

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **143,015** with **71** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran Embassy in Kabul Announced the Visit of the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Consular to Afghanistan to Negotiate With Gov't Officials on Border Issues, Joint Border Security, and Consular Cooperation

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Iran-India Trade Grows By 53% in a Year

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - India's Ministry of Commerce said that the country's trade with Iran has increased 53 percent to 1.4 billion dollars in the first half of 2022.

The latest figures released by India's Ministry of Commerce show that the country's trade with Iran accounted for 1.373 billion dollars in the first half of 2022.

This proves a 53-percent growth compared to the same period last year when their trade was 897 million dollars.

In the first half of 2022, India exported 1.038 billion dollars of goods to Iran and imported 335 million dollars of goods, according to India's Ministry of Commerce.

Basmati rice accounted for 60 percent of Iran's imports from India, while the South Asian country mostly purchased fruits and oil products from Iran.

Iran-India trade in the first half of 2022 nearly equaled their total trade in 2021.

According to reports, India's exports to Iran in 2021 faced 42% decline and fell to \$1.284b while the figure was \$2.2b in 2020. But India's imports from Iran in 2021 saw 37% growth and reached \$297m while it was \$409 in 2020.

Iran to Launch Desalination Project At Nuclear Power Plant

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran will launch construction works for a major water desalination project at its Bushehr power plant within the upcoming weeks, according to a local official in southwest of the country.

Governor of Bushehr province Ahmad Mohammadzadeh said on Sunday that works for Iran's first nuclear-powered desalination plant will start in late August concurrent with ceremonies to mark the Administration Week in the country.

The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) will contribute to the construction of the desalination plant in Bushehr which will have a capacity of 70,000 cubic meters per day, said Mohammadzadeh.

"The nuclear power can solve the water crisis and this project has become final ... the execution phase will begin during the Administration Week and it will come on line based on the schedule," he was quoted as saying by the semi-official Fars news agency.

Iran's first and only nuclear power plant in Bushehr is capable of producing nearly 1 gigawatt per hour of electricity.

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Relative Progress in JCPOA Talks But Needs Iran Redlines to Be Met



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran says "relative progress" has been made in the latest round of Vienna talks and that an agreement can be reached if Tehran's red lines are met.

Speaking at a news conference on Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani reiterated Tehran's long-standing position that it aims to reach a "sustainable and good agreement to remove the unjust sanctions imposed on Iran."

He reported "relative progress" in the latest round of talks between Tehran and the P4+1 group of countries on restoring the deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), saying, however, that "Iran's legitimate demands" have not yet been fully met.

Kanaani added that discussions are underway in Tehran and that "additional opinions" on the European Union's proposals would be submitted.

Four days of Vienna talks between representatives of Iran and the five remaining parties to the JCPOA to salvage the deal culminated last Monday with a modified text on the table.

While the European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell claimed a "final text" had been reached, Iran emphasized it has conveyed its "initial response and reservations" on the draft text.

Kanaani said consultations are ongoing at the highest level in Tehran, adding, "We are close to an agreement, but it is conditioned on the consideration of Iran's red lines and the ensuring of the country's main interests."

Commenting on the appointment of a new Kuwaiti ambassador to Iran after six years, Kanaani said "We are witnessing a serious development on the path towards the development of ties and cooperation between the two countries."

He noted that Kuwait's move could pave the way for further promotion of cooperation between Iran and its neighbors in the Persian Gulf.

Kuwait reduced diplomatic ties with Iran to the level of charges d'affaires in early January 2016.

Elsewhere, Kanaani also commented on some reports claiming a link between Iran and the attacker of Salman Rushdie, the author of a blasphemous anti-Islam book, saying "we categorically and officially deny this."

"No one has the right to accuse the Islamic Republic of Iran," he asserted.

The Iranian spokesman noted that Rushdie's supporters are the ones who should be blamed for the attack.

For his part, Kanaani reasoned that Rushdie exposed himself to a "popular outrage" when he insulted Islamic sanctities and crossing the red lines of over 1.5 billion Muslims as well as the followers of divine religions.

Turning to the situation in Iraq, Kanaani stressed that the issues of Iraq are important to Iran and the country observes the developments in Iraq carefully and critically.

Stressing that Iran does not intervene in Iraq's internal affairs, he cited, "In the light of positive and constructive communication with various political currents in Iraq, we are trying to help the political views of this country to come closer together."

Inviting all Iraqi political currents to respect the constitution of this country as a national charter, Kanaani said that paying attention to national interests can bring stability back to Iraq.

3 Servicemen Killed During Israel Attack on Syria

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - The Syrian military says three servicemen have been killed as the Arab country's air defenses confronted 'hostile' Israeli targets over the city of Tartus and the nearby mountain range of Qalamoun.

The military made the announcement on Sunday, saying three more servicemen had also been wounded during the attacks.

Citing its correspondent in the area, Iran's Arabic-language news network al-Alam said the Israeli missiles had targeted the southern part of Tartus, on the western coastline of Syria.

The network's reporter said three explosions had rung out across Tartus' skies, adding that ambulances and relief workers had been dispatched to the area.

A military source told SANA, "Our air defense confronted the aggression, downed some of the missiles."

Lebanese media outlets said the attack had been carried out by Israeli warplanes from the Lebanese airspace. The Israeli regime's Channel 12 confirmed that the attack had been carried out by the regime's assault aircraft.

Syria and the Israeli regime are technically at war due to the latter's 1967-to-present occupation of Syria's Golan Heights.

Israel maintains a significant military presence in the territory, which it uses as one of its launchpads for attacks against the Syrian soil.

The regime's attacks on Syria started to grow significantly in scale and frequency after 2011, when Syria found itself in the grip of rampant foreign-backed militancy and terrorism.

Peak Electricity Consumption Surpasses 69,000 MW

TEHRAN (LNA) - Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian has said the country's peak electricity consumption in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) has reached 69,278 megawatts (MW), which is 2,000 MW more than the figure for the previous year.

Speaking to the press on Monday, Mehrabian said the gap between electricity supply and demand was around 19,000 MW in the previous year, however, due to the significant surge in demand the figure is expected to reach 20,000 MW in the current year.

According to the minister, the average temperature in the country has been 38 degrees on the Celsius scale since the beginning of the year so far, which shows an increase of 1.1 degrees compared to the same period last year.

The official further noted that each degree of temperature rise would boost the country's electricity consumption by 1,500 MW and this means that with each degree of temperature rise 2,500 MW capacity of new power plants should be added to the country's power network.

"This year, despite people's savings, we have witnessed an 85 percent growth in electricity consumption," Mehrabian said.

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Iranian Carmaker Prioritizing Exports to Russia

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran Khodro, the Middle East's leading automaker, is eyeing Russia's large market which the Europeans have abandoned amid the raging Ukraine conflict.

Mehdi Khatibi, Iran Khodro's managing director, says the carmaker is prioritizing exports to Russia which has a lot to learn from the Islamic Republic about how to take the West's expanding sanctions in its stride.

"We are going to pay special attention to the Russian market, and we are also thinking of partnering with Russian investors," Khatibi was quoted as saying.

"We have held good negotiations with Moscow. The Russian market, with its capacities, will be one of our important markets," he added.

On Sunday, Iran Khodro unveiled Rira, the latest model of its crossover vehicle, at its factory west of Tehran, with Khatibi saying the manufacturer will begin exporting to Russia this year.

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Iran Navy to Have Special Missions Soon

TEHRAN (IFP) - The commander of the Iranian Navy has said the naval forces of the Army will have been assigned a special mission this year.

Admiral Shahram Irani told Fars News Agency the exact date of the mission depends on planning by the headquarters but it is definitely going to happen this year.

The commander of the Iranian Navy did not specify the nature of the mission but said he will give the details in the near future.

Admiral Irani noted that given that the Navy must have a presence in all world oceans, it plans to make a number of ships that will serve as a floating naval base.

He noted that manufacturing such ships is a must and they will hopefully be produced.

Admiral Irani said the Navy unveils new hardware on different occasions such as the 10-day Dawn that marks the victory of the Islamic Revolution and a ship that is going to be unveiled is a base ship like Makran.

Last year, a fleet of the Iranian Navy carried out a special mission for 133 days that covered 44,000 kilometers worldwide.

The Iranian navy is also engaged in anti-piracy operations in the region.

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World's Army UAV Contest Underway in Isfahan

ISFAHAN (IP) - The 2022 International Army Games in the UAV sector kicked off in Iran, hosted by the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force in Kashan city of Isfahan province, central Iran.

The Spokesman for the competitions, Brigadier General Ali Belali, said armies from Iran, Russia, Armenia, and Belarus had taken part in the games.

According to General Belali, the 2022 International Army Games is underway in 34 fields, hosted by 12 countries. The event is underway until August 28.

Gov't, Majlis the Two Arms of Governance

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi described the current agreement between the government and the parliament as an opportunity to overcome the country's long-standing problems and, emphasizing the empathy between the two executive and legislative branches, and said, "The joint responsibility of all parts of the Islamic Republic is to solve people's problems, compensated for the backwardness and moving rapidly towards progress and excellence of the country".

Speaking in the meeting of the government with the board of directors and the heads of specialized commissions of the parliament, Raisi stated that the Popular Administration took over the responsibility of running the country under special circumstances and said, "43 years after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, what is expected is that things go forward with the convergence, empathy and agreement of all elements of the governance system".

The President added, "In order to follow this path, we have the Declaration of the Second Step of the Islamic Revolution, which has very accurately outlined the current situation, the desired situation and the necessary steps to achieve a lifestyle that the Islamic Revolution deserves".

Raisi stated that the government and the parliament, as the legislators and enforcers of the country's laws, have a common responsibility to solve people's problems and create an opening in economic, cultural and social issues, and stated, "The requirements and concerns of the society must be identified very precisely in order to provide and take steps to resolve them".

The President clarified, "As the members of the parliament supported the government with their careful consideration during the review of the qualifications of the ministers, they should also support the government now as a manifestation of the will of the people in the development and progress of the country".

