on raising rates until they see long-lasting evidence that price pressures are firmly on a downward path.

"I'd like to see a period of sustained inflation under control, and until we do that I think we are just going to have to move rates into restrictive territory," Barkin told CNBC.

Imported fuel prices dropped 7.5% last month after surging 6.2% in June. Petroleum prices declined 6.8%, while the cost of imported food fell 0.9%, the largest one-month drop since November 2020 and third straight monthly decline.

Excluding fuel and food, import prices dropped 0.5%. These so-called core import prices decreased 0.6% in June. They rose 3.8% on a year-on-year basis in July. The strength of the U.S. dollar is helping keep a lid on core import prices.

The dollar has gained around 10% against the currencies of the United States' main trade partners since the beginning of the year. The report also showed export prices fell 3.3% in July after accelerating 0.7% in June. Prices for agricultural exports declined 3.0%, with the fall led by lower prices for soybeans, wheat and cotton.

Turkish Central Bank To Keep Rates at 14% Again



ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's central bank is expected to hold its policy rate unchanged at 14% for an eighth meeting next week, a Reuters poll showed on Friday, in the face of a global tightening cycle and rampant inflation at nearly 80% that shows no signs of falling.

Most economists expect the key interest rate to remain steady through year-end, reflecting no apparent U-turn in President Tayyip Erdogan's unorthodox economic policy plan.

The central bank paused an easing cycle in January after its cuts totalling 500 basis points last year sparked a currency crisis, sending inflation to 24-year highs, stoked in part by surging energy prices due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

All 14 economists who participated in the Reuters poll expected the central bank to maintain its benchmark rate in the policy-setting meeting next week.

Seven of nine economists polled expect the policy rate to remain at the same level by year-end. One expected a cut to 12% by then, while another foresaw a hike to 20%.

The central bank held rates steady at 14% at the last seven meetings, leaving real rates deeply negative even as a global tightening cycle puts more pressure on the lira.

The bank raised its year-end inflation to 60.4% last month, and saw it peaking near 90% in the autumn. That compares to a year-end forecast median of 70% in the latest Reuters poll and a level of 79.60% announced for July.

Economists say the central bank will not raise rates, with Erdogan having firmed his grasp on the bank after rehailing the bank's management over the years, including sacking three governors in as many years.

Erdogan, a self-described "enemy" of interest rates, has said his government will not raise rates and will continue to lower them.

Japan July core CPI Seen Rising 2.4%

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's core consumer price index (CPI) for July likely rose 2.4% from a year earlier, accelerating to the fastest pace in nearly eight years and topping the central bank's 2% inflation target for a fourth month, a Reuters poll showed.

"Electricity and gas prices started to re-accelerate, while price hikes are becoming more prevalent in goods such as processed foods," said Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute.

Economists estimate the nationwide core CPI, which excludes volatile fresh food costs but includes energy, was 2.4% higher last month than a year earlier. That would be the fastest increase since December 2014 and follow the 2.2% annual gain seen in June.

Excluding periods when the indicator was skewed by effects of higher sales tax, the expected core CPI rise for July would be the fastest since August 2008.

While raising its core inflation projection to 2.3% for the current fiscal year, ending next March, the Bank of Japan last month kept its ultra-easy policy unchanged to support an economy still reeling from pandemic damage.

The central bank's next interest rate review is set for Sept. 21-22.

Elsewhere in the poll, July imports were seen soaring 45.7% from a year earlier on the weak yen and a commodity rally, outgrowing a 18.2% expansion in exports, according to the median estimate of 17 economists.

Japan's July trade balance is estimated at a shortfall of 1.405 trillion yen (\$10.53 billion), marking the 12th month of a deficit.

Core machinery orders, a leading indicator of capital expenditure, were expected to have risen 1.3% month-on-month in June, following a 5.6% fall in May.



Chamran Re-Elected as Tehran City Council Chair

TEHRAN (IFP) - Members of Tehran's Islamic City Council have re-elected Mahdi Chamran as the chair of the body for one more year.

Chamran, who was elected to the council one year ago for a six-year term won 21 votes to be reinstated. Soudeh Najafi and Jafar Sharbiani also got 19 and 21 votes, respectively, and were re-elected as the secretaries of the presiding board of the council. The members also picked Parviz Sarvari as the vice chair of the council. Tehran's City Council has 21 members, who are elected through popular vote.



