

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **143,947** With **30** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

# IRAN NEWS

Commander of the Iranian Army Air Defense Force Says Iran Is Today In Possession of the Most Advanced Air Defense Hardware and Is Capable of Monitoring Thousands of Kilometers Beyond Its borders.

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## Potential JCPOA Deal Should Not Have Any Ambiguity

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Fake and politicized accusations made by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) against Iran should be resolved, because a potential agreement in the Vienna talks should not have any ambiguity, an Iranian political expert said.

Mohammad Marandi, an analyst, told Aljazeera TV network on Friday night that the important issue is that the potential accord should not include any kind of possible problem, ambiguities or gap, which could be misused by the United States in a bid to withdraw it under the excuse of such gaps, as the Trump administration could use ambiguous words and some gaps in the 2015 nuclear deal in order to pull out of the agreement.

The analyst went on to say that this time Iran is determined to push for creating a framework to prevent the US from annulling the potential deal.

The Iranian negotiating team tries to create a condition that the US would not be able to withdraw from the agreement without paying prices; so, there is nothing extraordinary in Iran's response to the suggestion of the European Union on the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), he noted. *See Page 7*

## Iran Standing Up Against Arrogant Powers' Plots



IRAN NEW NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has hailed the Islamic Republic as the most promising force in the face of plots pursued by colonial powers, stating that most of their outrageous demands have been resisted and rejected due to Iran's struggle.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks on Saturday as he addressed participants of the 7th Summit of General Assembly of Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly in Tehran.

"Followers of the Household of Prophet are proud to have taken the most significant step in confronting the system of arrogance and dominion. Many words are being uttered; but what is actually taking place on the ground is a clear and definite thing. It is the Islamic Republic acting as the flag-bearer in this regard," he noted.

He added that Shia Muslims take great pride in standing up against arrogant powers, which interfere in the affairs of other countries, governments, and nations in a cruel and tyrannical manner.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said many of their outrageous demands have been resisted and rejected as a result of the Islamic Republic's struggle.

The Leader went on to say that Islamic Republic of Iran is hoisting the flag of justice and spirituality. It is natural for arrogant powers to oppose the country which is branding such a flag. Therefore, the arrogant countries' opposition and confrontation with the Islamic Republic is a natural issue, Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out.

Ayatollah Khamenei described Iran's encouragement of other nations to stand up against bullying as the main reason behind arrogant powers' wrath and enmity towards the Islamic Republic.

The Leader also highlighted that Tehran's neutralization of Washington's criminal plots in other countries, one of which was the creation of Daesh Takfiri terrorist group, triggered intense campaign of Iranophobia and Shiaphobia, as well as wild accusations that Iran is meddling in the domestic affairs of other countries.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the United States spearheads global arrogance, emphasizing that accusations are being made against Iran as arrogant powers are unable to prevent the significant progress of the Islamic Republic.

"Everyone should stand up against the policies of arrogant powers, exercise vigilance and not associate with them," the Leader of the Islamic Revolution said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said the policy of the arrogant powers is to paint unrealistic dividing lines in the Muslim world.

The Leader added that recent incitement and planning for a war between Shia and Sunni Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs or even intra-Shia and intra-Sunni conflicts are the all orchestrated by the United States.

The 7th Summit of the General Assembly of Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly is underway in the Iranian capital city of Tehran and the northeastern shrine city of Mashhad, and will run through September 4. It has attracted hundreds of guests from more than 110 countries.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly is an international non-governmental organization in Iran. It was founded in 1990 by a group of Shia elites in order to identify, organize, educate and support followers of the Household of Prophet Mohammad.

## Iran Ends Reliance on Oil Sales in Foreign Trade

QOM (IRNA) - Minister of industry, Mine and Trade Reza Fatemi Amin said here on Friday that the world markets are opened towards Iran's exports and now Iranian economy's reliance on oil in foreign trade has ended.

Fatemi Amin said on the sidelines of his visit to Qom in a press conference, "Iran's non-oil exports rose from 35 billion dollars in the year 2021 to 58 billion in the year 2022 and in the first four months of the current Iranian year (that began on March 21, 2022) showed 40% increase in non-oil exports compared to the same period last year.

He emphasized that the economic conditions of the country are improving, and said that the general conditions of the Iranian economy are quite hope inspiring.

Fatemi Amin said that also in production of most products "we are witnessing boom in manufacturing, and for instance Iran's steel production increased 5% and aluminum production over 15%.

He said that this increased production is also seen in cars, home appliances, glassware, copper, etc., although in case of some goods such as cooking oil we have faced decreased production, which is partly due to the smuggling of this product. *See Page 7*

## Ball Now Is In U.S. Court

On Thursday the Islamic Republic submitted its views on the U.S. response to the EU draft text on revival of the 2015 JCPOA deal and now the ball is in the U.S. court to show its will for striking the new deal but many analysts believe that the current U.S. Administration lacks enough courage to sign the deal because of the mid-term elections for the Congress and Senate in the U.S.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said that Iran's response was prepared following evaluation on various levels. He said, "After receiving the United States' response, the Islamic Republic's expert team examined it carefully and Iran's responses were compiled and submitted to the coordinator tonight."

"The text that was sent (by Iran) has a constructive approach aimed at finalizing the negotiations," he added.

Speaking during a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Moscow on Wednesday, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the country was reviewing the US's response, but stressed the importance of "stronger guarantees" from the American side to clinch an agreement.

On Monday President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi once again reiterated Iran's conditions for revival of the deal and stressed that Iran will not bow to the West's pressure and it will sign the deal only after its conditions are fully accepted.

Raisi said an agreement on the revival of the Iran nuclear deal hinges on the settlement of safeguards issues between Tehran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Without settling those issues, reviving the 2015 deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) makes no sense, Raisi said at a press conference on Monday.

"Negotiations are underway within the same framework and focused on the removal of sanctions. We insist on verification and confidence-building measures during the course of negotiations. We also emphasize on the full resolution of safeguard issues. This is an important issue, and any talk of an agreement would have not meaning unless issues are resolved."

He stressed that Iran needs a stronger guarantee from the U.S. for probable U.S. withdrawal from the deal and he also reiterated that Iran's dossier in the IAEA should be closed for ever.

Raisi also dismissed Israeli threats against Tehran, emphasizing that nobody can deprive the Iranian nation of its inalienable right to access peaceful nuclear technology. *See Page 7*

## Iran Navy Details Seizing American Vessels in Red Sea

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Navy details seizing two American maritime drones in the Red Sea as means of preventing naval accidents in the international shipping lane.

The Navy's Jamaran destroyer encountered the "data collecting" vessels during a routine operation aimed at securing shipping routes and confronting piracy and maritime terrorism, the Navy said in a statement.

The Iranian warship then called on the American authorities in charge of the sail drones to change the vessels' direction "in order to prevent accidents and naval collisions," read the statement.

The destroyer, however, encountered the drones again, with its calls on the American officials to control the vessels' behavior going unheeded on several occasions.

Having seized control of the American vessels, the Iranian ship then resorted to releasing them in a "safe area" towards "establishing naval security," after which American naval units, which were present there, captured the drones.

The American side was "then urged to act responsibly concerning [the issue of] naval security and prevent recurrence of such incidents." *See Page 7*

## Russia Indefinitely Suspends Nord Stream Gas Pipeline to Europe

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Russian gas giant Gazprom has indefinitely suspended natural gas flows to Europe via Nord Stream 1 pipeline amid a worsening energy crisis in the continent.

Gazprom completely halted the flow of gas through the pipeline on Wednesday, saying the stoppage would last for three days.

However, on Friday it said it extended the shutdown over a technical fault, providing no timeframe for a reopening.

"Gas transportation to the Nord Stream gas pipeline has been completely halted until the complaints on the operation of the equipment have been eliminated," Gazprom said in a statement on Telegram on Friday.

Gazprom also said that they won't resume operations until the repair work will be over.

"Until it is repaired... the transport of gas via Nord Stream is completely suspended," it added.

The latest announcement comes on the same day as the G7 nations said they would work to quickly implement a price cap on Russian oil exports.

The Kremlin has recently warned about the future operations of the pipeline that is at risk due to a lack of spare parts.

"There are no technical reserves, only one turbine is working," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"So the reliability of the operation, of the whole system, is at risk," he said, adding that it was "not through the fault" of Gazprom. While the EU has accused Russia of cutting supplies in retaliation for the sanctions, Moscow has insisted that the sanctions have made the technical maintenance of the pipeline very difficult for the Russian company. *See Page 7*

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## Cyprus Arrests Assailant of Iranian Woman

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Public Relations Office of the Foreign Ministry announced that the assailant of an Iranian woman in Cyprus has been arrested, emphasizing that Iran embassy pursued the inhumane act and asked the Cypriot government to act accordingly.

The Foreign Ministry following the release of a video clip showing an Iranian woman being beaten up by her apartment owner in Cyprus, issued a statement. "The consulate of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Cyprus

visited the attacked Iranian woman in the hospital, and pursued the process of her medical treatment. Also the embassy pursued the inhumane treatment of the Iranian citizen and asked the Cypriot government to act accordingly," the statement said.

The Foreign Ministry reflected that the Cypriot officials have expressed sorrow over the inhumane act and their promise to pursue the matter, and on Thursday the news on the arrest of the assailant, who is a British citizen, was released.

## President Urges People To Observe Health Protocols Seriously

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi announced injection of reminder doses and control of the country's entry points as two important issues to deal with coronavirus in the month of September, and said, "Due to the traffic of Arbaeen pilgrims and the increase in travel in the last days of summer, it is necessary for all people to follow health protocols more seriously".

Speaking on Saturday at the meeting of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus, Ayatollah Raisi announced that the injection of a reminder dose and control of entry points into the country are two important issues to deal with coronavirus in September, and said, "Considering the traffic of Arbaeen pilgrims and the increase in travel in the last days of summer, it is necessary for all people to follow health protocols more seriously".

Referring to the report of the Ministry of Health about 74% vaccination in the country, the President said, "It is necessary to explain the positive results of vaccination and booster doses to the people through the media".