Saying that we are all on the same ship and the failure of each of us means the failure of the Islamic Republic system, Raisi said, "I, for my part in the government, will notify every law that is approved in the parliament for implementation without delay, and I believe that even if a law has defects or weaknesses in our opinion, it should not be delayed in its implementation, but efforts



should be made to solve its problems in the parliament itself during its implementation".

The President introduced the government and the parliament as the two arms of governance in the country and added, "It is necessary for the government and the members of the parliament to coordinate more, especially on projects that have a financial burden".

Emphasizing that today all elements of the country are obliged to create hope, the President stated, "The enemies of the Islamic Republic have used all their power to disappoint the people of the system and they do not hesitate to sabotage, lie or deceive in this regard".

Raisi continued, "Against this wave, there is the government and parliament, which say that they know the problems of the society well and are looking to solve them".

The President stated that the supervision of the parliament on the performance of the government is a good and worthy thing, and noted, "Supervision should of course be applied in a way that does not take away the courage of the managers, because if this happens, a manager will no longer be able to properly carry out their missions".

Raisi stated that the cooperation between the government and the parliament has had constructive and important results so far, and added, "The economic reforms that started in this government with the support of the parliament were among the things that were delayed for years and the previous governments and parliaments had delayed implementing them".

At the end of his speech, the President welcomed the holding of specialized meetings between the ministers and parliament commissions and said that these meetings can help the government and the parliament to understand the country's issues and lead to greater coordination between the two branches.

U.S. Led Afghanistan Towards Destruction for 20 Years

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian President's special envoy on Afghanistan affairs said that the Americans occupied Afghanistan for 29 years, and directed that country towards destruction by eradicating all its infrastructures.

Hassan Kazemi Qomi made the remarks in a special news interview of an IRIB TV channel in response to a question of the outcome of the American military forces' 20-year presence in Afghanistan for that nation.

He said that now a year passes since the American military forces' escape from Afghanistan now.

Kazemi Qomi added that this means the US espionage services are still active in Afghanistan and they continue their destructive acts under various scenarios.

"The Americans occupied that country for 20 years and led it towards destruction and extinction of its infrastructures," he said.

They resorted to mass "murder of civilians and brought to power an incompetent government. Besides financial corruption in that government, the Americans did not even permit a professional and strong army take shape in Afghanistan," he said.

The official pointed out that this means that both the government and the army were quite dependent on the Americans for proving their existence.

Kazemi Qomi emphasized that for instance that the root cause for a major part of lack of security in Afghanistan was the acts of the Americans themselves.

"They paved the path for the entry of the terrorist groups into Afghanistan and that was definitely one of the notorious acts of the Americans during those 20 years," he said, adding that you heard a lot about explosions in marriage ceremonies, for instance.

He added that in the cultural and social fields, too, the Americans were acting quite badly.

"In a country with a religious and traditional society, they kept on promoting quite a liberal culture. Of course a broad majority in the society did not yield to such moves. They also promoted the drug abuse secretly. When the Americans arrived Afghanistan's narcotic drugs' production was around 200 tons, which was of course 2,000 tons a year before that. But during the Americans' presence it reached 10,000 tons," he said.

Kazemi Qomi said that a very sad phenomenon in Afghanistan was facing a large population of drug addicts, where although the puppy flower plantation had always been high, but the number of drug addicts had always been very low. But during those 20 years the addicts comprised about a tenth of the Afghan nation.

Iran to Host 8th Int'l Shams and Rumi Confab in September

TEHRAN (MNA) – The 8th International Scientific Conference of Shams and Mawlana is slated to be held in Khoy County, Iran on September 29, 2022.

More than 15 domestic and foreign universities from Turkey, India, Iraq, Afghanistan, USA, France, and Pakistan are cooperating scientifically to hold the 8th International Scientific Conference of Shams and Mawlana in Khoy.

So far, over 240 papers on Persian literature and mysticism

from domestic and foreign scholars have been sent to the secretariat of the conference.

The tomb of Shams-e Tabrizi is located in Khoy County, West Azarbaijan Province.

September 29 is named "Shams Day" in the Iranian calendar commemorating the celebrated thinker Shams Tabrizi.

To commemorate Shams and Rumi in Iran, numerous events, including festivals, conferences, seminars, as well as webinars are held annually.

Iran Marks Nat'l Journalists' Day

TEHRAN (IP) - National Journalists' Day was commemorated in Tehran with the presence of the Minister of Culture and Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade at Vahdat Hall.

August 8 has been named Journalists' Day in Iran after the correspondent of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Mahmoud Saremi, was martyred along with 8 Iranian diplomats by the Taliban in 1998.

Delivering a speech at the ceremony on Sunday, the minister of industry, mine, and trade, Reza Fatemi-Amin, said that the more accurate the reporters worked, the more effectively they could play role in solving the country's problems.

Reza Fatemi-Amin said the reporters' work would influence the quality of governance in the country.

In the ceremony, the reporters who died during the coronavirus pandemic, and the Israeli-assassinated reporter of Al-Jazeera, Shireen Abu Akleh, were commemorated.

An "Ashurai Photo Gallery" and Taziyeh rituals were held on the sidelines of the ceremony.

16th Iran Plast Pre-Registration Extended

TEHRAN (Shana) -- New participants of the 16th Iran Plast International Exhibition can pre-register for this large and specialized event in the petrochemical industry from August 15 to 17.



According to the Iran Plast exhibition headquarters, due to the repeated requests of new participants who have not yet managed to register to attend the exhibit, the registration deadline has been extended for 72 hours from Monday, August 15.

The 16th Iran Plast International Exhibition this year will be held at the permanent fairgrounds of Tehran, the Iranian capital, in four sections: raw materials, manufactured and semi-manufactured items, machinery and equipment, and services.

Based on the plans, new participants can pre-register to attend this showcase event through the official site of the exhibition: www.iranplast.ir by August 17, 2022.

According to Ayoub Benavi, the manager of Iran Plast International Exhibition, due to the wide reception of the participants for an active presence in the exhibition, all the space of Tehran International Exhibitions Joint Stock Company is dedicated to the 16th edition of the event from September 21 to 24.

He added: "In the first stage of pre-registration, which lasted for 15 days from July 26, nearly 900 domestic companies announced their participation in Iran Plast."

Islamic Resistance Expanded Beyond Region

TEHRAN (IRNA) – The Government spokesman emphasized that resistance has given a new identity to the Islamic world and the region, granting lots of victories to freedom seeking nations.

Ali Bahadori Jahromi wrote on his Instagram page on the occasion of August 14, the Islamic Resistance Day, that today is the day of the Islamic resistance. If many years ago the Lebanese Hezbollah managed to humiliate the Zionist regime in the 33-Day War, today the Gaza resistance led to a cease fire in only three days.

The Islamic resistance has expanded beyond the region, and this is not only not deniable any longer, but is an ever greater power, he added.

The government spokesman said that the Islamic resistance is today seen in Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and even Africa and Latin America, expanding the borders of resistance, to such broad horizons that the global oppression cannot easily exert its hegemony, or colonialist power at ease anywhere in the world.

U.S. Should Address Iran's Concerns in Nuclear Talks

TEHRAN (IFP) - The United States, as the initiator of the current crisis in Iran's nuclear agreement with the West after its unilateral pullout in 2018, has to do away with its double standards in dealing with the atomic issue and allay Iran's concerns to help seal an agreement, China's ambassador to Tehran says.



In an interview with the Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA), Chang Hua said talks to restore the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear agreement have reached a sensitive point, advising all sides to adopt a flexible and pragmatic stance by responding to all parties' concerns and interests in order to strike a lasting agreement.

The Chinese ambassador had some harsh words for the United States for stirring up tensions with its "interfering policies" on Taiwan.

He said the recent provocative trip by the U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, as the third highest-ranking person in the country, to Taiwan amid the already tense ties between China and the United States, was "a severe violation of China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the One China policy."

The envoy stressed that China's punitive measures against Pelosi's "reckless" trip would include rolling back military ties with Washington and suspension of cooperation based on some other agreements.

Chang Hua expressed optimism that Iran's relations with China, especially trade ties, hit by the coronavirus outbreak, improve and reach the pre-pandemic levels.

He noted Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has held talks with the Chinese head of state Xi Jinping on several occasions "to direct the expansion of ties between Iran and China and give the ties a new political momentum."

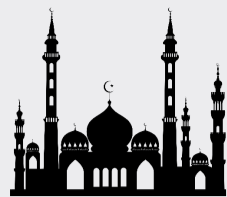
Beijing backs the Islamic Republic's full membership at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), expected to be officially announced in an upcoming meeting of the SCO scheduled in September this year in the Uzbek city of Samarkand, according to Chang Hua.

"Undoubtedly, Iran's official accession to the SCO, in addition to strengthening regional security cooperation, will lead to the development of economic and commercial cooperation and the promotion of cultural exchanges among the people of the member states," he said.

Regarding the developments in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover last year, the Chinese envoy said the country should not become a failed state detached from the international community.

He said China has always respected Afghanistan's independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity and will never interfere in its internal affairs.

However, he added that the international community expects the interim administration in Kabul to push for national reconciliation efforts, form an inclusive government, and guarantee employment, education and women's rights.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:08
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:12
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:52
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:25

64. Be quite sure that to Allah doth belong whatever is in the heavens and on earth. Well doth He know what ye are intent upon: and one day they will be brought back to Him, and He will tell them the truth of what they did:

Surah 24. Light (64)

Minister Emphasizes Developing Economic Cooperation With Mauritius

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance (MEAF) emphasized developing cooperation between Iran and Republic of Mauritius in the fields of trade and economy.

Speaking in his meeting with visiting Mauritius' Minister of Labor, Human Resource Development and Training Soodesh Satkam Callichurn in Tehran on Sunday evening, Seyyed Ehsan Khandouzi Iran's Minister of Economy, while welcoming the other side's view of developing cooperation and mutual investment, expressed readiness of Iran for investing and establishing cooperation with the Republic of Mauritius in the field of advanced technologies of pharmaceutical industry and nanotechnology.