Kazakhstan to Start Oil Sales Via Azeri Pipeline to Bypass Russia

LONDON (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan is expected to sell some of its crude oil through Azerbaijan's biggest oil pipeline from September, as the nation seeks alternatives to a route Russia threatened to shut, three sources familiar with the matter said.

Kazakh oil exports account for more than 1% of world supplies, or roughly 1.4 million barrels per day (bpd).

For 20 years, they have been shipped through the CPC pipeline to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk, which provides access to the global market.

In July a Russian court threatened to shut the CPC, prompting the Kazakh government and major foreign producers to set up contracts for other outlets as a precaution.

None of the alternatives are as practical as the CPC pipeline, raising the risk of further volatility on energy markets.

Shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in February, international crude prices hit 14-year-highs and prices have stayed high, sustaining an average above \$100 a barrel in July.

A source with direct knowledge of the matter said Kazakhstan's state oil firm Kazmunaigaz (KMG) was in advanced discussions with the trading arm of Azerbaijan's state firm SOCAR to allow 1.5 million tonnes per year of Kazakh crude to be sold through the Azeri pipeline that delivers oil to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.

At just over 30,000 bpd, the volume is a trickle compared to the usual 1.3-1.4 million bpd that flows through the CPC pipeline.

The final contract is due to be signed at the end of August with flows through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline starting up a month later, the source said.

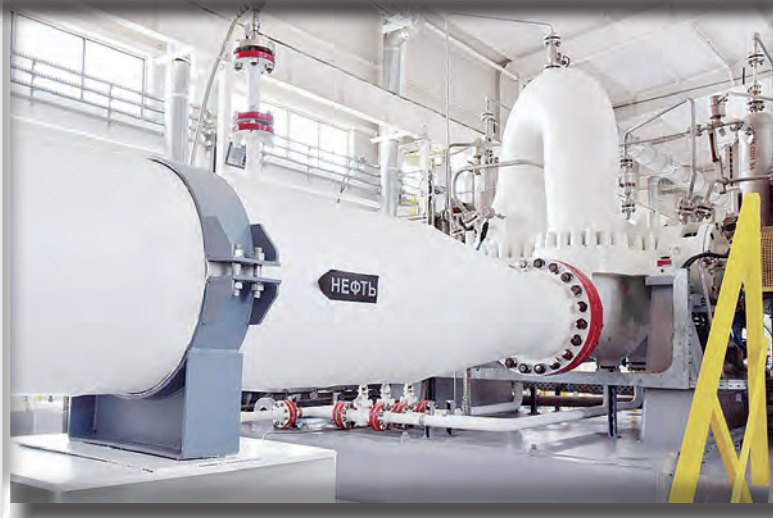
Another 3.5 million tonnes per year of Kazakh crude could start flowing in 2023 through another Azeri pipeline to Georgia's Black Sea port of Supsa, two sources said.

Combined with BTC flows, the volume would equate to just over 100,000 bpd, or 8% of the CPC flows. KMG declined to comment and SOCAR declined to comment on the specific deal.

Relying on Azerbaijan would allow Kazakhstan to side-step Russian territory. Last month, BP Azerbaijan said it would redirect flows away from the Baku-Supsa pipeline to the larger BTC pipe.

However, the new BTC route means Kazakhstan will have to rely on a fleet of small tankers to take its oil across the Caspian Sea to Baku from its port at Aktau that has limited spare capacity, the sources said.

Tengizchevroil (TCO), a joint venture led by oil major Chevron, has its own



marketing arm and is separately negotiating its own routes by pipeline and rail, two of the sources said.

The BTC pipeline could be an option for TCO too, but a source said if agreed, it could take up to six months for flows to start. TCO declined to comment.

Quality is another factor impeding a quick agreement. Kazakhstan's main grade CPC Blend is a light, sour crude sold at a significant discount to Azerbaijan's flagship BTC grade that is an easier-to-refine medium, sweet grade.

TCO already began re-routing a small volume of oil by rail to Georgia's port of Batumi in April when storm damage made part of the CPC terminal unusable.