In another part of his speech, Ayatollah Raisi introduced Arbaeen as a great and honorable event and said, "This great global movement is organized with the efforts of those who love Imam Hussein (AS) and the Ahl ul-Bayt (AS) and the government has the duty to serve people in this regard and facilitated the travel of pilgrims".

Stating that the key to the success of Arbaeen is that it is held as popular as possible, the President urged its organizers and the officials of various institutions to use the



capacity of popular and jihadist groups appropriately.

Raisi described registration in the SAMAH system as necessary and important in order to provide better service and easier traffic for Arbaeen pilgrims, and emphasized the need for accurate information.

Expressing his satisfaction with the creation of peace in Iraq, the President stated, "The enemies do not want this huge procession, which is a capacity for the resistance front and the Islamic world, to be held well, but every year the grandeur of the great gathering of Imam Hussein's (AS) followers increases".

In another part of his speech, the President referred to the approach of the reopening of schools and universities and emphasized the necessity of "proper ventilation" and "compliance with health protocols".

In this regard, Raisi tasked the Ministries of Science and Education to update the rules and health guidelines for the reopening of schools and universities and explain them to the people according to the current conditions of the country.

## Iranian Defense Power Never Up For Negotiations

TEHRAN (IFP) - An advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the ex-Iraqi regime's Western-backed war on Iran in the 1980s taught the country not to engage in any negotiations over its defense power.

Brigadier General Amir Hatami, who advises Ayatollah Khamenei, the Commander-in-Chief, on military affairs, said during a ceremony that the Islamic Republic moved to sharply strengthen its defense power following the eight-year war, something that promoted the enemies of the nation to call for negotiations on the matter.

"The Sacred Defense [Iraqi-imposed war] taught us that the defense might is non-negotiable. We will promote this [power] as much as needed and will never put it up for negotiations with any party," said Hatami.

If Iran possesses advanced missiles today, that's because the country has realized it needs such weapons, he said.

That is also the reason why Iran is in possession of cutting-edge drones, which also played a role in wars in Azerbaijan and Ukraine, he added.

"Today, the Western countries have rushed to the aid of Ukraine [against Russia] with short-range and anti-armor equipment. We are also in possession of anti-tank and anti-helicopter arms, among other things, that can serve as a game-changer in this battle," he added.

## Enemies Don't Tolerate Iran's Enjoyment of Modern Tech

KASHAN (IRNA) - Possessing modern technologies is a source of power for any country, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said, adding that enemies don't tolerate Iran's enjoyment of those technologies.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is uncompromising and will not trade independence, glory, and the country's interests for anything, Mohammad Eslami said in Kashan.

Eslami said that Europeans' immediate goal of imposing sanctions against Iran is to drive it to submission.

The nuclear chief added, not only have the sanctions not led Iran to surrender, but they have turned into a source of power for Iran.

He noted that biotechnology, information and communications, and nuclear and aerospace technologies are considered drivers of power today.

Every country which possesses emerging technologies is powerful, Eslami said, adding that Iran possesses these technologies today despite all disturbances and acts of sabotage by the enemies.

The Iranian official underlined that Europeans have acknowledged that Iran has internalized nuclear science and this cannot be bombed or ruined, opposing the Zionist regime's argument that Iran's nuclear capability should be destroyed through military action.

He also noted that the Global Arrogance had been seeking to disturb the Iranian public opinion by making threats, imposing sanctions, waging psychological warfare, and raising false accusations against Iran.

## Gov't, People Stand Against Colonial Excessive Demands

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani has underscored that the Iranian government and people keep standing against any kind of excessive demands by the colonial powers.

On the occasion of the anniversary of the day of combat against British colonialism, Kanaani commemorated the important historical event.

The FM spokesman wrote on his Instagram account on Saturday that Shahrvivar 12 (September 3) is the day of fighting colonialism.

The day is the reminder of Martyr Rais Ali Delvari, the combatant and brave figure as well as the symbol of fighting colonial and expansionist invaders, Kanaani added.

The government and nation of Iran will not give up their legitimate rights in the face of excessive demands and bullying from the inheritors of colonialism and defend the independence and dignity of the country, according to the official.

The Islamic Republic of Iran designated September 3 as the day of combat against British colonialism in Iran, which is the day of martyrdom of Rais Ali Delvari, who was an Iranian independence fighter and anti-British colonialism activist.

Rais Ali Delvari was born in 1882 in Delvar, a small village in the southwestern Bushehr Province; he was martyred in 1915 at the age of 33.

## Russia Strategic Partner of Iran Tehran Reacts to Anti-Iranian Note in UK Paper

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Europeans have demanded Iran to mediate between Russia and Ukraine to stop war, an Iranian lawmaker said.

Iran's distinct geopolitical position has caused Europeans, including France, to ask Iran to act as a go-between to prevent an all-out war in the heart of Europe, Fada-Hossein Maaleki, member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, told IRNA.

Iran could counter the United States' cruel sanctions and stand against excessive demands of some world powers, including the US, for four decades by relying on its domestic capabilities, Maaleki said.

He opined that Iran, Russia, and China were aligned in a block after the US imposing of sanctions against Iran and excessing demands from the European side, pushing the powers in the region to become close to protect their national interests.

He highlighted the suspension of Russia's gas export to Europe, saying that this has caused a fear among Europeans and forced them to push the US to rejoin the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran so that they can purchase their gas from Iran.

Maaleki described Russia as a strategic partner that has a common language with Iran in the region, noting that this can give Iran a more effective role in putting an end to the Ukraine crisis.

LONDON (Dispatches) - Iran Embassy chargé d'affaires in Britain reacted to Zionist regime's representative on probable agreement to terminate sanctions, and reiterated that that illegitimate regime cannot tolerate peace and security in the world.

Mehdi Hosseini Matin on his Twitter account, wrote, "The Zionist regime's destructive demands from Britain once again show that that illegitimate regime cannot tolerate peace and security either in the region, or anywhere else in the world, and even does not recognize Britain's right to decide independently in nuclear negotiations." The Iranian diplomat wrote that the terrorist regime of Israel that has been established based on illegal occupying of the others' lands has the record of several decades of phony accusations against Iran's peaceful nuclear program. Referring to the UN Security Council Resolution on JCPOA, Iran's chargé d'affaires wrote that the agreement was a legal document, agreed upon by Iran and five countries, including Britain.

As the negotiations to remove the sanctions approaches its fate making stages, the destructive moves by the racist Zionist regime are aimed at disrupting the negotiations. Tzipi Hotovely, the Zionist regime ambassador in London on Friday issued an article in Daily Telegraph newspaper in which she has described the agreement with Iran as dangerous, asking the British government to reject it.

Saying nothing about Israel's stockpiles of nuclear warheads in its arsenals, she claimed: Trusting a regime that due to its ambitious nuclear plan still keeps on telling lies, is quite an illogical move. She claimed that signing an agreement with Iran is as perilous for Washington and London, as it is for Tel Aviv, and it is today more important than ever before that the agreement on the table will not be signed. Earlier, too, the interim Zionist regime prime minister in a message addressed to the White House had claimed that the draft of the Vienna agreement has gone beyond the JCPOA criteria and is incongruous with the redlines of the US President Joe Biden, and are breaching them. The Islamic Republic of Iran has presented its views on the US response to the presented draft for the nuclear agreement.

## Foreign Policy Based On Independence, Peace

TEHRAN (IP) - The Iranian Foreign Minister says the Islamic Republic's discourse and performance in foreign policy have been established based on independence, peace, and dignity.

In a meeting with the World Assembly of Ahl al-Bayt members and other guests from 118 countries held in Tehran, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian discussed the status quo of the Islamic world and the threats and opportunities ahead of it.

Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian called the preparation of the grounds for the world's Muslim scholars' exchange of thoughts one of the valuable achievements of the 7th General Forum of the World Assembly of Ahl al-Bayt.

He pointed to the enemies' attempts to cast division among the Muslims and misrepresent Islam as a violent religion, putting emphasis on the unity of the Islamic factions and efforts to introduce genuine Islam.

The Iranian FM stressed the creation of a global consensus against violence, focusing on the discourse of Islamic peace and justice and divulging the contradictory aspects of Western human rights.

## Ports, Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Wins Top Award



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Province with winning the highest rate in terms of general and special indexes was awarded the top executive organization award during the Shahid Rajaei Festival.

According to reports, the jury of the festival after evaluating the performance of the executive bodies of Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Ports and Maritime Department of the province was named for the fifth consecutive year as the top executive body of the year in the Shahid Rajaei Festival.

The organizers of the festival in their plaque of appreciation give to the caretaker of the department hailed the performance of the department for efficient use of all capacities. The organizers in the plaque of appreciation reiterated that Ports and Maritime Department achieved the highest points during the evaluation process of all executive bodies in the province and was awarded with top prize.

It also expressed hope that the department with following the recommendations of the Supreme Leader and implementing the policies of the popular government would serve the respected people of the province more than before.

## IME Posts Higher Records In Trade Value and Volume

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,056,000 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$485m, posting growths of 10% in volume and 33% in value of trades compared to the figures of the previous week.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 1,669,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$279m.

Commodities sold on this floor included 1,035,636 tons of cement, 270,000 tons of iron ore, 268,573 tons of steel, 76,000 tons of sponge iron, 8,875 tons of zinc, 5,850 tons of aluminum, 4,570 tons of copper, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 39 tons of precious metals concentrate, 27 kg of gold bars and 481 Haima SUV automobiles.

Furthermore, the IME saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 384,905 tons of commodities worth nearly \$204m.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 92,276 tons of polymeric products, 93,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 38,000 tons of lube cut, 34,058 tons of chemicals, 11,700 tons of sulfur, 3,948 tons of base oil, 340 tons of insulation and 110,295 tons of bitumen.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 1,752 tons of commodities traded on it.



## PRAYER TIME

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr)            | 13:03 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb)      | 19:46 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 05:13 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise     | 06:39 |

31. And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with them, and We have made therein broad highways (between mountains) for them to pass through: that they may receive Guidance.