Khandouzi also announced the agreement of Iran to boost mutual cooperation in order to ensure food security between the two countries given the Ukraine war and also development of investment by Iranian side in the Republic of Mauritius in the field of building construction and supply of construction materials to this African state.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iranian minister called Mauritius as gateway of financial transactions in South Africa and emphasized the will of the country to strengthen cooperation and financial transactions with south African countries.

It is hoped that formation of joint economic commission between Iran and Mauritius would further increase bilateral trade, Kahndouzi added.

Mauritius' Minister, for his part, emphasized the serious will of his country for expansion of trade and economic cooperation with Iran.

The high-ranking trade delegation from Mauritius traveled to Iran on Sunday to explore ways of expanding trade relations between the two countries

Meanwhile earlier Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Mauritius' Economic Development Board (EDB) to cooperate on facilitating economic exchanges between the two countries.

The MOU was signed on the sidelines of an Iran-Mauritius business forum held at the convention hall of Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, the TPO portal reported. The event was attended by senior officials from the two countries including



Mauritius' Minister of Labor, Human Resource Development and Training Soodesh Satkam Callichurn, Iranian Chargé d'Affaires in Mauritius Hassan Ali Bakhshi, Iran's Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mohammad-Sadeq Mofateh, and Director-General of TPO's Africa Office Mohammad-Sadeq Qanadzadeh.

As reported, some of the main goals of the mentioned MOU include creating a practical framework for joint cooperation between the two countries in various fields, promotion of investment-making with a focus on sectors such as engineering, agricultural processing, medicine, health care, ports and logistics, information and communication technology, construction, hoteling, education and breeding, industry and cinema, etc.

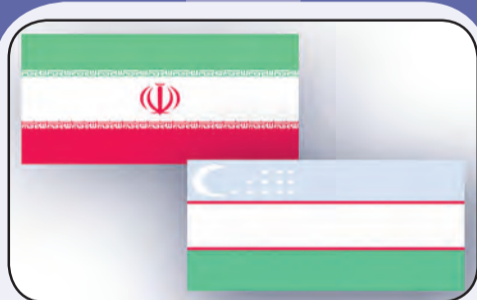
The MOU is also aimed at promoting mutual trade between the private sectors of the two sides considering the potentials and export capabilities of the parties in the agricultural, industrial, and mineral sectors.

It also emphasizes the exchange of information about export opportunities, resources, incentives, and support services between the two countries, as well as facilitating activities related to information gathering and market research.

Facilitating the formation of joint investment projects between private and public sectors of Mauritius and the Islamic Republic of Iran, technology transfer, and technical knowledge exchange between the two countries, especially in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, processing of agricultural products, medicine, and medical equipment as well as construction industry were also reported to be among the issues covered in the said MOU.

During the gathering, the two sides underlined the significance of the event as a platform for promoting cooperation between the two countries in the commercial, economic, and tourism sectors and expressed hope that both sides will be able to benefit from each other's facilities in future collaborations.

Iran Export of Products to Uzbekistan At 63% Growth



TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Affairs announced that Iran's exports of products to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan hit 63 and 23 percent hike respectively in the current year.

Mehdi Safari made the remarks on Sunday in a meeting of Foreign Economic Relations Coordination Headquarters entitled "Follow Ups of Approvals of Iran-Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan Joint Economic Commission" and called organizing an exhibition to showcase Iranian export products in Uzbekistan as an opportunity to supply products especially construction materials to Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states.

While expressing his satisfaction with the results of many approvals of Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Economic Commission, the deputy foreign minister considered it 'important' to follow up approvals of the Commission and implement protocols before Iranian President Raisi's visit to Tashkent and added that President Raisi has placed special emphasis on holding economic commissions and follow up of achievements of foreign trips.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Safari pointed to the export of technical and engineering services to Kyrgyzstan as well as high volume of pertinent projects and emphasized that Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) should finance these projects.

He then pointed to Iran's export of products to two neighboring countries of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and stated that country's export with these two countries hit 63 and 23 percent growth in value respectively.

Sepahan Co. Seeks Fair Distribution of Its Products

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Sepahan Oil Company Dr. Mohammad Amir Nikoo Hemmat in meeting with representatives of the company for distribution of its engine oil products in different provinces of the company hailed them and called for continuation of such meetings for resolving problems and misunderstandings.

In the meeting, Mr. Nikoo Hemmat stipulated that the task of Sepahan Oil Company in the current condition seeks helping fair distribution of its products and preventing rent-seeking and black market in a way that ultimately the final consumer can have access to a full standard product with suitable price.

He added that recent changes in the trend of distribution of products by the company have been in this regard and Kimis Speedy Qeshm Company as the executive arm of Sepahan Oil Company follows this important task in a targeted and planned framework.

Mr. Nikoo Hemmat added that some offences like hoarding, illegal export, fake products and the likes made the company change the trend of distribution of its products in order that final consumer can get the good quality product with suitable price and at the same time the company does not suffer damage in this unhealthy climate.

Then the participants in the meeting raised their concerns and expressed their problems and they raised some suggestions which will be taken into consideration by the company for further study.



70% Progress in Chadegan Wastewater Treatment Network Structure

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA o Isfahan) Mr. Hossein Akbarian during the visit of the coordination deputy governor general of Isfahan on developmental affairs from the construction process of Chadegan Wastewater Treatment network said that construction of this wastewater treatment network has started from 2013 with spending over 190b rials and currently its structure has progressed 70% physically.

Akbarian said that in order that Chadegan people enjoy wastewater network services, it needs implementation of 58 kilometers of transfer line of the wastewater network that so far 34 kilometers of this transfer line and wastewater network has been implemented in the town.

He went on to say that to provide required equipment and electromechanical equipment for this project and completing the project, the company needs 2200b rials of credit.

Then during this visit, Akbarian pointed to the



services of ABFA of Isfahan to water supply to villages of Sineh Kooch Complex in the Chadegan area and said that the water supply to five villages of Sineh Kooch Complex with implementing 18 kilometers of transfer line that with its completion, 5,000 people in this complex will enjoy sustainable drinking water while currently three villages of Ali Arab, Deh Kalbali and Marouf in this complex have sustainable drinking water.

Then he pointed to the water supply to South Chenaroud Complex and said that for sustainable water supply for this rural complex drilling a water well is on the agenda. South Chenaroud Complex has 15 villages with 310 households and population around 1100 people.

Akbarian also said that fixing and changing the old drinking water network of towns and villages of Chadegan is necessary and currently renovation of some 40 kilometers of this network needs 300b rials of credit.

Can Iran Turn Into a Regional Hub for Bitumen?

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Pasargad Oil Company Dr. Masoud Esfandiar who is also a university teacher in an article noted that Iran currently accounts for 8% of world bitumen market and bitumen is one of the main foreign earning source of the country while the country's oil is under sanction.

Dr. Esfandiar believes Iran can turn into a regional hub for bitumen provided that all required conditions are provided. He wrote that the production and consumption of bitumen was over 125m tons in 2021 and Iran with production capacity of over 6m tons accounted for 8% of the world bitumen market. He added that Iran ranks 7 and 4 in the world in terms of production and exports of bitumen respectively and this is an important matter if we know that bitumen has been one of the major sources of forex earning during the sanctions on oil.

He noted that Iran's bitumen export in last Iranian calendar year earned the country some \$1.5b and it accounted for 2.9% of the country's total non-oil exports and in terms of value it experienced 73% growth comparing to the preceding year.

Dr. Esfandiar then wrote the total capacity of production and vacuum bottom of the country is 12m tons per year and almost half of this amount is allocated to production of fuel oil and the other half to production of bitumen. He added that some 4m tons of produced bitumen is exported and remaining 2m tons is allocated for the domestic consumption, reiterating that 70% of the produced bitumen of the country is exported.

He then wrote that since October 2021 to July 2022, the price of bitumen in the world has faced upward trend and from 450 to 500 dollars in October 2021 has reached 600 to 650 dollars in July 2022. He admitted that due to decline in the global demand and lack of competitiveness of Iran's prices, Iran faced drop in its sales.

He then mentioned why East Asian countries do not welcome Iran's bitumen and blamed the sanctions, the rise in marine transportation fare and prolongation of transporting the cargo by containers.

Dr. Esfandiar then pointed to the challenges that Iran's bitumen market is struggling with like pricing and vacuum bottom, barter bitumen an effects of sanctions.

But he reiterated that Iran's bitumen market has strong potentials to become a benchmark and a regional hub but it needs the government support and unity among bitumen producers otherwise countries like Bahrain and Iraq will take advantage of it.

Another Achievement for Shiraz Petrochemicals Co.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Shiraz Petrochemicals Company won the national successful management award during the conference on national successful manager in the fourth industrial revolution which was held at the IRIB Conference Hall in presence of some high-ranking official and scientific and academic personalities.

According to reports, the CEO of Shiraz Petrochemicals Company Eng. Bahmani received the golden statue of the national successful manager in this event which is another golden leaf in the book of honors of this company.

On the sidelines of the event, Mr. Bahmani said that winning this award will make his responsibility heavier in this company which is one of the oldest petrochemical companies in the country. He added that this award is the outcome of endeavors and empathy and cooperation of all of his colleagues in the company and dedicates it to all managers, experts and staff of Shiraz Petrochemicals Company.

The company in line with materializing the Supreme Leader's recommendations and slogan of the year has pursued the set targets through successful management and through the years, it has enhanced nominal capacity of production.

The event is aimed at boosting the knowledge and the latest scientific achievements in the fourth industrial industry, interaction and economic growth among the state sector and evaluation of companies in 17 groups of economic enterprises for transfer of knowhow.



U.S. Congressional Delegation in Taiwan

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - A U.S. congressional delegation arrived in Taiwan, officials said, days after China held military drills around the island in retaliation for U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit.