Two of the sources said TCO was booking more rail volumes and they could increase in September or October.

Kazakhstan separately exports up to 1 million tons, or 250,000 bpd, of Urals via Russia's pipeline system to the Black Sea and to Baltic sea ports.

Asia Spot Prices Near Record Highs as Buyers Focus on Winter Supply



LONDON (Dispatches) - Asian spot liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices climbed to near record levels this week as Asian buyers sought to secure supply ahead of winter, narrowing the price spread with Europe where Russian gas flows remain curtailed.

The average LNG price for September delivery into north-east Asia was estimated at \$48 per million British thermal units (mmBtu), up \$3, or 6.7%, from the previous week, industry sources said.

The average price for October delivery was estimated at \$51/mmBtu, exceeding Reuters estimated record levels seen in December at slightly over \$48/mmBtu.

"Prices continue to be elevated in Asia, with Japan and Korea propping levels up with recent tenders, while there is still some apprehension about when China will come back," said Toby Copson, global head of trading and advisory at Trident LNG.

In a week when winter buying demand from Japan and South Korea came into focus for market participants, the differential between Asian and European LNG prices has widened.

On Thursday, the October derivatives for Platts Japan Korea Market (JKM) - widely used as an Asian benchmark - rose to a \$4.70/mmBtu premium to its European LNG benchmark, Platts DES Northwest Europe, according to Ciaran Roe, global director of LNG at S&P Global Commodity Insights.

"This would allow for Atlantic Basin LNG to flow to North Asia over Northwest Europe," Roe said.

In Europe, S&P Global Commodity Insights assessed LNG prices on a delivered ex-ship (DES) basis into north-west Europe at \$47.123/mmBtu on Aug. 11, a discount of \$15.65/mmBtu to September TTF prices.

"Platts NWE forward curve was assessed throughout winter months at a nearly \$13/mmBtu discount to the equivalent TTF contract month, meaning that the market perception currently is that heavy discounts will remain for the coming months," Roe added.

More gas is being used for power generation in Europe than expected due to difficulties securing alternative energy sources, posing additional challenges for already tight gas markets, according to Hans van Cleef, senior energy economist at ABN AMRO.

Wind power output is weak, low water levels are hindering deliveries of coal to power plants and nuclear plants are running at lower capacity due to a heatwave.

Sarajevo Film Festival Provides Platform for Ukrainian Filmmakers

SARAJEVO (Dispatches) - The Sarajevo Film Festival, the largest film industry showcase in the region, is for the first time allowing Ukrainian movies in its competition and providing support to Ukrainian filmmakers.

The festival, which has grown to cover the sector from Vienna to Istanbul, was founded towards the end of the Bosnian war in 1995 as an act of defiance by enthusiasts resisting a 43-month siege of the capital by Bosnian Serb forces.

"At the onset of the war in Ukraine it has become clear that something must be done in solidarity with colleagues from film industry in Ukraine," Jovan Marjanovic, the festival director, told Reuters.

The festival, which started on Friday, decided to open its competition program for work from Ukraine and provided artist-in residence status to Ukrainian filmmakers to enable them to work and further develop their films.

It also offered jobs to Ukrainian professionals who have become refugees but previously worked at film festivals in Kyiv and Odessa.

Script writers and filmmakers Marysia Nikitiuk and Maria Stoyanova arrived in Sarajevo several months ago to develop their projects and present them at the industry platform Cinelink, which brings together writers and producers



alongside the film screenings.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine halted Stoyanova's work on her debut feature as the funding was frozen, the editing director joined the army and the producers got involved in volunteering and filming the war.

"The residency and participation in the workshop became significant support for me as an artist," Stoyanova

told Reuters. "This opportunity to work and think helps to heal mental wounds."

Nikitiuk hopes to find partners and co-producers for her script dealing with people with post-traumatic stress disorder, inspired by displaced women and children she encountered in a shelter in an Ukrainian village where she had hidden at the start of the war.

On Friday, the festival honored Ukrainian filmmaker Sergei Loznitsa with the Heart of Sarajevo Award.

Swedish director Ruben Ostlund will also be honored. His film "Triangle of Sadness", which won this year's Palme D'Or for Best Picture at Cannes, will open the event.