32. And We have made the heavens as a canopy well guarded: yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)!

Surah 21. The Prophets (31 - 32)

# Japan Can Develop Iran Auto Industry

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



**TEHRAN – The chairman of the Iran-Japan Joint Trade Committee believes Japan can be a good choice for Iran to improve its auto industry provided that it shows interest in cooperation with Japan and JCPOA talks end successfully and sanctions are removed.**

Speaking to ILNA, Bahram Shakouri talked about the latest developments in trade between Iran and Japan and said that Japan is one of the most advanced countries in industry in the world, as everybody knows it well that automakers active in Japan are international and they sell 75% of their products in the international markets.

Touching upon the remarks of Japan Ambassadors regarding cooperation between the two countries in the field of auto making, Shakouri said that Mr. Ambassador is completely right, adding that since major shares of Japanese products are sold in the U.S. market and they have American partners and actually they have joint investment with the U.S., there is no possibility for the presence of Japanese carmakers in Iran's market due to the sanctions. He added that of course one of the good choices for cooperation with Iran can be Japan along with imports of cars from China because Japan is one of those countries which can develop Iran's auto industry provided that Iranians show interests and the JCPOA talks end successfully and sanctions are removed.

He also criticized the approval for setting price ceiling of 20,000 euros for import of any car, adding that Japanese car can also enter Iran's market with this price ceiling but it seems the figure should be changed because this price ceiling actually will push the purchasers towards low quality Chinese cars.

Shakouri then talked about the history of Iran-Japan ties and said that a couple of years ago both countries celebrated their 90th anniversary of ties and it bespeaks of century-long and close relation between the two states. He reiterated that Japan government and people are interested in cooperation with Iran and on the whole Iran enjoys distinguished strategic position in the region and he believes Iran can be a hub in the region for production and export of any products.

He then pointed to some hurdles in way of imports from Japan and said that long distance is the most important hurdle but currently sanctions is the main problem for imports from Japan and it has helped Japan to boost its ties with other countries in the region.

Shakouri said that Iran can have huge amount of exports to Japan and in return, it can import the latest technology and knowhow from Japan and both countries can cooperate on the joint venture projects.

He went on to say that Iran can cooperate with Japan in the fields of technology, rail transportation and infrastructures, auto making, tourism, gas fields and other industries, and Japan also can enjoy importing Iranian carpets, caviar, saffron, pistachio and dried fruits. He reiterated that in case sanctions are removed, Iran and Japan can improve the level of trade ties.

Shakouri went on to say that currently the official trade volume of Iran and Japan in the current year has been less than \$30m and it has been mainly imports of Japan because major exports of Iran to Japan have been oil and oil products which have been zeroed due to the sanctions.

## Tehran to Host Belarusian Trade Delegation



TEHRAN (MNA) - Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) will host a Belarusian trade delegation at the place of the chamber on Tuesday, the TCCIMA portal reported.

The Belarusian delegates active in the fields of oil and petrochemical products, refineries, fibers, pharmaceuticals, paper, forestry, car tires, paints, red meat, customs services, railways, transportation and logistics, etc. will meet and negotiate with the Iranian traders and businessmen, who are the members of the country's chambers of commerce, during some B-2-B meetings.

The spokesman of the Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry also announced that Iran and Belarus plan to increase their mutual trade first by 10 times in the near future and then by 20 times in the long term.

Omid Qalibaf said in line with the Iranian government's dynamic trade diplomacy, the ministry has prepared a detailed roadmap for increasing bilateral trade ties between the two countries.

He noted that the important point of focus in Iran's bilateral trade with Belarus is exporting knowledge-based companies' medical facilities to the country.

According to the official, the government has targeted exporting five million dollars of such equipment to Belarus annually.

## Iran Eyes 0.2mbd Crude Oil Output Capacity Rise By March 2023

TEHRAN (Shana) – The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said an increase of 200,000 barrels per day in Iran's oil production capacity is expected by the end of the current calendar year, which began on March 21.



Iran's crude oil production capacity will reach 4.38 million barrels per day by the end of this calendar year with an increase of 200,000 barrels per day, Mohsen Khojastehmehr said.

He said crude oil production capacity reached its pre-sanction's level under the Raisi administration by March 2022, adding that oil production capacity is now 3.838 million barrels per day.

He continued: "By the end of this [calendar] year, with the measures taken, Iran's oil production capacity will increase to 4.038 million barrels per day."

Regarding the increase in oil exports under Raisi administration, the Deputy Petroleum Minister said: "Considering the increase in oil production capacity, it is possible to increase our exports due to the demand in international markets."

Khojastehmehr emphasized: "This is an optimal capacity so that whenever the international conditions are more open, we will be ready to significantly increase exports and return to the world markets with maximum power."

## Tehran, Yerevan Have Ongoing Joint Application In UNESCO

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia Alfred Kocharyan received today General Director of the Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran's East Azerbaijan province Ahmad Hamzehzadeh, the ministry said in a news release.

During the meeting Deputy Minister Kocharyan said that the friendly relations between Armenia and Iran continue for centuries, by strengthening and developing with time.

"The ongoing and future programs are the evidence of this. Particularly, there is an experience of preparing joint applications to UNESCO in the field of cultural heritage. At the moment we have an ongoing application. The Blue Mosque in downtown Yerevan is a good example of preservation of heritage", he said.

Touching upon the cooperation in tourism sector, Alfred Kocharyan stated that Iranian citizens capture the 3rd place with visits to Armenia. He said that exhibitions also contribute to this, which the sides are participating on mutual principle.

The Deputy Minister assured that the Armenian side is ready to discuss the possibility of implementing new projects and initiatives.

In his turn the Iranian official said that the close ties between Iran and Armenia have a history of centuries. He stated that one of the priorities of the new government of Iran is to develop the relations with neighbors, and for that the bordering provinces serve as a linking hub. Ahmad Hamzehzadeh said their province is implementing numerous effective programs with neighboring countries. He said there are around 4000 cultural heritage objects in the province, 4 of which have got a world conformation, including 5 churches.

"We carry out the preservation of all these churches in cooperation with the Armenian community of Tabriz, and this is a vivid evidence how important the Armenian cultural heritage is for us.

No matter whether they are Armenian or Iranian, these monuments belong to the whole world", he said.

He also proposed to organize mutual visits to the churches of the two countries that got world confirmation aimed at developing tourism. Ahmad Hamzehzadeh thanked for the preservation of Iranian literature in Yerevan's Matenadaran, as well as the Blue Mosque. He proposed to jointly achieve the world confirmation of the Mosque.

In his turn Deputy Minister Alfred Kocharyan thanked for the preservation of Armenian culture in Iran. "Cultural heritage has no nationality, it is universal and belongs to all of us", he stated.



## Australian Film Week Held in Tehran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and Australia came together in Tehran to celebrate cinema and culture, as August ran into September.

Friday, September 2, saw Australia Film Week in Iran close, as it opened a new door to a dialogue among civilizations.

In other words, Australia was first in a long line of film weeks coming up. The line this year is to continue with China and Russia and move on to three other countries.

The present event was held and set off in style in some of the best cultural centers in the capital. Held in Bagh-e Ferdows Cinema Museum, it was inaugurated at Farabi Cinema Foundation, Iran's national cinematic body for organizing international events on August 30. It is heard that this second Australian film week after years and the tenth international film week Iran has done altogether over the years is only the first link in a new dialogue among civilizations. It is to be a beginning in cinematic cooperation with other countries, as well as in other capacities with Australia.

Australia was asked to also participate in the wintertime Fajr film festival and children's festivals. Culture and cinema bring people closer together and Iranian cinema boasts it can express human culture in a clean context too, as it promotes conservative family values. The thing is, Iran also holds Persian film weeks abroad.

In the present event, five films have been screened, beginning with the Furnace at Farabi, and ending with Nitram at Bagh-e Ferdows.

As Iranian cinematic and cultural authorities gave her the floor, an elegant Australian Ambassador Lyndall Sachs, who has shown an interest and respect in the local culture of her host country before, told of her experience during her three years here. Noticing the



Persian passion for cinema, she has learned Australians and Iranians both see cinema as a source of entertainment and a voice we may not hear otherwise.

The Sapphires and Rabbit Proof Fence are two favorites. Five other films were screened at the event, but all of them were the "newest best films to be shown to explore family relations and Australians' relations with their indigenous people," the Aboriginals or First People.

Nitram, the last film to be screened Friday, is directed by Justin Kurzel. With no less of a human angle than any other, it is about an isolated young man who lives with his parents in Australia until he meets an eccentric heiress. What follows is a gripping portrait of nihilism and violence. But I got to learn a whole lot of new things from the first film screened at the opening.

The Furnace, directed by Roderick MacKay and screened at Farabi's Abbas Kiarostami Hall, is about Afghan cameleers in Australia in the 19th century. There's no happiness to be found in the furnace, as any gold melted in there is blood money, and so Haneef the cameleer chooses redemption instead, and to walk through nature with his Aboriginal brothers. That's what Sachs loved about the film. In a twist of events, it turned out to be a film on "Redemption which correlates to Reconciliation with the Aboriginals" in Today's Australia. She did say earlier: "Our (Australian) cinema weaves the voices and practices of the oldest culture, our first people, into how we present Australia today."

And guess what? 150 years on, the cameleers may be no more. But Muslim and Sikh names live on among Aboriginal families. Mixed marriage relations then set the stage for relations with the First People today. And cinematic events between Iran and foreign missions are lined up to form new cultural bonds and keep those existing going.

## Iran Export of Products to Turkey Up 56% in 7 Months

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's exports to neighboring Turkey in the first seven months of 2022 registered a 56 percent growth.

According to the Statistical Department of Turkey, Iran exported \$443 million worth of products to Turkey in the first seven months of the current year in 2022, showing a 56 percent growth compared to the same period of last year.

Accordingly, Turkey's exchange of products with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the seven months of the current year in 2022 has had a 37 percent growth.

The number was \$2.877 billion this year but had been \$3.847 billion in the same period of the current year.

Based on the report, Turkey imported \$2.145 billion of goods from Iran from January to July 2022, showing a 56 percent increase compared to the last year's corresponding period.