Sunday's unannounced trip came after Pelosi infuriated Beijing by visiting Taiwan earlier this month, sparking unprecedented air and sea drills that raised the prospect of conflict.

The five-member delegation, led by Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts, will meet with President Tsai Ing-wen and attend a banquet hosted by Foreign Minister Joseph Wu during the visit, according to Taiwan's foreign ministry.



Fireworks Explode Killed One in Armenian Mall

YEREVAN (Dispatches) - Blasts ripped through a fireworks warehouse in a shopping mall in the Armenian capital of Yerevan on Sunday, killing one and injuring at least 45 people, Russian news agencies cited the Armenian emergency ministry as saying.

Video posted on social media showed thick grey smoke rising above a building, followed by an explosion that sent people running from the scene.

Firefighters were struggling to contain the blaze as fireworks continued detonating, TASS cited the head of the ministry's rescue service as saying.



Ukraine Targets Russian Soldiers Accused of Threatening Nuclear Plant



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has warned Russian soldiers who shoot at Europe's largest nuclear power station or use it as a base to shoot from that they will become a "special target" for Ukrainian forces.

Meanwhile, an Africa-bound food aid cargo was getting ready to depart from Ukraine in the coming days, the first since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and sources said the first grains ship to leave Ukraine under a U.N. deal was nearing Syria.

Russian troops captured the Zaporizhzhia nuclear facility in southern Ukraine early in the war, but it is still being run by Ukrainian technicians.

Amid fears of a nuclear catastrophe over renewed shelling there over the past days, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for the establishment of a demilitarised zone. Ukraine and Russia trade blame for the shelling.

"Every Russian soldier who either shoots at the plant, or shoots using the plant as cover, must understand that he becomes a special target for our intelligence agents, for our special services, for our army," Zelenskiy said in an evening address on Saturday.

Zelenskiy, who did not give any details, reiterated that he considered Russia was using the plant as nuclear blackmail.

The plant dominates the south bank of a vast reservoir on the Dnipro River. Ukrainian forces controlling the towns and cities on the opposite bank have come under intense bombardment from the Russian-held side.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak accused Russia of "hitting the part of the nuclear power plant where the energy that powers the south of Ukraine is generated".

"The goal is to disconnect us from the (plant) and blame the Ukrainian army for this," Podolyak wrote on Twitter. Local Russian-installed official Vladimir Rogov wrote on Telegram that Ukrainian forces were shelling the plant.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which is seeking to inspect the plant, has warned of a nuclear disaster unless fighting stops. Nuclear experts fear fighting might damage the plant's spent fuel pools or the reactors.

While fighting continued, some cargo ships have continued to leave Ukraine as part of a U.N.- and Turkey-brokered deal in late July aimed partly at easing a global food crisis.

The U.N.-chartered ship Brave Commander will depart for Africa in the days ahead after it finishes loading more than 23,000 metric tonnes of wheat in the Ukrainian port of Pivdennyi, a U.N. official said on Sunday.

The ship, which arrived in the port near Odesa, will sail to Ethiopia via a grain corridor through the Black Sea.

"The world needs the food of Ukraine. This is the beginning of what we hope is normal operations for the hungry people of the world," Marianne Ward, World Food Program deputy country director, told reporters. The relief agency purchased more than 800,000 tons of grain in Ukraine last year.

Separately, the first ship to depart Ukraine under the deal two weeks ago was approaching the Syrian port of Tartous on Sunday, two shipping sources said. The Razoni had been destined for Lebanon but hit a snag when the buyer refused delivery, fearing the quality of the corn had diminished after months on board. read more

Kyiv has said for weeks it is planning a counteroffensive to recapture Zaporizhzhia and neighbouring Kherson provinces, the largest part of the territory Russia seized after its Feb. 24 invasion and still in Russian hands.

Russia's priority over the past week has likely been to reorient units to strengthen its campaign in southern Ukraine, British military intelligence said on Sunday.

Russian-backed forces of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic in the eastern region of Donbas continued assaults to the north of Donetsk city, the British Defence Ministry said in its daily intelligence bulletin on Twitter.

Ukraine's military command said early on Sunday that Russian soldiers had continued, unsuccessfully, to attack Ukrainian positions near Avdiivka, which since 2014 has become one of the outposts of Ukrainian forces near Donetsk.

Russia, in a daily briefing, said it had taken control of Udy, a village in the eastern Kharkiv region, which is under continual shelling by Russian forces.

Reuters could not independently verify the battlefield accounts. Russia calls the invasion of Ukraine a "special military operation" to demilitarize and "denazify" its smaller neighbor, has pushed Moscow-Washington relations to a low point, with Russia warning it may sever ties.

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PM Shehbaz Vows to Transform Pakistan Into Economic Power

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif stressed for holding of a national dialogue and developing a consensus on charter of economy by all the stakeholders to transform Pakistan into an economic power.

Addressing a national flag-hoisting and unveiling of re-recording ceremony of the national anthem here at the Jinnah Convention center, the prime minister said that like their forefathers, on this 75th Independence Day, they vowed to transform Pakistan into an economic power.

"If we can become a nuclear power, we can also become an economic power but for it we have to strive day and night and prove to the world that we are no less than anyone in the world," the prime minister added.

The ceremony was attended by federal ministers, parliamentarians, senior military and law enforcement agencies leadership and people belonging to all walks of life.

"Pakistan Movement is a lesson for everyone which tells when a nation devised the course of its path, the mountain-like hurdles and seas like distances could not hamper them from achieving their goal," the prime minister added.

The prime minister recalled that when Allama Iqbal dreamt about a separate motherland, a sense of pessimism was created that it was not feasible.

"We salute the founding fathers of Pakistan who had smashed such sense of pessimism and due to their historic struggle, they are now breathing in an independent and sovereign country," he added.

The prime minister said for decades, the Muslims in the sub-continent faced the foreign subjugation, they laid down their lives, gave immense sacrifices and made a historic migration and lost their near and dear ones in that perilous journey to achieve a separate country.

They handed over an ideological country, he said and paid tribute to all those that lost their lives in the Independence Movement.

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North Korea Criticizes U.N. Chief's Support for Denuclearization

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea's foreign ministry on Sunday criticized the United Nations Secretary-General's recent comment on his supports for the North's complete denuclearization, calling the remarks lack impartiality and fairness.

North Korea's state news agency KCNA released a statement from the foreign ministry after U.N. chief Antonio Guterres on Friday said he fully supports efforts to completely denuclearise North Korea when he met with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol.

"I cannot but express deep regret over the said remarks of the UN secretary-general that grossly lack impartiality and fairness and go against the obligations of his duty, specified in the UN Charter, as regards the issue of the Korean peninsula," Kim Son Gyong, vice minister for international organizations of North Korea's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Kim added that the U.N. secretary-general should not request or accept orders from the government of a specific country but refrain from doing any act that may impair his or her position as an international official who is liable only to the UN.

Kim said the North's "complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization" (CVID) was "an infringement upon the sovereignty of the DPRK," referring to North Korea by the initials of its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"It demands the unilateral disarmament, and Secretary-General Guterres perhaps knows well that the DPRK has totally rejected it without any toleration," said Kim, adding that Guterres should be careful when uttering "dangerous words" amid the extremely acute situation on the Korean peninsula.

North Korea has test fired a record number of missiles this year, and officials in Seoul and Washington say that it appears to be preparing to test a nuclear weapon for the first time since 2017, amid stalled denuclearization talks.

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Iraq Judiciary Dismisses Demand to Dissolve Parliament

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq's judiciary said it lacks the authority to dissolve parliament as demanded by populist Shiite Muslim cleric Moqtada Sadr, who is engaged in an escalating standoff with political rivals.

Followers of Sadr, in defiance of his Shiite rivals of the pro-Iran Coordination Framework, have been staging a sit-in protest at Iraq's parliament.

In the latest twist to the political turmoil, the firebrand cleric has urged the judiciary to dissolve parliament by the end of this week to pave the way for new legislative elections.

But the judiciary replied that "the Supreme Judicial Council has no jurisdiction to dissolve parliament", citing "the principle of a separation of powers".

Under the constitution, parliament can only be dissolved by an absolute majority vote in the house, following a request by one-third of deputies or by the prime minister with the approval of the president.

Nearly 10 months on from the last elections, Iraq still has no government, new prime minister or new president, due to repeated squabbles between factions over forming a coalition.

In the latest turmoil to strike the oil-rich but war-scarred nation, Sadr has called for "early democratic elections after a dissolution of parliament".

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The Supreme Council said it agreed with Sadr's criticism of the system's "failure to elect a president of the republic, a prime minister and the absence of a government formed within the constitutional timeframe".

"This is an unacceptable situation that must be remedied," it said. The Coordination Framework opponents of Sadr launched their own Baghdad sit-in on Friday, nearly two weeks after his supporters stormed parliament and began an open-ended protest, first inside, then outside the legislature.

The opposing encampments are the latest turn in a standoff which has so far remained peaceful.

On Twitter, a close associate of Sadr, Saleh Mohamed al-Iraqi, said it was time to show "which of the two sides has the most support" among the Iraqi people.

He called on Sadr's supporters across the country to rally in Baghdad for a "million-man demonstration," without giving a date.

Sadr's camp launched the sit-in after the Coordination Framework nominated a candidate they saw as unacceptable for prime minister.

The cleric's bloc emerged from the October elections as parliament's biggest, but still far short of a majority.

In June, 73 of his lawmakers quit in an aborted bid to break the months-long political logjam.



U.N.-Chartered Ship In Ukraine Ready for Journey to Africa

YUZHNE (Dispatches) - The United Nations-chartered ship Brave Commander will depart Ukraine for Africa in coming days after it finishes loading more than 23,000 metric tons of wheat in the Ukrainian port of Pivdennyi, a U.N. official said.

The ship, which arrived in the port near Odesa, will sail to Ethiopia via a grain corridor through the Black Sea brokered by the United Nations and Turkey in late July.