The festival, which will show 235 films from 62 countries, 51 of them in competition, will also celebrate Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen and U.S. Oscar-nominated actor and director Jesse Eisenberg.

Switch From Gas Boosts Oil Demand

LONDON (Dispatches) - Sweltering summer temperatures and soaring gas prices have boosted the use of oil in power generation, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said, increasing demand but masking weakness in economies beset by recession fears.

The Paris-based agency described the rise as a quirk of an energy market rattled by supply jitters wrought by sanctions on Russia's oil and decades-high inflation which is already starting to sap fuel use.

"Natural gas and electricity prices have soared to new records, incentivising gas-to-oil switching in some countries," the agency said in its monthly oil report in which it raised its outlook for 2022 demand by 380,000 barrels per day to 2.1 million barrels per day (bpd).

"These extraordinary gains, overwhelmingly concentrated in the Middle East and Europe, mask relative weakness in other sectors," the IEA warned.

It cited reduced use of fuels for road transport in developed countries and slowing growth by the year's end "aligning with more negative economic sentiment to suggest a considerable 2H22 contraction".

A rebound of air traffic, the IEA said, will provide one of the few bright spots for demand going forward.

Much of the demand growth for 2022 is set to have been concentrated earlier in the year, with a slowdown in growth from 5.1 million bpd at the start of the year to less than 100,000 bpd in the fourth quarter.

Domestic Firms to...

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking on national TV, Owji noted that recent studies show that over \$160 billion of investment is required to complete the country's oil industry development projects over the next eight years.

"Planning has been done to provide this figure, and considering the current progress [in our plans] there will be no problem in this regard," he said. The official noted that the current government has so far attracted over \$80 billion for the country's oil and gas projects and an agreement worth \$40 billion has also been signed with Russia's Gazprom.

Our priority is developing joint oil and gas fields, he said, adding: "In the downstream sector, we reached an agreement with Gazprom to build gas transmission and export pipelines to countries such as Oman and Pakistan."

U.S. Benefits From War...

FROM PAGE 1

This is just a simple sign for the U.S. support of prolongation of war in Ukraine and word-mongering habit of the Americans which benefit from it and earns the country billions of dollars or bring puppet governments to the power for future milking of them.



The result of a new research is another proof that the U.S. is behind most wars and clashes in most part of the world. The new research study has revealed that more than a quarter of the worldwide U.S. military offensives in the American history have taken place in the West Asia region and Africa.

The survey, titled Introducing the Military Intervention Project: A New Dataset on U.S. Military Interventions, said the US had undertaken almost 400 military interventions since its founding in 1776 until 2019, with more than a quarter occurring in the post-Cold War period.

Stressing that U.S. military interventions "increasingly" targeted the Middle East and Africa, the study also found that the post-9/11 era had resulted in "higher hostility levels," with U.S. military adventures becoming "overwhelmingly commonplace."

"The cumulative impact of what we discovered from our data collection effort was indeed surprising," said Sidita Kushi, an assistant professor at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts, and one of the study's authors said in an interview with the Middle East Eye.

"We hadn't expected both the quantity and quality of US military interventions to be as large as revealed in the data."

Underlining the U.S. "decades-long hyper-interventionist stance," Kushi said America's global military footprints "might be surprising to Americans. But, they are hardly surprising to the rest of the world."

The report pointed to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, saying the U.S. emerged as the dominant military power across the world after the incident, however, it did not result in a decrease in Washington's military interventions.

"The post-Cold War era has produced fewer great power conflicts and instances in which to defend vital U.S. interests, yet U.S. military interventions continue at high rates and higher hostilities," the report said. "This militaristic pattern persists during a time of relative peace, one of arguably fewer direct threats to the US homeland and security."

The study said the end of the Cold War unchained U.S. military global ambitions, adding that even as U.S. rivals reduced their military intervention, Washington "began to escalate its hostilities," resulting in a "widening gap between U.S. actions relative to its opponents."

The study cited the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute as saying that the cost of the U.S. military stands at more than \$800bn annually, accounting for almost 40 percent of global military spending.