## Aluminum Ingot Output up 27% In 4 Months on Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - Production of aluminum ingot in Iran rose 27 percent in the four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

The IMIDRO's data put the production of aluminum ingot at 222,053 tons in the four-month period of this year, while the figure was 175,281 tons in the same time span of the previous year.

Among the country's four major producers, South Aluminum Corporation (SALCO) had the best performance in the first four months of the present year, producing 95,853 tons of aluminum ingots, followed by Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) producing 61,478 tons, Almahdi Aluminum Company producing 52,456 tons, and Iran Alumina Company producing 12,266 tons of the product.

According to the data previously released by IMIDRO, production of aluminum ingot in Iran rose 20 percent during the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), as compared to its preceding year.

The IMIDRO's data put the annual production of aluminum ingot at 538,633 tons in 1400, while the figure was 446,836 tons in 1399, and 278,318 tons in 1398.

Among the country's four major producers, Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) had the best performance in the previous year producing 177,058 tons of aluminum ingots, although the figure was 185,000 tons in its preceding year.

## Eight Go on Trial Over 2016 Bastille Day Attack

PARIS (Dispatches) - Seven men and one woman will go on trial on Monday over the 2016 Bastille Day attack in the French city of Nice, which saw 86 killed and hundreds injured by a gunman who drove a heavy truck into a crowd gathered to watch fireworks.

The gunman, responsible for one of the deadliest massacres in peacetime France, was shot dead by police on the spot, ending an assault that shocked a country already reeling from the Islamist attacks in Paris the previous year.

Prosecutors say the accused, who face between five years in jail to a life sentence, helped 31-year-old Tunisian-born Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel get weapons, rent the truck or survey the route he took for his deadly rampage.



## Suu Kyi Gets Jail With Hard Labor

YANGOON (Dispatches) - Myanmar's deposed former leader Aung San Suu Kyi was found guilty of electoral fraud and sentenced to three years in jail with hard labour, according to a source familiar with the proceedings.

The Nobel laureate and figurehead of Myanmar's opposition to decades of military rule has been detained since a coup early last year and has already been sentenced to more than 17 years in prison. She denies all the allegations against her.

On Friday, she was judged to have committed fraud in a November 2020 general election that her National League for Democracy (NLD) won with an overwhelming legislative majority, trouncing a party created by the powerful military.



## Ukraine, Russia Trade Blame Over Nuclear Plant



ZAPORIZHZHIA (Dispatches) - Ukraine and Russia traded accusations over each other's actions around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant on Friday as a team of inspectors from the UN nuclear watchdog tried to check the safety of the facility and avert a potential disaster.

Ukraine's state nuclear company said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) mission had not been allowed to enter the plant's crisis center, where Ukraine says Russian troops are stationed, and would struggle to make an impartial assessment.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Ukraine was continuing to shell the plant, raising the risk of a nuclear catastrophe.

The site, 10 km (6 miles) from Ukrainian positions across the Dnipro River, was captured by Russian forces soon after they invaded Ukraine in late February and has become the focus of concern.

It has come under repeated shelling over the past month, with Kyiv and Moscow trading blame for the firing. The plant is still run by Ukrainian staff and Russia has rejected calls for it to withdraw its troops.

IAEA chief Rafael Grossi and his team spent several hours at Europe's largest nuclear power plant on Thursday and intended to return on Friday across the frontlines to assess damage.

Speaking after the initial visit, Grossi said the physical integrity of the plant had been violated several times and he was worried by the situation there.

Ukraine's state nuclear company Energoatom said it would be difficult for the IAEA team to make an impartial assessment due to Russian interference.

"The Russians did not allow the mission to enter the crisis centre, where Russian military personnel are currently stationed, whom the IAEA representatives were not supposed to see," Energoatom said in a statement.

"The (Russian) occupiers lie, distort the facts and evidence that testify to their shelling of the power plant, as well as the consequences of damage to the infrastructure," it said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the mission could still have a role to play despite the difficulties met.

"Unfortunately we haven't heard the main thing from the IAEA, which is the call for Russia to demilitarize the station," Zelenskiy said in a video streamed to a forum in Italy.

In Moscow, Defence Minister Shoigu rejected assertions by Kyiv and the West that Russia had deployed heavy weapons at the plant. He accused Ukraine of "nuclear terrorism" by shelling.

Shoigu repeated Moscow's insistence that Kyiv would carry the responsibility for any escalation at the site.

## India Unveils First Homemade Aircraft Carrier, With Eye on China

KOCHI (Dispatches) - India debuted its first locally made aircraft carrier today, a milestone in government efforts to reduce its dependence on foreign arms and counter China's growing military assertiveness in the region.

The INS Vikrant, one of the world's biggest naval vessels at a length of 262 metres (860 feet), will formally enter service after 17 years of construction and tests.

It inherits the name of a retired carrier famed for enforcing a blockade against Pakistan's naval forces during the 1971 Bangladeshi independence war.

"Today, INS Vikrant has filled the country with a new confidence, and has created a new confidence in the country," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the ship's commissioning ceremony in southern Kerala state.

"We've joined the league of those select nations who can construct such large aircraft carriers at home," he added. Around 1,600 sailors will crew the Vikrant, which will initially service fighter jets redesignated from India's only other aircraft carrier.

That vessel was bought second-hand from Russia, which has long been a major arms supplier to New Delhi.



## Top Cleric Killed by Mosque Blast in Afghanistan's Herat

KABUL (Dispatches) - A huge bomb blast at one of the biggest mosques in western Afghanistan Friday killed its influential imam, who called earlier this year for those who commit "the smallest act" against the government to be beheaded. Images and pictures posted on Twitter showed what appeared to be blood-stained bodies scattered around the compound of Gazargah Mosque in Herat city, and local media said many casualties were feared.

Violence has declined since the Taliban returned to power last year, but several bomb blasts -- some targeting minority communities -- have rocked the country in recent months, many claimed by the jihadist Islamic State (IS) group.

Government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed that Mujib ur Rahman Ansari had been killed in Friday's blast.

"The country's strong and courageous religious scholar was martyred in a brutal attack," he said on Twitter.

Ansari was an influential cleric known for his fiery speeches.

In July, during a religious gathering in Kabul, he called for those who commit "the smallest act against our Islamic government" to be beheaded.

"This (Taliban) flag has not been raised easily, and it will not be lowered easily," he said.

Ansari is the second pro-Taliban cleric to be killed in a blast in less than a month, after Rahimullah Haqqani died in a suicide attack at his madrasa in Kabul.

Haqqani was known for angry speeches against IS, who later claimed responsibility for his death.

He had also spoken in favour of girls being allowed to attend secondary school, despite the government banning them from attending classes in most provinces.

Several mosques across the country have been targeted this year, some in attacks claimed by IS.

At least 21 people were killed and dozens more wounded on August 17 when a blast ripped through a mosque packed with worshippers in Kabul.

## Dozens of Migrant Children Reported Missing in Houston

HOUSTON (Dispatches) - Federal and local officials are scrambling to locate close to a dozen unaccompanied migrant children, after Houston police raised concerns about a trend of migrant children reported missing in the Texas city, according to U.S. government officials and related emails reviewed by Reuters.

The cases underscore the challenges for U.S. President Joe Biden's administration as it faces a record number of unaccompanied kids arriving at the southwest border it must safely and quickly release to sponsors in the United States.

Earlier this summer, a Houston police detective alerted the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) after discovering what looked like a pattern of migrant kids missing from the homes of their U.S. sponsors, according to an HHS official, who declined to be identified.

HHS is the federal agency that oversees the custody and release of children after they have crossed the U.S.-Mexico border without a parent or legal guardian.

In August, in a rare step, the HHS refugee office implemented an emergency supervisory review of releases of unaccompanied kids to non-parent sponsors in the Houston area, according to the HHS official and an internal email seen by Reuters.

The agency found that since late last year, 57 unaccompanied migrant kids had been reported missing in Houston, the HHS official, and two additional

sources familiar with the situation, said. Included in the count were nine kids who ran away from HHS shelters in the Houston area, the official said.

As of Aug. 26, 46 of them had been confirmed safe, the official said. So far authorities say they have found no evidence of sex or labor trafficking.

Some of the missing kids who have been located are now 18 or older. A handful left the homes of relatives acting as sponsors to join parents who were in the United States, the official said, adding that the number of cases being reviewed is small compared to the volume of overall releases to the area.

Harris County, Texas, where Houston is located, is the No.1 destination for releases of unaccompanied minors, with more than 6,300 released between October 2021, when this fiscal year began, through June 2022.

More than 200,000 non-Mexican minors - who cannot be quickly turned around at the border - have been caught crossing alone since Biden took office in January 2021.

Early in Biden's presidency, the rise in unaccompanied minors overwhelmed Border Patrol stations, leaving children stuck in crowded conditions beyond a legal limit of 72 hours.

Biden officials took steps to expand emergency shelters and streamline the release of children to sponsors - usually parents or relatives - in the United States, while at the same time seeking to ensure they are not sent to homes where they could face danger or mistreatment.



## North Korea Says UN Human Rights Expert Is U.S. Puppet

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Pyongyang accused the newly appointed UN special rapporteur on North Korean human rights of being a "puppet of the US" and making "unpardonable reckless remarks".

The accusations came as the new rapporteur, Elizabeth Salmon, visited Seoul on her first trip since being appointed to the role last month.

Salmon, a Peruvian professor of international law, arrived earlier this week and has held meetings with South Korean officials and civic group members, including female defectors from the North, to discuss the situation in the isolated, nuclear-armed country.

"We had already made clear our principled stand that we neither recognise nor deal with any 'special rapporteur' who is merely a puppet of the US," said an unnamed spokesman for North Korea's foreign ministry in an English statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

The spokesman said the rapporteur's activities were cover for an American smear campaign, accusing Salmon of daring to make "unpardonable reckless remarks encroaching upon our inviolable system and sovereign rights".

"The UN should no longer allow its name and mission to be misused for the US hostile policy towards the DPRK," the spokesman added, using the acronym for North Korea's official name.