It will be the first humanitarian food aid cargo bound for Africa since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24 under the framework of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Denise Brown, UN Resident Coordinator in Ukraine, told reporters the grain was urgently needed in Ethiopia, and the United Nations would work to ensure continued shipments to countries around Africa that are facing famine and sharply higher food prices.

"On a very, very personal note, for any mothers who might be listening, seeing hunger in a child is very painful. Hunger, malnutrition is physically very, very painful," Brown, who was previously posted in the Central African Republic, told reporters. "It's up to all of us to help these children."

The cargo was funded with donations from the United Nations World Food Programme, the U.S. Agency for International Development and several private donors.

"The world needs the food of Ukraine. This is the beginning of what we hope is normal operations for the hungry people of the world," Marianne Ward, World Food Programme deputy country director, told reporters. The relief agency purchased more than 800,000 tonnes of grain in Ukraine last year.

Ukrainian authorities have not released details on when the Brave Commander will sail or when it will arrive in Ethiopia, citing security concerns.

A total of 16 ships have now departed from Ukraine, according to authorities there, following the deal with Russia to allow a resumption of grain exports from Ukraine's Black Sea ports, after they were stalled for five months due to the war.

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Beijing's Pet Lovers Turn to Acupuncture To Treat Furry Friends



BEIJING (Dispatches) - Strapped in tight, the prone poodle nervously eyes the vet as he gently sticks fine needles into its back and paws, summoning the ancient art of acupuncture to treat the pet's aches and pains.

Duniu is just one of a growing number of animals being signed up for traditional medicine in China — care their masters say is less invasive and comes with fewer side effects than conventional treatments.

In one Beijing practice, pets of all shapes and sizes come for treatments.

"The advantage of traditional Chinese medicine is that there is no surgery," 38-year-old Zhai Chunyu tells AFP, accompanied by Duniu, his poodle.

"So the animal's suffering is reduced."

At just three years old, Duniu suffers from Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, which affects the thigh bone and can lead to painful osteoarthritis. "He was in so much pain that he could no longer put his paw on the ground" and "had no appetite", says Zhai, who works in finance.

"A doctor advised me to have the head of the femur removed. But I didn't want to because I have another poodle who has been there and he suffered a lot from the operation and the after-effects."

But then a friend advised him to try acupuncture.

"After five to six sessions, we saw the results. Duniu manages to walk and even run a little now," Zhai says. Animal acupuncture is centuries old in China, says veterinarian Li Wen, who founded his practice in 2016.

"Traditional Chinese medicine is not intended to replace conventional medicine" because "both have their strengths" and are complementary, he says.

Before starting the treatment, the vet first checks the animal's body, examines its eyesight and the colour of its tongue, takes its pulse and asks its owner questions.

He then plants his needles at acupuncture points specific to dogs and cats.

"Out of the 10 animals that I receive on average every day, there are always one or two who rebel," Li says.

"You have to communicate with them, treat them gently, reassure them that you're not here to hurt them."

Recordings of soft bamboo flute music and the chirping of birds are played at the clinic to help the animals relax.

Li mainly deals with cases of paralysis, limb weakness, epilepsy, pain and urinary retention.

But acupuncture can also be used for ailments when no other treatment is available.

That was the case with Xiaomei, a 12-year-old male Labrador suffering from nerve compression in his lower back. "Last September, after swimming, he was unable to get back on his feet. A veterinarian then told us that it was impossible to treat and that he would become paralysed," his owner Ma Li, 41, tells AFP.

"Thanks to acupuncture, he still has difficulties but can walk normally and even run."

"He loves it!"

"The first time, he was scared," says Yang Lihua, a 65-year-old retiree accompanied by her Pekinese Niannian, who is suffering from a herniated disc.

"Now he loves it! After the session, he is so relaxed that he sleeps in the car on the way home."

The acupuncture market for animals remains limited for the moment, Li says.

"But since 2016, it has been gaining popularity," he adds.

"As education levels, living conditions improve and incomes rise, more and more people are realising the benefits of this medicine."

Ma's Labrador jumps into the back seat of her mistress's car after her session, looking content.

"Doesn't he look happy?" she exclaims.

Iraq's Garden of Eden Now Like a Desert



HUWAIZAH MARSHES (Dispatches) - To feed and cool his buffaloes, Hashem Gassed must cross 10 kilometres (six miles) of sunburnt land in southern Iraq, where drought is devastating swathes of the mythical Mesopotamian Marshes.

The reputed home of the biblical Garden of Eden, Iraq's swamplands have been battered by three years of drought and low rainfall, as well as reduced water flows along rivers and tributaries originating in neighboring Turkey and Iran.

Vast expanses of the once lush Huwaizah Marshes, straddling the border with Iran, have been baked dry, their vegetation yellowing. Stretches of the Chibayish Marshes, which are popular with tourists, are suffering the same fate.

"The marshes are our livelihood — we used to fish here and our livestock could graze and drink," said Gassed, 35, from a hamlet near Huwaizah.

Southern Iraq's marshlands were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2016, both for their biodiversity and their ancient history.

But now, beds of dry streams snake around the once verdant wetlands, and the area's Um al-Naaj lake has been reduced to puddles of muddy water among largely dry ground.

Like his father before him, Gassed raises buffaloes, but only five of the family's around 30 animals are left. The others died or were sold as the family struggles to make ends meet.

Family members watch carefully over those that remain, fearful that the weak, underfed beasts might fall in the mud and die.

Nestled between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the Mesopotamian Marshes suffered under the former dictator Saddam Hussein, who ordered that they be drained in 1991 as punishment for communities protecting insurgents, and to hunt them down.

The wetlands have sporadically gone through years of harsh drought in the past, before being revived by good rainy seasons.

But between August 2020 and this month, 46 percent of the swamplands of southern Iraq, including Huwaizah and Chibayish, suffered total surface water loss, according to Dutch peace-building organization PAX.

Another 41 percent of marsh areas suffered from reduced water levels and wetness, according to the organization, which used satellite data to make the assessment.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization in Iraq said the marshes were "one of the poorest regions in Iraq and one of the most affected by the climate change", warning of "unprecedented low water levels".

It noted the "disastrous impact" on more than 6,000 families who "are losing their buffaloes, their unique living asset".

Biodiversity is also at risk.

The swamplands provide a home for "numerous populations of threatened species", and are an important stopping point for around 200 species of migratory water birds, according to Unesco.

Environmental activist Ahmed Saleh Neema said there were "no more fish", wild boar or even a subspecies of smooth-coated otter in the marshes.

He said the Huwaizah swamplands were irrigated by two tributaries of the Tigris River, which originates in Turkey, but that their flows had dropped.

Iraqi authorities are rationing supplies to cover different needs, he said.



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Germany Reaches 75% Gas Stocks Target

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - German gas storage facilities were slightly more than 75% full last Friday, a couple of weeks ahead of target, data from European operators group GIE showed on Sunday. Germany has 23.3 billion cubic meters (bcm) of underground gas storage, a little more than a fifth of the 100 bcm of gas used in 2021. The Rehden storage unit, which holds 4 bcm, was 54% full, the GIE data showed.



Saudi Aramco Unveils Record \$48.4b Profit in Q2

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Oil giant Saudi Aramco unveiled record profits of \$48.4 billion in the second quarter of 2022, after Russia's war in Ukraine and a post-pandemic surge in demand sent crude prices soaring.

Net income leapt 90 percent year-on-year for the world's biggest oil producer, which clocked its second straight quarterly record after announcing \$39.5 billion for Q1.

"While global market volatility and economic uncertainty remain, events during the first half of this year support our view that ongoing investment in our industry is essential -- both to help ensure markets remain well supplied and to facilitate an orderly energy transition," said Aramco president and CEO Amin H. Nasser.

"In fact, we expect oil demand to continue to grow for the rest of the decade, despite downward economic pressures on short-term global forecasts."

Net income rose 22.7 percent from Q1 in "strong market conditions", Aramco said. Half-year profits were \$87.9 billion, up from \$47.2 billion for the same period of 2021.

Aramco paid an \$18.8 billion dividend in Q2 and will disburse the same amount in Q3.

The quarterly profits, the highest since Aramco's flotation in late 2019, beat analyst forecasts of \$46.2 billion.

Aramco was priced at 40.8 riyals (\$10.9) ahead of the Saudi stock exchange's opening on Sunday.

Aramco floated 1.7 percent of its shares on the Saudi bourse in December 2019, generating \$29.4 billion in the world's biggest initial public offering.

The "crown jewel" and leading source of income for the conservative kingdom temporarily supplanted Apple as the world's most valuable company in March. It now lies second in the list.

Saudi Arabia has sought to open up and diversify its oil-reliant economy, especially since Mohammed bin Salman's appointment as crown prince and de facto ruler in 2017.

Earlier this month, the International Energy Agency said global oil demand will rise more than previously forecast this year as heatwaves and soaring gas prices prompt countries to switch fuels for power generation.

Oil prices have dropped by \$30 per barrel from a peak in June due to growing supplies, but remain close to \$100.

The OPEC group of oil-producing countries has been gradually raising production, despite pressure from Western leaders including US President Joe Biden -- who visited Saudi Arabia last month -- to pump more.

Biden's trip was seen as a climb-down after he previously promised to make Saudi Arabia a "pariah" over the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents in Turkey in 2018.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has also visited Saudi Arabia since the Russian invasion in February.

42% of Major Firms See Japan Economy Slowing Down

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Around 42 percent of major companies in Japan expect the country's economy to slow down over the next 12 months, up from just 5 percent one year ago, as they struggle to cope with surging commodity costs and the yen's weakness, a Kyodo News survey showed.

The survey of 114 companies, including Toyota Motor Corp and SoftBank Group Corp, found that Japanese blue chips are becoming increasingly pessimistic about the country's economic outlook, up from 12 percent at the beginning of the year.

Meanwhile, those that believe Japan's economy will expand dropped to 55 percent from 90 percent one year ago, and 84 percent earlier this year, as concerns weighed on hopes for a gradual recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

With multiple answers allowed, 83 percent that expect the economy to slow down cited adverse effects of higher commodity prices, followed by 58 percent predicting sluggish growth or a decline in consumer spending.