There is a proverb that it says cats do not catch the mice for God's sake and the U.S. does not spend billions of dollars for the sake of supporting people in Europe, Asia, Africa or any part of the world and it will definitely benefit of this investment through conflicts and wars.

So it is natural the U.S. to support Ukraine war and to flood its weapons into this country in order that Ukraine stands against one of the biggest rivals of the U.S.; therefore one cannot expect the Russia-Ukraine war to end soon and it will continue till the moment the U.S. realizes that its support is in vain and also Ukrainians realize that they have turned into a puppet of the West and come to their senses and stop the war

Since the West and U.S. supports the war in Ukraine, we cannot expect the UN to take any serious step to stop this war because the UN has usually shown that it usually follows the West's path or even when it decides to take action, veto power thwarts this action.

Iran Raises...

FROM PAGE 1

Considering the increase in exports, NIOC has also been ramping up production so that according to Oil Minister Javad Owji, the country's oil production has increased almost to the pre-sanctions level.

Back in April, Owji had said that the country's crude oil production reached the pre-sanction levels.

Putting the current capacity of Iran's oil production at more than 3.8 million barrels per day (bpd), the minister said, "We hope that through the efforts of all those active in this sector, we will reach higher figures in the exports of crude oil, gas condensate, oil products, and petrochemicals."

"By taking effective measures in onshore and offshore oil fields, drilling new wells, repairing wells, rebuilding and modernizing facilities, and oil collection centers, the current oil production capacity has reached before the sanctions, and we have no problem in performance and this amount of production", Owji added.

Spaun Seizes One-Stroke PGA Memphis Lead

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - J.J. Spaun sank two late clutch putts to fire a three-under par 67 and take a one-stroke lead after the second round of the US PGA Tour's St. Jude Championship. The 31-year-old American sank a 13-foot birdie putt on his penultimate hole then closed with a seven-foot par putt to stand on 11-under 129 at TPC Southwind in Memphis, Tennessee. "I feel good. It's exciting," Spaun said. "Still a lot of golf left. Just going to try to keep doing what I've been doing the last two days and hopefully it will pay off."

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

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

Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

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Tola Withdraws From London Marathon

LONDON (Dispatches) - Ethiopia's men's world champion Tamirat Tola said he had pulled out of October's London Marathon due to muscle fatigue. Tola won gold in Eugene, Oregon, last month in a championship record time of two hours, five minutes and 36 seconds. "It is with great regret that I am unable to run this year's TCS London Marathon," said the 31-year-old. "Unfortunately, since the World Championships I have had problems with muscle fatigue and have not yet been able to resume training."

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SPORTS

MONDAY AUGUST 15, 2022

Hurkacz Ends Kyrgios Streak in Montreal

MONTREAL (Dispatches) - Hubert Hurkacz overcame 53 winners from Nick Kyrgios to halt the Australian's nine-match win streak with a three-set quarter-final victory at the ATP Montreal Masters.

The Polish eighth seed managed 43 winners of his own in a rapid-fire 7-6(7/4), 6-7(5/7), 6-1 triumph that put him into his fourth semi-final at the Masters level.

Hurkacz will next face Norway's fourth-seeded Casper Ruud, who crushed home hope Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-1, 6-2, in 74 minutes.

Ruud will play his third Masters semi-final this season on Saturday, having defeated Hurkacz in their previous meeting in May at Roland Garros.

At the bottom of the draw, Dan Evans completed a comeback to defeat American Tommy Paul 1-6, 6-3, 6-4, needing two match points to overcome Paul in two and a quarter hours.

But the chance of an all-British semi-final at this elite level fell away as Jack Draper lost 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 to Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta after saving a pair of match points.

The 39th-ranked Evans, who managed only 15 winners, was decisively out-hit by Paul with 40.

Not surprisingly he said reaching his second career semi-final in Masters tournament was a hard slog.

"I had to try and hang in, get a few scraps off of him," he said. "If he made errors, take advantage, he was too good in the first set.

"You start to wonder if you can get into the match, so when I got the chance I took it to him. I was fired up - we had a good battle."

Barca Register Four New Signings

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Barcelona have registered four of their newly signed players ahead of their opening game of the season at home to Rayo Vallecano, a La Liga source has told Reuters.