The statement referred to Salmon as "he" in an apparent mistake of her gender. Salmon said in a statement released Friday that she was "fully aware that the DPRK Government opposes country-specific human rights mandates including my mandate."

"However, that does not mean that we should not try," she said, adding that she hoped Pyongyang would reconsider and engage with her.

"We should not give up on engagement with the DPRK because what is at stake are the lives of the North Korean people and their human rights," she added.

The UN established the special rapporteur on North Korean human rights in 2004 as international concerns grew over allegations of grave violations in the reclusive state.

None of the special envoys has been granted access to the country for a fact-finding mission.



# Bollywood Broken? Movie Moguls' Spell Over India Fades

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - Bollywood may be broken, and it has itself to blame.

That's the verdict of one of its biggest and brightest stars after the latest flop in a Hindi-language movie industry that's long mesmerized Indians, and the world, with its dazzling all-singing, all-dancing brand of big-screen escapism.

"Films are not working - it's our fault, it's my fault," Akshay Kumar told reporters last month after his new movie "Raksha Bandhan" tanked at the box office. "I have to make the changes, I want to understand what the audience wants. I want to dismantle the way I think about what kind of films I should do."

Indeed times have changed and Bollywood, a cultural pillar of modern India, is losing its allure.

The rise of streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime during the COVID pandemic has conspired with growing Bollywood fatigue among younger generations who view many of its movies as outdated and unfashionable.

Of the 26 Bollywood releases this year, 20 - or 77% - have been flops, defined as losing half or more of their investment, according to the Koimoi website, which tracks industry data.

That's about double the failure rate of 39% in 2019, before the pandemic shook up society and forced hundreds of millions of Indians to wean themselves off cinemas, for decades the bastion of Bollywood and its main source of revenue.

Christina Sundaresan, a 40-year-old mother of two teenage girls in Mumbai, used to see at least one Bollywood movie a week in the cinema before the pandemic. Now she rarely goes.

"I mean, they are okay to watch when you need a laugh but I would not go to a theatre for them," she said. "My daughters used to watch every movie with us, but now they're not interested either. They are very much into Korean shows and series which air on these streaming platforms."

They're not alone in converting to international streaming services, which came to India relatively late - Netflix and Amazon Prime launched in 2016 - offering varied content made in America and Europe as well as India and elsewhere in Asia, from Parasite and Avengers to Squid Game and Game of Thrones.

A quarter of India's 1.4 billion people now use such services, up from about 12% in 2019, according to market data firm Statista. The figure is expected to hit 31% by 2027, and there's room to grow; take-up is about 80% in North America, for example.

Indian box-office revenues had risen every year for a decade to reach around \$2 billion in 2019 before slumping during the pandemic. They show little sign of bouncing back.



Ticket sales have fallen every month since March this year, sequentially, industry trackers show. Revenues from Bollywood films specifically are expected to fall 45% in the July-September quarter versus pre-COVID levels, according to research from investment banking firm Elara Capital.

Bollywood can no longer take audiences for granted and has to adapt if it hopes to survive and thrive, according to Reuters interviews with film fans, as well as half a dozen industry players including producers, movie distributors and cinema operators.

Four of the executives painted a picture of confusion and worry in the industry as studios release films that were supposed to hit the market before the pandemic struck and consumer taste evolved with the rise of streamers, known in India as OTT or over-the-top services.

Producers are racing to rework scripts and considering linking actors' fees to box-office performance instead of handing over an upfront payment, said Rajender Singh Jyala, chief programming officer at India's second-biggest multiplex operator INOX, citing his discussions with filmmakers.

"No one knows what the actual problem is," he added. "During the pandemic there were no releases, everything was shut and people had a lot of time to watch on OTT and to watch different kinds of content. So what would have worked two years ago, that content is not worth today's time."

Yet it's not all doom and gloom, say Jyala and other executives. There's no turning back the clock to Bollywood's heyday, but they say a few big hits could breathe new life into the industry and that it could ultimately find a new balance with streaming services and the money they bring to the table.

Nonetheless, executives must adapt quickly.

Indian films rely on cinemas for nearly three-quarters of their revenue, researchers at O.P. Jindal Global University near New Delhi found. By contrast, movies globally draw less than half of their income from box offices, according to data from America's Motion Picture Association.

Fans of Bollywood, a century-old institution, say it can evolve to stay relevant. Recent shifts to better reflect society include the introduction of gay relationships and characters who change their gender, for example.

For New Delhi college student Vaishnavi Sharma, studios simply need to step up their game.

"The storyline is the issue and since the past two years the audience has been exposed to so many new themes and they have been introduced to new concepts as well, so that is why I guess Bollywood is lacking in that area," she said.

The writing was on the wall last month when a pair of big-budget movies bombed despite starring two of Bollywood's box-office darlings, Kumar and Aamir Khan.

The poor showing of Kumar's "Raksha Bandhan", about the bond between a brother and his sisters, provoked the actor's comments about films not working.

Khan's "Laal Singh Chaddha", a remake of 1994 Hollywood hit "Forrest Gump", has only made around 560 million rupees in ticket sales - about a quarter of its budget - despite being released on Aug. 11, on the eve of a festive long weekend.

The flops represented steep reversals for the two A-listers, action and comedy favorites whose films have been known to recover all costs within the first week over the years.

INOX's Jyala said the multiplex was reducing the number of showings of Laal Singh Chaddha by a quarter because of its poor performance.

A senior Bollywood producer, who has two big-budget movies lined up for release, told Reuters on condition of anonymity that producers were "re-calibrating everything" for new projects in the works, from budgets and scripts to the choice of actors.

The cost of going to the cinema is another key issue cited by film fans and industry players at a time when India, like much of the world, is wrestling with a cost-of-living crisis.

A big-screen movie outing can typically cost a family of four 3,000 to 5,000 rupees (\$35-\$60), a high price in a nation where many people live in poverty, the average annual income is about 160,000 rupees and the monthly subscription fee for streaming services like Netflix starts at about 150 rupees.



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## Turkey Raises Electricity, Gas Prices

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkish authorities raised electricity and natural gas prices for households by around 20% and by around 50% for industry, putting further upward pressure on inflation, which was running at nearly 80% in July.

The utility price hikes are expected to push inflation up by 0.8 percentage points, according to a Reuters calculation, while higher industrial prices also lead to an indirect increase in inflation as producers reflect the costs on to consumers. Turkey's EPDK energy regulator said it had raised household electricity prices by 20%, those used by public and services sectors by 30% and those used in industry by 50%.



## Eurozone Inflation Roars to 9.1% in August

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Growth in consumer prices in the eurozone rose to another record in August, official data showed Wednesday, beating expectations and solidifying the case for further big European Central Bank (ECB) rate hikes even before prices peak near the turn of the year.

Fueled by soaring energy prices mainly driven by Russia's war in Ukraine, inflation in 19 European countries using the euro currency rose to 9.1% in August, up from 8.9% in July, the latest figures by the European Union statistics agency Eurostat said. The consumer price index (CPI) stays well clear of the ECB's 2% target and marks the highest levels since record-keeping for the euro began in 1997.

Prices are also rising in many other countries as Russia's war in Ukraine grinds on, triggering unprecedented increases for energy and food that are squeezing household finances. This summer has seen a wave of protests and strikes around the world by workers pushing for higher wages and people fed up with the high cost of living.

Inflation in Britain, Denmark and Norway, which have their own currencies, is also surging, according to official data released earlier this month.

Inflation is also high in the U.S., adding urgency for the Federal Reserve (Fed) to keep raising interest rates. Prices were up 8.5% in July compared with a year earlier, though that was lower than 9.1% in June.

In the eurozone, energy costs remained the driver of prices but food inflation also rose into double-digit territory. Energy prices surged 38.3%, while food prices rose 10.6%, according to Eurostat's preliminary estimate. The non-energy industrial goods, a particular focus for the ECB, showed a 5% price surge and the cost of services rose 3.8%.

The figures only add to the ECB's worries as it gears up for another big rate hike next week, but the outlook is even bleaker. Soaring energy prices even before the start of the heating season and the reversal of some German subsidies almost ensure that inflation will continue to climb and exceed 10% before a peak around the turn of the year.

But more importantly, closely watched underlying price growth, which filters out volatile food and energy prices, continued to soar, suggesting that rapid price growth is spreading across the economy.

Inflation excluding food and fuel prices jumped to 5.5% from 5.1% while an even narrower measure, which also excludes alcohol and tobacco rose to 4.3% from 4%.

"Inflation will probably increase strongly next month, heading towards 10%, as some energy-relief measures expire in Germany," UniCredit said in a note prior to the data release.

All this adds to the case for a big rate hike by the ECB on Sept. 8 and figures favor a growing camp of policy hawks looking for an exceptionally large hike.

Some ECB policymakers are making the case for a 75 basis point increase in the deposit rate, which now stands at zero, while others are arguing for a more modest increase, in line with July's 50 basis point move.

## IMF Provisionally Agrees on \$2.9b Loan for Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka has reached a preliminary agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan of about US\$2.9 billion, the global lender said, as the country seeks a way out its worst economic crisis in decades.

The agreement, which Reuters first reported, is subject to approval by IMF management and its executive board, and is contingent on Sri Lankan authorities following through with previously agreed measures.

"The staff level agreement is only the beginning of a long road for Sri Lanka," senior IMF official Peter Breuer told reporters in the commercial capital Colombo.

"Authorities have already begun the reform process and it must continue with determination." The IMF requires receiving financing assurances from Sri Lanka's official creditors, besides ensuring efforts are made to reach a collaborative agreement with private creditors.

"Debt relief from Sri Lanka's creditors and additional financing from multilateral partners will be required to help ensure debt sustainability and close financing gaps," the IMF said in a statement.

The IMF program, spread over 48 months, will aim to raise government revenue to support fiscal consolidation, introduce new pricing for fuel and electricity, hike social spending, bolster central bank autonomy and rebuild depleted foreign reserves.