Some 56 percent said the yen's weakness against the U.S. dollar and other major currencies would negatively impact the economy.

Stronger global demand has pushed crude oil and commodity prices up to historic highs as countries attempt to restart their economies, while Russia's invasion of Ukraine has further aggravated supply chain constraints.

Furthermore, the Japanese currency has been in a freefall against the U.S. dollar in recent months, hitting a fresh 24-year high last month in the 139 zone amid contrasting approaches in monetary policy between Japan and the United States.

The U.S. Federal Reserve has pushed for aggressive rate hikes as it battles 40-year high inflation in risk of a recession, while the Bank of Japan has maintained an ultra easy monetary policy.



The Kyodo survey, conducted from mid to late July, covering leading companies in each sector, found 32 percent of them expect economic growth to be flat, while 10 percent forecast moderate contraction.

Some 53 percent of surveyed companies believe there will be moderate growth, while 2 percent are hopeful of solid growth. None believed the economy would fall into a recession. Among multiple answers from those that anticipate growth, 85 percent said they expect personal consumption to recover, while 77 percent predict normalization from the coronavirus pandemic.

While some companies said the BOJ's hard stance to maintain its ultra easy monetary policy has caused the yen to weaken and push up import prices, 37 percent nevertheless believe its continuation is necessary.

ADB Pledges Bangladesh \$9.46b for Next Three Years

DHAKA (Dispatches) - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has committed to provide Bangladesh an estimated \$9.4 billion loan in the next three years to help the country continue its post-pandemic recovery and deal with impacts stemming from global uncertainties.

Bangladesh will get more than \$3 billion on average each year under the Bangladesh lending pipeline 2023-2025 in communication by the Manila-based bank to the Economic Relations Division (ERD) on 24 July.

In the previous pipeline for 2022-2024, the lending amount that the ADB proposed stood at \$7.91 billion.

ERD and ADB officials said the ADB has agreed to give loans for 44 projects under the lending pipeline and prepared a list of confirmed projects, which was finalized after consulting different government agencies.

According to the Bangladesh Country Programming Mission (CPM) report-2022, the ADB will provide support for continued improvement of the country's key infrastructures.

Roads and railway corridors' development with necessary reforms will be supported to facilitate inter-regional trade, provide better access to the market and job opportunities, and increase private sector investment opportunities, it noted.

The ADB will also provide integrated solutions to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Opportunities for energy efficiency and renewable energy will be explored to accelerate clean energy transition, the report also said, adding that the ADB will support mass rapid transit and e-vehicle development to achieve sustainable transport.

The development partner will provide funding for projects on a priority basis under six sectors. The transport sector will get the highest \$2.9 billion from the three-year lending pipeline,

followed by education and health \$2.35 billion, water and urban \$1.39 billion, finance \$1.3 billion, energy \$1.07 billion, agriculture \$441 million, according to Bangladesh Lending Pipeline 2023-2025.

The ADB will provide funding for a few road and rail projects in the next three years. For example, it will give \$300 million for the Akhaura-Laksam Double Track Project in 2023.

For another project, "Conversion of Tongi-Bhairab-Akhaura metre-gauge double track into dual-gauge double track", the development partner has also kept its funding for 2023 as standby.

The ADB says it hopes to complete all processes and provide a loan for this project in 2023.

The government has already started work on converting rail lines into dual gauge double lines on Dhaka-Chattogram route. A 72km long Akhaura-Laksham section is part of it, which has so far made more than 85% progress in June this year.

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Britons Give Up Pets as Living Costs Soar



LONDON (Dispatches) - Stood on her hind legs to greet any prospective owner who might approach her glass-doored kennel, Harriet is a black English cocker spaniel abandoned as a deepening cost-of-living crisis pushes growing numbers of Britons to part with their pets.

She was found running along a busy road in London after witnesses saw her pushed out of a car and is one of 206 dogs and 164 cats currently being looked after at rehoming centers run by the Battersea animal charity.

It is a similar story at other centers across the country - with some seeing record inquiries for dog and cat returns - as the tightest squeeze on living standards since at least the 1960s forces many owners to decide the additional cost of food plus hundreds of pounds in vet bills is no longer manageable.

"We are concerned that's going to be an increasing reason for people bringing their dogs in to Battersea," Steve Craddock, who manages the center in southwest London, told Reuters.

Exotic pets such as snakes and lizards are also proving too expensive due to their need for specialist heating and lighting.

Three snakes, including an 8-foot (2.4-metre) boa constrictor, were recently dumped in pillow cases outside a reptile shop, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) told Reuters.

The trend, which follows a surge in demand for pets during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns in a country known for its love of animals, comes as households brace for energy bills to more than triple in January on last year, hammering people's incomes.

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Ukrainian Says New \$5b IMF Loan Would Reassure Other Creditors

KYIV (Dispatches) - Securing a new \$5 billion loan from the IMF would help reassure Ukraine's other creditors that the war-torn country's macroeconomic situation was under control, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief economic adviser told Reuters.

Fresh financing from the International Monetary Fund for around 18 months could serve as the anchor for a larger package of \$15 billion-\$20 billion to help Ukraine weather the economic crisis caused by Russia's invasion, the adviser, Oleg Ustenko, said.

He said Ukrainian officials were in touch with the global lender about the potential request, adding that the goal should be to move forward as quickly as possible.

The IMF declined to comment.

Ustenko's comments came just over two weeks after Ukraine's central bank governor, Kyrylo Shevchenko, told Reuters that he was seeking as much as \$20 billion from the IMF over two or three years - an amount that would have put Ukraine well over the fund's "exceptional access limit" for lending.

The large size of that request had triggered intense debate within the IMF because it would have also raised questions about the sustainability of Ukraine's debt.

The revised plan would be modeled on a financing package agreed in 2015, after Russia's invasion of the Crimea region of Ukraine, that included \$17.5 billion in IMF funding but helped leverage total funding of \$40 billion.

Moody's Downgrades Turkey to B3

LONDON (Dispatches) - Moody's Investors Service has downgraded Turkey's sovereign rating by one notch to B3 with a stable outlook, taking it to six notches below investment grade, the rating agency said.

Pressure on the balance of payments has risen and the increasingly unorthodox policies from the Erdogan administration are unlikely to restore macroeconomic stability, Moody's said.

Looking at other credit rating agencies' assessments on Turkey, Fitch Ratings rates

Turkey at B/Negative, five notches below investment grade, while Standard & Poor's has Turkey at B+/Negative, four notches below investment grade.

More downgrades are on the way.

Prior to the Moody's hit, speculation on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's search for a way out of Turkey's economic mess (by now a most pressing matter for Erdogan with elections due by June 2023 at the latest) was again rife. Some media coverage in the wake of Erdogan's recent Sochi summit with Vladimir Putin focused on incoming capital from Russia. Analysis suggesting Turkey's credit default swaps (CDS) were recovering thanks to the Russian money followed. Such articles did not mention the fact that emerging markets CDS were simultaneously in recovery in general.

The month of August usually brings about shaky markets as liquidity dries up during the vacation period. However, for the financial industry, August this year has so far proceeded in an extremely positive fashion (as positive as possible amid the global tightening).

There is no guarantee, however, that the second half of August will continue in the same fashion. The mood could change. On September 21, the Fed's open market committee is currently expected to deliver another 50bp rate hike.

Since 2016, Qatar has been seen coming to the rescue amid Turkey's economic collapse. Since last November, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has joined Qatar in the mission. Saudi Arabia, last month, and Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin are now said to have signed up to provide economic assistance. Current press coverage suggests Putin is supposed to send \$15bn and Saudi Arabia \$20bn.

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Linking Assassination Plots To Nuclear Talks Futile

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian lawmaker says Israel seeks to knock nuclear talks with the West off course by resorting to a blame game against Iran, including accusations of Iran-sponsored assassination plots.

Javad Karimi Ghoddosi, a member of the Iranian Parliament's Foreign Policy and National Security Committee, told Iranian Labor News Agency (ILNA) that "Israel does not need to bother to level such accusations against

Iran, as it can rely on the influential pro-Israel lobbyists at the White House."

The remark comes days after the U.S. Justice Department claimed that Iran had plotted to kill former White House national security adviser John Bolton in retaliation for the assassination of top Iranian commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani at Baghdad International Airport in 2020.



Cheaper, Changing and Crucial: The Rise of Solar Power

PARIS (Dispatches) - Generating power from sunlight bouncing off the ground, working at night, even helping to grow strawberries: solar panel technology is evolving fast as costs plummet for a key segment of the world's energy transition.

The International Energy Agency says solar will have to scale up significantly this decade to meet the Paris climate target of limiting temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The good news is that costs have fallen dramatically.

In a report on solutions earlier this year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said solar unit costs had dropped 85 per cent between 2010 and 2019, while wind fell 55 per cent.

"There's some claim that it's the cheapest way humans have ever been able to make electricity at scale," said Gregory Nemet, a professor at the University of Wisconsin — Madison and a lead author on that report.

Experts hope the high fossil fuel prices and fears over energy security caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine will accelerate the uptake of renewables.

Momentum gathered pace on Sunday with the ambitious US climate bill, which earmarks US\$370 billion in efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent by 2030.

An analysis by experts at Princeton University estimates the bill could see five times the rate of solar additions in 2025 as there were in 2020.

Nemet said solar alone could plausibly make up half of the world's electricity system by mid-century, although he cautioned against looking for "silver bullets".

"I think there really is big potential," he told AFP.

The "photovoltaic effect" — the process by which solar cells convert sunlight to electrical energy — was first discovered in 1839 by the French physicist Edmond Becquerel.

After decades of innovations, silicon-based solar cells started to be developed in the United States in the 1950s, with the world's first solar-powered satellite launched in 1958.

The IPCC said of all energy technologies, small-scale ones like solar and batteries have so far proved quicker to improve and be adopted than bulkier options like nuclear.