Midfielder Franck Kessie, defender Andreas Christensen and forwards Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha are now available to face Rayo Vallecano, though Jules Kounde still needs clearance.

Barca had to meet La Liga's salary cap to register their new signings but several "economic levers" including new investment deals released funding after the final lever was triggered.

Barcelona would have to free up so-called salary mass to register 23-year-old France defender Kounde.

La Liga restrictions also affected players who renewed deals in the close season but forward Ousmane Dembele and defensive midfielder Sergi Roberto have now also been registered.

Barcelona have been using several mechanisms to increase their revenue in order to offset losses, reduce debt and fulfil La Liga's financial fair play rules.

The club said on Friday they had sold a 24.5 per cent stake in their audiovisual studio to production company Orpheus Media for €100 million (RM456 million) to raise funds.

Barca last month signed a deal with digital fan token firm Socios.com to sell 25 per cent of their stake in Barca Studios.

New Zealand Cruise Past

Demoralized West Indies in 2nd T20

KINGSTON (Dispatches) - New Zealand pulverised a demoralised West Indies by 90 runs in the second T20 International at Sabina Park to take an unbeatable 2-0 in the three-match series.

In a one-sided encounter which magnified the rapid decline of the two-time World T20 winners over the past 12 months, the Black Caps piled up 215 for five.

They then limited the home team to just 125 for nine in reply to hand the Caribbean side a sixth defeat in their last seven matches in the format.

For Hurkacz, it was a second win in as many matches against Kyrgios, the first played on grass in June at Halle, Germany. Kyrgios, known for quick play, had several service games go by in less than one minute, with the Wimbledon finalist barely pausing between the end of one point and the start of the next.



Wimbledon runner-up Kyrgios, who won his first title in three years last week in Washington, was bothered at times by his foot, lower back and hip as he lost momentum in the third set.

"I was just running on fumes a bit towards the end," the 27-year-old Aussie said. "That's normal. "But I feel good, feel confident. I've got three or four days of rest until Cincinnati. I'm going to use that, really capitalize and just rest and recover."

The pair combined for 39 aces, with Hurkacz striking 20 of them.

"Over the last two months, Nick has been playing incredibly," Hurkacz said.

"Today was a really tough match. Battling against him, it's very challenging, but it's also fun.

"Nick is a super opponent. He can make every single shot. He doesn't really have that many weaknesses, if any. I was just trying to serve good and stay aggressive."

Hurkacz, a 2021 quarter-finalist in Canada, won his 31st match of the season.

Ruud, who struck only nine unforced errors, was pleasantly surprised at his domination of Montreal's Auger-Aliassime.

"It was one of those days where everything was in my favor," he said. "I had a troubling start when I was broken to zero.

"But I turned it around. I made him play a lot of shots. Maybe playing at home was a factor for him.

"I was lucky to be able to win and keep the crowd from not cheering too much."

Halep Rallies To Reach Canadian Open Semis

TORONTO (Dispatches) - Romania's Simona Halep fought off a late rally from Coco Gauff to secure a nervy 6-4 7-6(2) win yesterday and advance to the Canadian Open semi-finals for a fifth time.

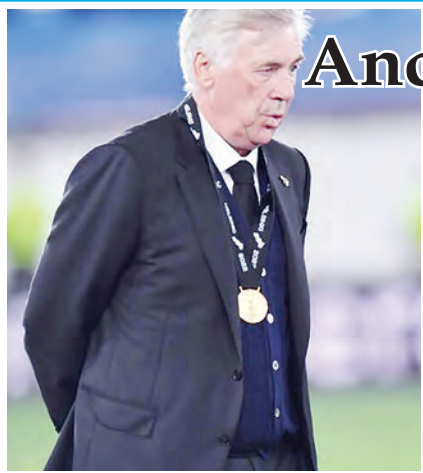
Twice champion Halep, up a set and leading 4-1 in the second, looked headed for an easy passage into the last four.

But Gauff dug in and rallied to force the second set to a tiebreak before 15th-seeded Halep finish off the 10th seed in the tiebreak to maintain her dominance over the American.

In four career meetings, including three this year, Gauff has yet to take a set off Halep, who next faces another American in seventh seed Jessica Pegula — a 6-3 6-3 winner over Kazakh Yulia Putintseva.