"Starting from one of the lowest revenue levels in the world, the program will implement major tax reforms. These reforms include making personal income tax more progressive and broadening the tax base for corporate income tax and VAT," the statement said. "The program aims to reach a primary surplus of 2.3 per cent of GDP by 2024," it added.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who also serves as the country's finance minister, on Tuesday presented an interim budget aimed at clinching the deal with the IMF.

The budget revised Sri Lanka's deficit projection for 2022 to 9.8 per cent of the gross domestic product from 8.8 per cent earlier, while outlining fiscal reforms, including a hike in value-added taxes.

Sri Lanka needs to restructure nearly US\$30 billion of debt, and Japan has offered to lead talks with the other main creditors, including regional rivals India and China.

"If creditors are not willing to provide assurances, it would deepen Sri Lanka's crisis and undermine repayment capacity," Breuer said, adding that it was in the interest of all creditors to collaborate.



## India's Q1 Growth May Not Deter RBI From Raising Rates

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India's lower-than-expected economic growth in April-June is unlikely to alter the course for the Reserve Bank of India that is anchored to taming inflation with more rate hikes, analysts said.

Asia's third-largest economy grew 13.5% in the April-to-June quarter, its fastest pace in a year, though below the 15.2% forecast by economists in a Reuters poll, data showed on Wednesday.

Growth, however, was well above 4.1% in the previous quarter. For 2022/23, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected economic growth at 7.2%.

"(April-June) GDP data release should not be a game-changer for monetary policy," Nomura analysts Sonal Varma and Aurodeep Nandi said in a note.

The RBI had raised repo rate by 50 basis points in August to 5.40%, taking aggregate hikes to 140 bps in May-August.

The next policy decision is due on Sep. 30, with majority of the participants expecting another hike, though the quantum may come down.

Nomura kept its view of a 35 bps repo rate hike in September and a final 25 bps increase in December, with a 6% repo rate, before global growth concerns and the cumulative hikes potentially lead the monetary policy committee (MPC) to shift into an "extended pause."

India's retail inflation has stayed stubbornly above 6% for seven straight months, while the RBI's tolerance band remains 2-6%.

## Indonesia Inflation Eases in August

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Indonesia's inflation rate eased more than expected in August, official data showed, but economists said the rate is set to accelerate and more interest rate increases are likely amid expectation of a fuel price hike.

President Joko Widodo has been considering raising subsidised fuel prices to curb ballooning energy subsidies amid high global oil prices and a depreciating rupiah.

A drop in some food prices saw Indonesia's

inflation ease to 4.69% in August from 4.94% a month prior, data by Statistics Indonesia showed. A Reuters poll had expected a rate of 4.90% in August.

But the annual core inflation rate, which excludes government-controlled prices and volatile food prices, accelerated to 3.04% in August, the highest since Nov. 2019, from 2.86% in July.

The August rate was roughly in line with the 3% forecast in the poll.

Bank Indonesia (BI) is targeting inflation at between 2% to 4% for 2022 and 2023, a range Governor Perry Warjiyo has said was likely to be exceeded this and next year.

BI raised its benchmark policy rate by 25 basis points (bps) last month for the first time since 2018, in a move some economists believe was taken in anticipation of a fuel price hike.

Statistics Indonesia head, Margo Yuwono, said a fuel price hike could substantially increase price pressure as it would affect prices of other goods and services too.

Bank Mandiri's Faisal Rachman said inflation could be heading to 6% this year assuming a 30% increase in the price of subsidised gasoline, compared with a forecast of 4.60% without a price hike.

"We see that BI still has space to hike (the benchmark rate) by up to 50 bps in the rest of 2022," he said.

Bank Danamon economist Irman Faiz said producers were also under pressure to raise prices at consumer level due to rising costs. He expects a total of 75 bps rate hike by BI in the remainder of 2022.

BI's next policy meeting is on Sept. 21 and 22.

Authorities have not given a time frame for when a fuel price hike would happen. The president on Thursday told media the government was still carefully calculating the impact of any price hike.

Lawmakers told Reuters last week the government was considering a 30% to 40% increase in subsidised fuel prices.

## China's Factory Activity Contracts Again

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's factory activity extended declines in August as new COVID-19 infections, the worst heat waves in decades and an embattled property sector weighed on production, suggesting the economy will struggle to sustain momentum.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose to 49.4 in August from 49.0 in July, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said.

The gauge remained below the 50-point mark that separates contraction from growth for the second straight month, suggesting protracted weakness in the sector.

The survey shows the world's second-largest economy is struggling to emerge from the sluggish growth seen in the June quarter, with risks darkening the outlook as high inflation and the Ukraine war hit external demand.

The ruling Communist Party is trying to shore up economic growth that sank to 2.5% in the first six months of 2022, less than half the official annual growth target of 5.5%.

The data "show a further loss in economic momentum," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report. "We continue to think the economy will struggle to make much headway during the coming months."

Raymond Yeung, Greater China chief economist at ANZ, trimmed his 2022 gross domestic product (GDP) forecast to 3% from 4% as demand weakened. He also expects activity will be disrupted due to tighter virus controls ahead of the Communist Party Congress in October.

The sub-index for output remained unchanged but is still in contraction territory as production is disrupted by a power crunch, while the new orders sub-index grew by 0.7 point.

The new export orders index rose from 47.4 to 48.1, indicating softening momentum.

In particular, small manufacturers, which are less equipped to mitigate COVID-19 disruptions than their larger peers, suffered greater pressure in August with their PMI down 0.3 point.

The return of tighter COVID-19 restrictions in August as new cases were reported suggests Beijing has no immediate plans to loosen its broad zero-COVID-19 policy, analysts say. According to Evans-Pritchard, 41 cities, accounting for 32% of China's GDP, are currently in the midst of outbreaks, the highest since April when extensive lockdowns hurt the economy badly.

The extreme heat and drought also caused some regions such as the southwestern province of Sichuan and neighboring Chongqing to suspend industrial production to ensure residential power supply, disrupting operations of well-known manufacturers like Taiwan's Foxconn and battery giant CATL.

## Economists Cut Singapore Growth Forecasts, Raise Inflation



SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Economists have cut growth forecasts and upped inflation expectations for Singapore, according to a central bank survey, published, with a global slowdown seen as the biggest risk to the trade-sensitive city state.

The median forecast of 21 economists surveyed by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) is for Singapore's economy to grow 3.5% this year, down from a forecast of 3.8% in June's survey.

The median inflation forecast is for broad consumer prices to rise 5.7% over 2022, up from 5% predicted in June.

The MAS sent out the survey early in August, when the government also downgraded growth forecasts and as central banks around the world stepped up efforts to contain inflation by raising interest rates.

Almost three quarters of survey respondents saw an external growth slowdown among trading partners as the top downside risk to the economy, while 61.5% rated a better than expected recovery in China as the most likely source of an upside surprise.

Weak Chinese data in recent weeks will not be encouraging for that view, however, nor would disappointing Singapore manufacturing figures published last week.

On the inflation front, the most recent data from July had Singapore's consumer prices rising at their fastest pace in 13 years and the finance minister this month said he did not expect it to peak until the fourth quarter of this year.

Singapore unexpectedly tightened monetary policy twice this year, in January and July.

A majority of economists expect year-on-year corporate profits to fall in the September quarter, the survey showed, although most also think property prices will rise and corporate bond spreads will stay stable.

## “Mattress”, “File” Go to Int’l Film Festivals

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian short films ‘Mattress’ and ‘File’ will take part at two international film festivals in the Netherland and the UK respectively.

Directed by Arash Hassanpour, ‘Mattress’ will be screened at the 36th Cinekid International Film Festival in Amsterdam, Netherland which is slated to be held on October 15-30, 2022.

Cinekid Festival is the largest children’s media festival in the world. Meanwhile, another Iranian short film ‘File’ directed and written by Sonia Haddad and produced by Peyman Shadmanfar will also take part at BFI London Film Festival in its second international premiere after being screened at the 2022 Tirana International Film Festival.



## Kazakh President Delivers Address to the Nation and Announces Snap Presidential Elections

NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, delivered a major Address to the Nation on Thursday. The speech addressed the programme of reform and political modernisation towards a New Kazakhstan, as well as the socio-economic development of the country.

The President announced a series of fundamental and comprehensive political reforms, continuing the process of decentralising political power.

This included the recommendation that a Presidential term limit of one term of seven years be introduced, and the announcement of snap presidential elections this autumn.

President Tokayev cited the importance of securing a “new democratic mandate” for the “successful implementation of fundamental and comprehensive reforms, on the way to creating a fair Kazakhstan”.

As part of this process of ensuring public participation, the Head of State also announced that elections to the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) and Maslikhats (local representative body) will be held in the first half of 2023. The President emphasized that “within the framework of political modernisation in our country, the development of parliamentarism occupies a central place”, and that that “all institutional changes envisaged by the constitutional reform must be legislatively completed by the end of the year”.

Referring to the major political reforms announced in March, which dramatically expanded the space for new political parties, the President hoped that these reforms would “intensify political competition, and contribute to the emergence of a new wave of national deputies.”

Addressing another major theme of the New Kazakhstan reforms, President Tokayev also renewed his commitment to strengthening the rule of law in Kazakhstan. He announced that reforms of the judicial system, and particularly of the Supreme Court, would remove “governmental pressure on judges”. Tokayev also spoke the importance of prioritising competence throughout the judicial system, stressing that all judges “must be highly qualified, honest, and free from corruption.”

Focusing on the socio-economic development in Kazakhstan, the Head of State stressed that “we will radically change the relationship between citizens, business, and state, adding that “first and foremost, the state provides everyone with equal opportunities and ensures justice.” He noted that the priorities of the new economic course will be stimulating private entrepreneurial initiative, moving away from state capitalism and excessive state intervention in the economy, the development of competition, the provision of equal opportunities for all and fair distribution of the national income.

President Tokayev announced several new initiatives aimed at increasing quality of life for citizens across Kazakhstan. These included increasing the minimum wage for over 1.8 million citizens, ensuring stable and affordable lending to the real sector, allocation of land to entrepreneurs, building medical



centres in 650 villages within two years, which would provide access to primary health care for more than a million citizens.