Today, almost all of the panels glimmering on rooftops and spreading across vast fields are made in China using silicon semiconductors.

But the technology is changing quickly.

In a recent report, the IEA said these new solar cells have proven to be one-fifth more efficient in converting light to energy than standard modules installed just four or five years ago.

There are also a host of new materials and hybrid cells that experts predict could supercharge efficiency.

These include cheap, efficient and lightweight "thin film" technologies, like those using perovskites that can be printed from inks.

Experts say they raise the prospect of dramatically expanding where solar energy can be harvested — if they can be made durable enough to withstand a couple of decades of use.

Recent research has raised hopes that it could be possible.

In one study, published in the journal Science in April, scientists added metal-containing materials to perovskite cells, making them more stable with efficiency near traditional silicon models.

Other research mixes materials for different purposes.

One study in Nature used "tandem" models, with perovskite semiconductors to absorb near-infrared light on the solar spectrum, while an organic carbon-based material absorbed ultraviolet and visible parts of the light.

And what happens after sunset? Researchers from Stanford said this year they had



produced a solar cell that could harvest energy overnight, using heat leaking from Earth back into space.

"I think that there's a lot of creativity in this industry," said Ron Schoff, who heads the Electric Power Research Institute's Renewable Energy and Fleet Enabling Technologies research.

Generating more energy from each panel will become increasingly crucial as solar power is rolled out at greater scale, raising concerns about land use and harm to ecosystems.

Schoff said one efficiency-boosting design that is becoming more popular for large-scale projects is "bifacial" solar.

These double-sided units absorb energy not just directly from the sun's rays, but also from light reflected off the ground beneath.

Other solutions involve using the same space for multiple purposes — like semi-transparent solar panels used as a protective roof for strawberry plants or other crops.

India pioneered the use of solar panels over canals a decade ago, reducing evaporation as they generate power.

Scientists in California have said that if the drought-prone US state shaded its canals, it could save around 63 billion gallons.

Construction on a pilot project is due to begin this year.

Experts say solar will be among a mix of energy options, with different technologies more suitable for different places.

Schoff said ultimately those energy grids with more than 25 per cent solar and wind need ways to store energy — with batteries or large-scale facilities using things like pumped water or compressed air.

Consumers can also play their part, said Nemet, by shifting more of their energy use to daytime periods, or even hosting their own solar networks in an Airbnb-style approach.

He said the modular nature of solar means it can be rolled out in developing countries with sparse access to traditional grids.

"You could have solar on something as small as a watch and something as big as the biggest power plants in the world," he said.

"I think that's what's making people excited about it."

Iran to Launch...

FROM PAGE 1

The AEOI plans two other similar power generation units in Bushehr in line with Iran's plans to diversify electricity production in the country.

Mohammadzadeh said that nuclear reactors in the two planned power plant units in Bushehr will be used to operate two desalination projects with a combined capacity of 150,000 cubic meters per day.

Peak Electricity...

FROM PAGE 1

He noted that over one million new electricity subscribers have been added to the number of the country's power consumers since the previous calendar year.

The minister had previously called on people to continue following consumption management programs, saying: "If the people's cooperation and saving continue like in the early days of the summer, we will get through the remaining days of the season with minimal problems."

Over the past decade, constant temperature rising and the significant decrease in rainfalls across Iran have put the country in a hard situation regarding electricity supply during peak consumption periods.

Iran's Power Generation, Distribution, and Transmission Company (known as Tavanir) has previously announced that the company is implementing a variety of programs for managing the situation and preventing blackouts in the country.

Iranian Carmaker...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran Khodro's first exports to Russia occurred notably between 2007 and 2009. Some Iran-made automotive components such as engine cooling systems, suspension and casting parts have been exported to the Russian market in recent years.

The automaker's vice president, Kianoush Pourmojib, outlined plans to improve the quality of vehicles churned out by Iran Khodro.

He pointed to increased exports to Azerbaijan over the past five years, saying the manufacturer also intends to compete in other markets such as Oman and Iraq.

"In volume, it is of course Russia that is the most important," he noted.

This year, Iran Khodro will produce more than 500,000 vehicles, Khatibi said. The company's goal within three years is also to export 100,000 vehicles annually, compared with fewer than 20,000 currently, he added.

The Ukraine war has upended car production in Russia which is the eighth-largest automotive market in the world. Several global manufacturers have halted deliveries to Russia, while others have been forced to pause production due to a lack of parts.

In May, Iran's official news agency IRNA said a leading Russian automotive company sounded out Iranian parts and equipment manufacturers on the possibility of supplying its production lines with required products.

Master cylinder brake boosters, hydraulic anti-lock braking systems, ABS sensors, seat belts, airbags, alternators, air conditioners, oxygen sensors, thermostats and window lift systems are among the parts demanded by the Russian automaker, a member of the Iranian Auto Parts Manufacturers Association (IAMPA)'s presiding board, Hossein Bahrainian said.

Iran's auto sector has started standing on its own feet after years of reliance on imported car kits which foreign companies stopped supplying when the U.S. reimposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic in 2018.

Switzerland Could Align With EU Energy Saving Drive



ZURICH (Dispatches) - Switzerland could prevent an energy shortage by aligning with a European Union plan to cut gas use by 15% this winter, Energy Minister Simonetta Sommaruga told newspaper SonntagsBlick.

European Union countries formally adopted the bloc's emergency plan to curb gas use on Friday in a bid to save fuel for a winter of uncertain Russian supplies.

"The situation is serious," Sommaruga told the Sunday newspaper, adding that a call from Switzerland's electricity commission for households to stock up on candles in case of blackouts this coming winter was "a wake-up call for everyone".

In late June, the Swiss government outlined plans to address a possible shortage of natural gas this winter and said it could resort to rationing should other measures prove insufficient.

Landlocked Switzerland gets its gas via trading hubs in neighboring countries in the EU, and gas covers around 15% of its total energy consumption. Around 42% of gas is used to heat households, and the rest in industry and in the service and transport sectors, according to government data.

Asked if Switzerland should match the EU's agreement asking all countries in the bloc to voluntarily cut gas use by 15% this winter, Sommaruga replied: "That would certainly make sense. The Federal Council will decide."

She also said the government would begin a campaign to that effect in the coming weeks and that she would push for the heating to be turned down in public buildings.

More Cash Needed to Save Britons From Destitution in Energy Crisis

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's energy crisis will push millions into destitution this winter unless the government hands out more cash to help struggling households pay fuel bills, Rishi Sunak, the trailing candidate in the contest to become Britain's next leader, said.

Former finance minister Sunak is up against foreign minister Liz Truss to succeed Prime Minister Boris Johnson next month, when the winner will take charge of an economy facing prolonged recession and battling soaring energy price-driven inflation.

"The first rule of any crisis is to acknowledge that you are facing one. We are facing an energy crisis," Sunak said in a statement.

"I will support people that need urgent help to pay their bills this winter. Failure to do this would push millions, including many pensioners, into a state of destitution."

Sunak is seeking to use the public clamour for more help on energy to make his argument against immediate tax cuts more palatable, while his rival continues to argue that lowering taxes as soon as possible is the best way out of the current squeeze.



Sunak has gone beyond Truss by promising to increase an existing 15 billion pound (\$18.2 billion) support package aimed at helping Britons cope with energy costs that are forecast to rise by 150% from current levels by April 2023.

Yet opinion polls put Truss far ahead of Sunak in the race to win a majority of votes among members of the ruling Conservative Party who are voting by post, with a result due on Sept. 5.

Truss has faced criticism from political opponents and charities for appearing to rule out further "handouts" and, seeking to appeal to fiscally conservative party members, has not committed to increasing direct payments to consumers.

She says she would do everything possible to ensure people can pay their bills, and has promised to lift some environmental surcharges.

Sunak fleshed out his plans on energy by saying that he would deregulate North Sea fossil fuel production, cut energy waste by insulating more homes, and reform licensing around offshore wind, solar and nuclear energy generation.

European Hotels Find Themselves in Pickle, Fighting for Staff

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Do you have a resume in the hotel business? Do you have years of experience in the sector? No? Well, no problem! Top European hotel chains are hiring workers without experience or even a resume as executives admit years of underpaying staff have come back to bite, leaving them unable to meet post-pandemic travel demand.

Thousands of workers left the hospitality industry when international travel shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many chose not to return, finding better paid employment elsewhere, leaving hoteliers facing a desperate shortage.

Europe's largest hotelier Accor is running trial initiatives to recruit people who haven't previously worked in the industry, Chief Executive Sebastien Bazin said in an interview with Reuters at the Qatar Economic Forum last month.

Accor, which operates brands like Mercure, ibis and Fairmont in over 110 countries, needs 35,000 workers globally, he said.

"We tried in Lyon and Bordeaux 10 days ago and this weekend we're having people interviewed with no resume, no prior job experience and they are hired within 24 hours," Bazin said.

In the short-term, Accor is filling roles in France with young people and migrants while also limiting services.

"It's students, people coming from North Africa," Bazin said. "And basically closing restaurants for lunch or (opening them) only five days a week. There's no other solution," he fretted.

The new recruits are given six hours of training and learn on the job, he said.

Staff shortages are particularly pressing in Spain and Portugal, where tourism accounted for 13% and 15% of economic output, respectively before the pandemic.

Hoteliers there are offering higher pay, free accommodation and perks like bonuses and health insurance.

Spaun Clings to PGA Memphis Lead

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - J.J. Spaun birdied two of the last three holes to shoot a two-under par 68 for a one-stroke lead after the third round of the US PGA Tour's St. Jude Championship. Spaun tapped in to birdie the par-5 16th and holed a 17-foot birdie putt at the 17th then stood alone at the top after Austrian Sepp Straka missed a nine-foot par putt at the 18th at TPC Southwind in Memphis, Tennessee. The 31-year-old American stood on 13-under 197 through 54 holes with Straka on 198 after shooting 68.