"I'm really pleased with the way I stayed there strong mentally," said Halep, after reaching her 29th career semi-final at a WTA 1000 event — more than any other player.

"And I fought for every point which was really important because she's doing the same thing. Mentally I'm strong even if I struggled a little bit in the second set." Halep certainly struggled in the second as she twice served for the match at 5-4 and 6-5 only to be broken each time.



Ancelotti to Quit Football After Real Madrid

MILAN (Dispatches) - Carlo Ancelotti confirmed on Saturday that he will quit football management when he eventually leaves Real Madrid, ending one of the most glorious careers of football's modern era.

Ancelotti had said in May that he would "probably" quit once he left Madrid, but he removed all doubt in an interview with Italian daily Il Messaggero.

"This time at Real will end my career, after Los Blancos I will quit," said the 63-year-old.

"Real are the very top of football. It makes sense to call it quits after my experience here."

Ancelotti became the first ever coach to win all five of Europe's top leagues when he claimed the Spanish title last season, and he capped a remarkable campaign by winning his second Champions League for the club.

That was the 14th time Madrid had crowned themselves European champions and was the latest in a string of honors the Italian has won in a long career as player and coach.

He won three Serie A titles with Roma and AC Milan in the 1980s, as well as back-to-back European Cups with Arrigo Sacchi's Milan in 1989 and 1990.

He returned to Milan as coach in 2001 and in eight years at the San Siro won the 2004 league title and two Champions Leagues.

He also led Chelsea to a league and FA Cup double in 2010, setting a Premier League record of 103 goals scored in the process.

He also won Ligue 1 with Paris Saint-Germain in 2013 and the Bundesliga with Bayern Munich four years later.

Messi Absent From List of Ballon d'Or Nominees for 2022

PARIS (Dispatches) - Seven-time Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi paid a high price for an underwhelming first season with Paris Saint-Germain when he was left off the 30-strong list for this year's coveted football award.

Lucy Bronze, who was runner-up in 2019, is one of three members of England's Euro-winning squad to be short-listed for the women's award.

Messi, who won the title last year, had been an ever-present amongst the nominations since 2006 and a regular feature in the top three since 2007 with the exception of 2018.

But Messi, 35, has missed out on the 2022 award following his switch from Barcelona to the French capital.

A change in the format has also worked against the Argentine superstar with the Ballon d'Or no longer acknowledging the best player over a calendar year.

Instead, it is based on a season's record highlighting "the individual performances" and the "decisive and impressive character" of the nominees, according to the criteria.

After leaving Barcelona in the summer of 2021, Messi was unable to stamp his genius on a PSG team desperate for a Champions League title.

The French champions suffered a last-16 exit at the hands of eventual winners Real Madrid.

In total, Messi scored only 11 goals for PSG with his relatively indifferent club form failing to impress France Football magazine, the organisers of the Ballon d'Or which will be awarded in Paris on October 17.



Serena to Face Raducanu in Cincinnati Opener

CINCINNATI (Dispatches) - Serena Williams will face a challenging first-round clash with reigning U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu when the US tennis great's farewell tour continues at Cincinnati next week.

Williams, a 23-time Grand Slam champion, revealed this week that the "countdown has begun" to her retirement, with the 40-year-old expected to bid farewell after a final major campaign at the US Open starting later this month.

Williams won her first singles match in more than a year when she defeated Spain's Nuria Parrizas Diaz in the first round at Toronto last week. That was before she revealed in an article in Vogue and on Instagram that she was "evolving away" from tennis.

In her first match after the announcement, Williams fell in straight sets to Switzerland's Tokyo Olympic gold medallist Belinda Bencic in the second round.

Williams faces another tough path in Cincinnati, where she is a two-time champion.

The winner of Williams-Raducanu will face either 20th-ranked Victoria Azarenka or 31st-ranked Kaia Kanepi of Estonia.

Azarenka, 33, is a two-time Grand Slam winner and former world number one who missed the Toronto tournament because of visa trouble.

Williams, who was 17 when she won the 1999 US Open for her first major title, has never played 19-year-old Briton Raducanu, who shot to stardom with her run to the US Open title last year as a qualifier.