Turning to the priority of education, a key building block for Kazakhstan’s future economic success, President Tokayev announced establishment of the National Fund for Children. From 1 January 2024, 50% of the annual investment income of the National Investment Fund will be allocated to special savings accounts for children until they reach the age of 18. This will then be used to purchase housing and receive education when children turn 18, as well as other initiatives. The President also instructed to direct the money seized from corrupt officials to the construction of schools.

The leader of Kazakhstan also touched upon the transit potential of the country, stating that “Kazakhstan is a very important land corridor between Asia and Europe in the current geopolitical situation. We must take full advantage of this opportunity and become a global transportation hub.”

Commenting on the tragic January events this year, the President announced an amnesty for protestors facing criminal charges.

Explaining his decision, he said: “Both those who participated in the protests and members of law enforcement agencies are our citizens. Some of those who broke the law have acknowledged their guilt. I think it’s best to treat them with forgiveness.” Tokayev noted that the amnesty will not apply to those accused of terrorists, extremists and torture, and that these extremely serious crimes will be considered by the judicial system.

Concluding his Address, President Tokayev emphasized that “the creation of a Fair Kazakhstan is just beginning. This course is unwavering and will continue regardless of any circumstances of an internal and external nature.”

## Ball Now Is...

FROM PAGE 1

“We have stated times and again that nuclear weapons have no place in our nuclear doctrine. The Leader of the Islamic Revolution (Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei) has frequently announced that the acquisition of such armament is religiously forbidden. We also declared in our foreign policy that these munitions have no place in our foreign policy,” he underlined.

Iran’s Foreign Minister also Hossein Amirabdollahian said that the country needs “stronger guarantees” from the American side to clinch an agreement

“We have received the American side’s last text, and my colleagues are closely studying the response with the required [level of] rigor and speed,” he said.

Although some analysts and world politicians believe that Iran’s demands are logical and the U.S. should provide required guarantees to Iran but most analysts believe that U.S. President is under domestic and the Zionist regime’s pressures on the eve of November election in the U.S. and U.S. President Joe Biden will prolong the talks each time with raising some issue in order to put behind the U.S. November election as the Democrats fear they may lose majority in the Congress and the Senate and Biden under pressure from his party wants to drag the talks in a way to put behind the election.

So the U.S. officials on Friday claimed that Iran’s response was unconstructive and claimed that Iran’s demands will delay any agreement and of course everyone expected such a response from a gut-less administration like Biden’s.

The Islamic Republic wants to close the chapter of the talks with deal as soon as possible but it is not in rush because the West needs the deal more than Iran and they should rush because the Islamic Republic of Iran advances its nuclear programs and it will not stop until the deal is done.

Tehran believes peaceful nuclear deal is its right but the West wants to deprive the country from its right and it is not even ready to give any concession and it wants to win without conceding any goal but they are wrong because Iranian negotiating team is very smart and their attackers are so strong that the U.S. is unable to escape without giving concessions.

So the countdown has started for this marathon-like negotiation and now the ball is in the U.S. court and Americans are better to show their political will for resolving the issue and they are better to stop following the Zionist regime and blaming Tehran or accusing Russians of dictating their policies on Iran because Iran is independent and will remain independent and it will befriend with any country which respects its rights and interests.



## Kosovo Pushes Ahead With Car Licensing Rule Resisted by Serbs



JARINJE (Dispatches) - Dozens of U.S. NATO peacekeepers patrolled northern Kosovo to preserve calm after Pristina announced that around 50,000 ethnic Serbs in the region would have to switch their car license plates to local ones within two months.

Kosovo, which is predominantly ethnic Albanian, has sought to compel Serbs to accept Pristina’s authority in routine bureaucratic matters since winning independence in 2008 after nearly a decade-long uprising against Serbia’s repressive rule.

Serbia does not recognize Kosovo’s independence and Serbs in northern Kosovo consider Belgrade as their capital.

In announcing the Oct. 31 deadline for motorists to switch over Serbian license plates to those issued by Pristina, Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti described the decision as “nothing more or less than an expression of the exercise of sovereignty.”

“Certain financial benefits will be offered during registration, including tax relief,” Kurti said in Serbian in a video posted on his Facebook profile.

A push last year to implement the car licensing was met with protests by the Serbs in the north, who are backed by Belgrade and live close to Kosovo’s border with Serbia. Tensions flared again last month after Pristina announced the rule would go into effect on Sept. 1, prompting ethnic Serbs to set up roadblocks.

Tensions eased after Kurti, under U.S. and European Union pressure, agreed to postpone the switch. The roadblocks were removed under the watch of NATO, which bombed Serbia in 1999 to end repression of Kosovo’s Albanians and now has about 3,700 peacekeepers in Kosovo.

“If we are told to change the plates we will change them, but I am not happy with it,” Ratko Simic, a Serb from the northern town of Leposavic, told Reuters on Thursday as he crossed from Serbia into Kosovo.

The defense ministry in Serbia, which sees Kosovo as an integral part of Serbian territory, said on Wednesday it had stepped up training of some of its troops garrisoned near the border with Kosovo.

## Australia Needs Workers But a Million Are Stuck at the Door

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - A blowout in visa processing times in Australia has left about a million prospective workers stuck in limbo, worsening the acute staff shortages that have crippled businesses and dampened economic sentiment.

Strict border controls for two years and an exodus of holiday workers and foreign students have left corporate Australia struggling to fill jobs and keep their businesses going.

However, a seemingly simple solution to the problem of letting more migrants enter has hit a roadblock due to a backlog of over 914,000 applications for permanent and temporary visas as of Aug. 12, according to immigration data seen by Reuters.

Of these, about 370,000 are visas in key temporary categories of visitors, students and skilled visas that are key for the country’s economic recovery. It also includes applicants already in Australia and looking to change their visa status to a more permanent one.

The delays are largely due to resource shortages at immigration offices and a huge backlog of applications that were left unattended for two years as the pandemic forced the government to seal the borders.

Australia’s labor squeeze comes as competition for skilled labor intensifies around the world, especially in industries where the COVID-19 pandemic forced employers to cut jobs or push staff to work remotely.

Industrialized nations like the United States and others in the EU and Asia have been looking to loosen immigration rules and sweeten offers to attract the best talent. New Zealand is also making temporary changes to immigration rules to fill a labor gap

The new Australian government led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is bringing together politicians, business, unions and others to thrash out the problem at a national Jobs and Skills Summit this week.

“The Government acknowledges the importance of immigration and visitors in addressing current labor shortages and stimulating economic activity,” a spokesperson for the Department of Home Affairs told Reuters.

“We are committed to reducing on-hand visa applications to pre-COVID-19 levels, and have ramped up activity to accelerate processing times,” the spokesperson added.

The department has brought more than 180 new staff into visa processing roles since May to tackle the massive backlog. In the last two months it has managed to process nearly 1.14 million applications of people who are outside Australia.

But with more than 600,000 temporary visa holders leaving the country since the pandemic, a lot more needs to be done to fill the large gaps in the health, construction and hospitality industries.

Albanese’s government has blamed the previous administration for the delays.

## Potential JCPOA Deal...

FROM PAGE 1

Asked about the reason behind delay of the Vienna agreement because of differences on wordings, he answered that as Iran has repeatedly said, fake and politicized accusations made by the IAEA against Iran in the Board of Governors should be resolved first of all.

Iranian officials are well aware that the IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi visited the occupied lands of Palestine and held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid before a recent meeting of the UN nuclear watchdog, indicating that their stance towards Tehran has been politicized, Marandi argued.

Moreover, the Board of Governors is ruled by the Western states; thus, the Islamic Republic wants them to stop unfounded accusations, because a desired agreement should be based on firm basis, he added.

The analyst further said that any kind of ambiguity and sentence should be explained clearly, because it is an important text, which should be in place for a long

time, and that Iran will not see that the US says after a while that they do not want to implement a subject based on the excuse that it is ambiguous.

According to the pundit, the first and second answers of the Islamic Republic to the EU proposition have not changed, and the remaining issue in the final stages is the exact explanation of the potential agreement text.

Tehran pursues an agreement based on a clarified text, but the US and the European countries want to see the text would remain ambiguous, he said, noting that as far as the draft is not a clear text, it would not be ready for final signing.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the analyst said that some European states asked Iran to export gas via Turkey to Europe, in fact they hope for finalization of the negotiations for the resumption of the JCPOA in order to be able to import energy from Iran, but the US is still the main problem in this regard.

## Iran Ends Reliance on...

FROM PAGE 1

The minister said that Iran’s exports to the African counties, too increased 100% this year, and to Russia it increased 35% compared with the last year.

The minister of industry, mine, and trade also referred to the government’s plan to import 70,000 foreign cars till the end of the current Iranian year, March 21, 2023, to increase presentation to the market, and make up for the deficit, as well as the under 10,000-dollar cars on condition of also importing their technology and after sales services.

## Iran Navy...

FROM PAGE 1

The incident came only two days after the naval forces of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) briefly seized one such American unmanned surface vessel that had been stranded in the Persian Gulf.

Taking “timely action,” the IRGC Navy captured the naval drone, whose “navigational system had failed.”

The US Navy tried to portray the development as an unprovoked attempt by the IRGC to capture the military vessel.

Reporting the incident, however, Nour News, a website close to Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), dismissed the “Hollywoodesque narrative” offered by the US Navy with the intention of “covering up some of its failures” against Iranian naval forces in the Persian Gulf.

## Russia...

FROM PAGE 1

Gazprom has emphasized that the delayed return of the turbine from Canada, where the unit was being serviced, was behind the initial reduction in gas deliveries via the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline in June.

In that month, the company curtailed its gas supply to Europe by 40 percent. Then, it drastically cut the deliveries through the pipeline to about 20 percent of its capacity in July.

The new development comes as Europe braces for an upcoming harsh winter as energy consumption would go up.

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## PSG Sign Soler From Valencia

PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris Saint-Germain completed the signing of Spain midfielder Carlos Soler from Valencia on European transfer deadline day on Thursday, after earlier confirming the departure of Idrissa Gana Gueye, with the Senegal star returning to former club Everton. Soler, 25, has signed a five-year deal with PSG confirming the news barely two hours before the transfer window closed in France. Spanish media reports said Valencia would receive an initial €18 million (RM80.2 million) plus €2 million more in potential add-ons.