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
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Minisini Wins 2nd Men's Artistic Swimming Gold

ROME (Dispatches) - Italian artistic swimmer Giorgio Minisini won his second solo gold medal on Sunday at the European Championship, the first major competition to allow men-only events. Minisini added the free solo gold to the technical solo title he won on Friday. He also won the mixed free duet with Lucrezia Ruggiero on Saturday. Spaniard Fernando Diaz del Rio was again second with Frenchman Quentin Rakotomalala, who did not compete on Friday, taking bronze.

Hurkacz Sets Montreal Final Against Carreno

MONTREAL (Dispatches) - Hubert Hurkacz shrugged off a slow start to upset fourth seed Casper Ruud and book a title clash with Pablo Carreno Busta at the ATP Montreal Masters.

Poland's Eighth-seeded Hurkacz needed two hours to claim a 5-7, 6-3, 6-2 victory over his Norwegian opponent, who had dropped just one set all week.

But his workload was minor compared to that of unseeded Spaniard Carreno Busta, who needed three hours to hold off Briton Daniel Evans 7-5, 6-7 (7/9), 6-2.

Hurkacz had already battled past Emil Ruusuvuori, Albert Ramos-Vinolas and Nick Kyrgios in matches that went the distance this week in Quebec. Despite the demanding nature of his victories, Hurkacz was confident he would be ready to bring his best for the final, where he will face Carreno Busta, who downed Daniel Evans in 7-5, 6-7(7), 6-2.

"It's OK," said the Pole, who has now triumphed in his past six three-set matches. "Physically I feel good. I've been putting a lot of work in these past weeks. So far, so good!"

Carreno Busta had a match point in the second set tiebreaker but couldn't close out victory for another 50 minutes, finally sprinting away as he won the last dozen points of the match.

Evans sent over his sixth double-fault of a long evening to surrender the contest.

Carreno Busta reached his first Masters final, where he'll be vying to become the first unseeded Canadian champion since Argentina's Guillermo Canas in 2002.

He fired 45 winners, but said he was pleased to get through despite not playing his best tennis.

"It's important to win these kind of matches, I'm so happy to be in the final," he said.

"Suddenly this week, my level has been unbelievable." Against Ruud, Hurkacz finished with 47 winners - including 18 aces - and 19 unforced errors, advancing on his second match point.

"I was just trying to stay in the match, he was better for the first set and a half," Hurkacz said. "I just had to hold on and fight."



Hurkacz has gone to three sets in each of his matches this week, but said he wasn't feeling any physical toll.

"I feel good, I have energy," he said. "So far so good." Ruud and Hurkacz traded early breaks, but the Norwegian gained the edge in the first set, winning it on another break of serve.

He then inflicted further punishment by breaking Hurkacz to love in the opening game of the second as he tried to set a tone for the remainder of the match.

But Hurkacz struck back with an immediate break and carried on to level the match at a set apiece.

Hurkacz got away quickly in the deciding set, grabbing a 4-1 lead with two quick breaks of serve before closing out the comeback triumph.

He avenged a loss to Ruud in the fourth round at Roland Garros two months ago.

"I was just staying aggressive, searching for opportunities, just trying to take every single chance to get ahead in the rally and make him uncomfortable," Hurkacz said.

Hurkacz has won his first five ATP finals and is keen to carry on with his string of victories.

"I just try to compete as hard as I can, be as well-prepared (as possible)

"I was fortunate to win the first few finals. But tomorrow is a new match. It's going to be a very tricky one."

Haddad Maia To Face Halep for Canadian WTA Title



TORONTO (Dispatches) - Simona Halep will bid for a third Canadian title at the WTA Toronto Masters against determined Brazilian outsider Beatriz Haddad Maia.

Haddad Maia stunned 2021 finalist Karolina Pliskova 6-4, 7-6 (9/7) in the semi-finals while Halep put years of big-match experience to good use in a 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory over seventh-seeded American Jessica Pegula.

Halep, the former world number one from Romania who won 2016 and 2018 trophies in Canada, showed her definitive return to form with the victory after dropping from the top 10 in the rankings a year ago due to injury.

"We never played against each other," Halep said. "So I didn't really know what to expect."

"But it was a great fight. I'm really happy that I went through."

"Of course, I can improve," Halep added. "But I'm building the confidence, I'm building the game, and I'm really happy that I'm in this position."

Haddad Maia, who stunned world number one Iga Swiatek in the third round, blunted the noted serving attack of Czech Pliskova, who fired nine aces in defeat.

The first Brazilian to get to the final of a WTA Masters event has now won 17 matches since June, when she won grasscourt titles in Birmingham and Nottingham.

Nitithorn Wins International Series Singapore

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Thailand's Nitithorn Thippong seized the initiative as his rivals faltered, closing with a flawless three-under-par 69 to win the International Series Singapore.

His four-day, 16-under-par total of 272 was enough to leapfrog previous leaders Gavin Green and Phachara Khongwatmai and hand him a one-shot victory on Sunday at the sun-baked Tanah Merah Country Club.

The Singapore tournament was part of the new International Series, which received funding of \$400 million from the Saudi-backed LIV.

The final day of the event was set for a dramatic showdown, with 11 players within three shots of the lead going into the back nine.

However, it was Nitithorn who eventually reigned supreme, crediting his mental game for helping him win his biggest career title to date.

"I'm really (at a) loss for words with this victory. It's my biggest win so far and I cannot describe my feeling. I was fully focused on the process and playing my own game the entire week," he said.

"I kept believing in myself and did not allow myself to be distracted by other pressures. I'm so happy I managed to win this week."

Malaysia's Green, who had led the tournament since the second round, could have forced a playoff with Nitithorn had his birdie putt from 15 feet dropped into the hole at the last.

Green instead settled for a share of second place with overnight co-leader Phachara, of Thailand, and Canada's Richard T Lee, all of whom signed off with identical 273s.

"I don't think the last putt could have gone any closer to the hole. I thought I had made it. But it stopped breaking right at the end. But it is what it is. This is golf. I gave it a chance and that was all I could do," said Green.

Australia's Todd Sinnott shot the day's lowest score of 64 to finish in a tie for fifth with Taiwan's Chan Shih-chang.

Chan looked to be heading for a grandstand finish after snatching the outright lead on 16-under with a birdie on 14. However, a disastrous triple bogey on 18 dashed all hopes of securing his fifth win on the Asian Tour.



Jesus Has Raised the Bar at Arsenal

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta spoke of Gabriel Jesus's positive impact on the rest of the squad after the Brazilian marked his home debut with two goals in a 4-2 win over Leicester City in the Premier League.

Jesus, who joined from Manchester City in a deal reported to be worth around 45 million pounds (\$54.6 million), struck twice in the first half and was involved in further goals for Granit Xhaka and fellow Brazilian Gabriel Martinelli.

The 25-year-old could have bagged a hat-trick and was applauded off when substituted late on. "We know what Gabi can do. He scored two and got two assists and is still disappointed because he thinks he should have scored four," said Arteta, who worked with Jesus during his time as assistant manager at Manchester City.

"That's the standard, that's the mentality. You need to go to a different level." Jesus's influence on his team mates was clear as Arsenal's free-flowing attack looked potent on Saturday.

Leicester's defenders were given a torrid time as Jesus showed the kind of form that earned him many fans at City even if he struggled to nail down a starting spot.

"I wouldn't like to play against him. I've never been a defender, but I can imagine I wouldn't enjoy it. He's so mobile, so intuitive, always sharp and proactive to play in any moment and phase in the game, and it's a real threat," Arteta said.

Man United Players Trashed Tactical Plan

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag apologized to the club's supporters for his team's abject performance in their 4-0 loss against Brentford on Saturday, claiming the players consigned pre-match plans to "the bin".

United, the 20-times English champions, sit at the foot of the Premier League standings for the first time in 30 years after Ten Hag kicked off his first campaign in charge with back-to-back defeats following last week's loss to Brighton.

"Brentford were more hungry," the Dutchman told reporters. "We conceded goals from individual mistakes. You can't have a tactical plan but then put it in the bin." United last won the Premier League title nine years ago in Alex Ferguson's final season in charge and the club appear further away than ever to returning to their position among English football's elite.

Brentford had the game sown up long before halftime, with Josh Dasilva, Mathias Jensen, Ben Mee and Bryan Mbuemo all scoring for Thomas Frank's side by the 35th minute.

"It is difficult for me," said Ten Hag. "It is always a surprise when you start a game like this."

"After 35 minutes we conceded four goals. This is not possible. The team has to take the responsibility, I feel really sorry for the fans who did everything to support us, we let them down." The former Ajax Amsterdam coach took responsibility for the loss but also called on his players to show greater confidence and present a more united front.



Chelsea Linked With Two More

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea are treating negotiations for Leicester City's Wesley Fofana and Barcelona's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang as their priority, according to transfer expert Fabrizio Romano.

The Blues have had a busy transfer market so far with Andreas Christensen, Antonio Rudiger, Timo Werner and Romelu Lukaku among the departures this summer.

Marc Cucurella, Raheem Sterling, Kalidou Koulibaly, Carney Chukwuemeka and Gabriel Slonina have all signed for Thomas Tuchel's side and there's more to come.

Aubameyang, Zaha will endure pity chants like Werner at Chelsea without Tuchel sea-change With Christensen and Rudiger leaving for Barcelona and Real Madrid respectively, Chelsea have brought in Koulibaly and are now focused on delivering a deal for Fofana.

Chelsea, who were to host Tottenham on Sunday, have reportedly made two bids of £60m and £65m for Fofana but Leicester are demanding in excess of £80m for one of their best players.

Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers hit back at suggestions that Fofana was saying farewell to Foxes fans after their 4-2 defeat to Arsenal on Saturday.

Rodgers said: "No, I think he was giving the fans a clap. I didn't see a farewell clap. But you need to write what you need to write. That's the story."

And now Romano has claimed that the Blues 'are in direct contact for Pierre Aubameyang and Wesley Fofana as priority deals' while 'still working on top talents for the future'.