## Bellerin Returns to Barca From Arsenal

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Hector Bellerin has returned to Barcelona on a one-year deal after terminating his contract with Arsenal, the La Liga club announced. The Spanish right back, a product of Barca's La Masia academy who left for Arsenal in 2011, spent last season on loan at Real Betis and won the Copa del Rey. "FC Barcelona and Hector Bellerin have reached an agreement to sign the player, after the defender terminated his contract with Arsenal Football Club," Barca said in a statement.

# Premier League Clubs Shatter Spending Record In £1.9b Spree

LONDON (Dispatches) - Premier League clubs shattered their single-season spending record during an incredible £1.9 billion (\$2.1 billion) spree during the summer window. Deloitte's Sports Business Group estimated the gross spending by the 20 English top-flight clubs during the transfer window that ended on Thursday was the highest in the history of the competition.

Despite the cost-of-living crisis gripping Britain, Premier League teams needed just one window to break the £1.86 billion mark set in the summer and winter transfer periods combined during the 2017-18 season.

According to Deloitte, the gross spend on a total of 169 players was also 34 percent higher than the previous record for a single window of £1.4 billion in the summer of 2017.

It was 67 percent higher than last year's total Premier League summer window spend of £1.1 billion.

"Gross spend was so high among Premier League clubs this summer that, before this season's January transfer window had taken place, the 2022/23 season already has the highest transfer spend since the two-window season began, exceeding the previous record by 3 percent (2017/18's £1.86 billion)," Deloitte said.

Nine Premier League clubs spent over £100 million each as expenditure recovered dramatically after two seasons of decline caused by the financial fall-out from the coronavirus.

In total, the Premier League spent more than Spain's La Liga, Italy's Serie A and Germany's Bundesliga combined.

Tim Bridge, lead partner in Deloitte's Sports Business Group, said: "The record level of spending during this transfer window is a clear indication of Premier League clubs' confidence, as fans return to stadia and a new broadcast cycle begins. "It's now become part and parcel of the Premier League that clubs are willing to pay significant sums to maximise performance. "This season, the desire to acquire playing talent has reached new levels as the pressure for clubs to stay in the competition is higher than ever."

## Liverpool Sign Arthur On Loan From Juventus

LONDON (Dispatches) -Liverpool have signed Brazil midfielder Arthur Melo from Juventus on a season-long loan, the Premier League club said, one hour before the transfer deadline.

British media reported that Liverpool do not have an option to buy the 26-year-old, who has made 63 appearances for Juve since his move to the Italian club from Barcelona in 2020.

"We talked a lot and our ideas and visions were a good fit so I'm sure it was the right choice," Arthur said in a statement.

"Liverpool have a wonderful history in football. I've played against Liverpool, I know what it feels like to be in the stadium with the fans behind them.

"I was with the opposition and now I'm on the right side so I'm really excited. It's a massive club with a great manager, great players ... it's a dream to be here." Arthur, who can play in different roles in central midfield and was once hailed as Xavi Hernandez's heir, was sold by Barcelona for €72 million when they needed to meet their revenue target from player sales.

He arrives at Liverpool who are reeling from an injury crisis with midfielders Thiago Alcantara, Jordan Henderson, Naby Keita and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain all sidelined.

Liverpool, who are in sixth place with eight points from five games, visit Merseyside rivals Everton on Saturday.

## Piastrri to Drive For McLaren and Not Alpine in 2023

PARIS (Dispatches) - Australian Oscar Piastrri will drive for Formula One team McLaren and not Alpine next year, motor car racing's governing body the International Motoring Federation (FIA) announced.

The 21-year-old had been caught up in a fight between Alpine and McLaren with the former claiming Piastrri had a contract to drive for them and even announcing him as part of their 2023 line-up.



**Aubameyang Makes Premier League Return**

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea have signed Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang from Barcelona, with the Gabon striker signing a two-year contract to seal a return to the Premier League, the two clubs said.

The transfer was announced well after the 2200 GMT deadline but Chelsea had submitted the paperwork to the Premier League in time after the former Arsenal striker arrived in London late on Thursday.

Barcelona said they reached an agreement where Chelsea paid €12 million (RM53.4 million) to bolster their front line with Aubameyang, who previously thrived under manager Thomas Tuchel at Borussia Dortmund.

"I'm really happy. It's an honor to be part of this team and I can't wait to start. I have some unfinished business with the Premier League so it's good to be back and really exciting," Aubameyang said in a statement.

Aubameyang scored 13 goals in 24 games for Barcelona, but was surplus to requirements after they signed Poland striker Robert Lewandowski from Bayern Munich and needed to offload players to comply with LaLiga's financial rules.

Aubameyang is no stranger to the Premier League having spent four years at Chelsea's London rivals Arsenal, scoring 92 goals in all competitions.

The 33-year-old was the league's joint top scorer in the 2018-19 season and led Arsenal to the FA Cup title in the following campaign.

New ownership at Chelsea, with Todd Boehly's consortium taking over from Roman Abramovich, acted as a catalyst for the increased spending.

With a £255 million splurge, Chelsea spent more in one window than any team in Premier League history.

Their spending was £53 million more than Manchester United, who were the next biggest in this window at £202 million.

United's £82 million signing of Ajax forward Antony on deadline day was the fourth biggest transfer in Premier League history.

Liverpool's move for Benfica forward Darwin Nunez could eventually beat that fee, with the initial £67 million outlay potentially rising to £85 million depending on contract clauses and add-ons.

Chelsea's biggest deal during the window was the £70 million purchase of French defender Wesley Fofana from Leicester.

Boehly also funded moves for Marc Cucurella (£60 million), Raheem Sterling (£50 million), Kalidou Koulibaly (£33 million) and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (£10.3 million)

At Old Trafford, Casemiro (£60 million) and Lisandro Martinez (£51 million) joined Antony in United's top 10 most expensive signings of all time.

Champions Manchester City strengthened their squad with the £50 million move for Borussia Dortmund striker Erling Haaland, who has already started to repay that fee with nine goals in five games.

Newcastle striker Alexander Isak and West Ham midfielder Lucas Paqueta were among seven players to be signed for over £50 million this summer, while 19 players were signed for £30 million or more.

Even Nottingham Forest, back in the Premier League for the first time since 1999, recorded a gross spend of £126 million on an astonishing 21 players.

That was only the third time Deloitte has reported any club spending over £100 million immediately after promotion to the Premier League.

# Kyrgios Fined for Spitting, Obscenities at US Open



Benjamin Bonzi but boiled over when he was broken late in the fourth set. He immediately spat in the direction of his players' box and swore at a man there he

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Fiery Australian Nick Kyrgios has been fined \$7,500 for "spitting and audible obscenities" during his second-round win at the US Open on Wednesday, tournament organizers told Reuters.

The fine was the largest handed out to a player at the tournament so far.

The Wimbledon finalist maintained a running dialogue with himself throughout his 7-6(3) 6-4 4-6 6-4 win over the Frenchman Benjamin Bonzi but boiled over when he was broken late in the fourth set.

He immediately spat in the direction of his players' box and swore at a man there he

deemed as being insufficiently supportive.

"Go home if you're not going to (expletive) support me, bro," he shouted during the changeover. "You are not a spectator." Kyrgios also complained about the smell of cannabis during his night match at Louis Armstrong Stadium, saying he was concerned it could aggravate his asthma.

Fines for unsportsmanlike conduct are nothing new to the big-serving 27-year-old. He was fined for spitting towards a fan after his first round win at this year's Wimbledon and again for swearing at an umpire during his heated fourth-round victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Kyrgios is also being sued for defamation by a fan he accused of looking like she had "700 drinks" during his defeat in the final of the grass court major, where he also berated members of his players' box.

## Hamilton Focuses On Feedback for Next Year's Mercedes

LONDON (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton will be happy to consign his mercurial Mercedes to history but the seven times Formula One world champion is still in no hurry to finish a season now offering so little reward.

The Briton, who is 138 points adrift of Red Bull's leader Max Verstappen with eight races remaining, told reporters at the Dutch Grand Prix that his focus was on next year's car and every lap mattered. "I generally love the work that we're doing regardless of whether we're fighting for first or wherever," said Hamilton, who fought Verstappen for the title right down to the last controversial lap in 2021.

"I still love getting in a huddle with the engineers and mechanics. "And I still just every day love the challenge of fighting this car... the amount of engineering we have to do to dial it in is tricky and I would say that probably just increases your sensibility to improve the engineering side.

"I don't ever want to wish time by... there will be a lot of information to gain in the second half of the season."

The 37-year-old, who is on his longest ever streak without a win, said he was focusing on feedback.

"That's really where I'm applying a lot of my time, it's just communication with all the heads of different departments really to make sure we don't leave any stone unturned," he added.



## Beckham Slammed For PR Video Praising Perfect Qatar

LONDON (Dispatches) - Human rights campaigners on Thursday slammed David Beckham for fronting a glossy publicity campaign praising World Cup host Qatar as "perfection", despite concerns over its rights record.

The former Manchester United, Real Madrid and England star has appeared in a series of videos posted on Qatar Tourism's website where he samples local art and food and visits a desert camp, exclaiming: "This is perfection for me!" Amnesty International UK's head of priority campaigns, Felix Jakens, said the ads were "just the latest slick and positive video about Qatar that David Beckham has put his face to".

The London-based rights monitor upbraided Beckham for making "no mention of the country's appalling human rights record".

The video campaign has Beckham saying that the Arab state "really is an incredible place to spend a few days on a stopover".

"I cannot wait to bring my children back," he adds.

Beckham last year signed a deal reportedly worth £150 million to promote the gas-rich Persian Gulf state, which hosts this year's World Cup. He was appointed a cultural ambassador. Jakens urged Beckham to use his "unique profile" to highlight the "terrible abuses" that tens of thousands of migrant workers have faced while working on World Cup multi-billion dollar sites.

