

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Says Those Who Pretend to Be Iranian People Advocate Are Those Who Supported U.S. Cruel Sanctions on Iranian People and Ban the Medicines For Patients With Certain Diseases

IRAN NEWS

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami Said on Thursday That Iran Is a Leading Country in Producing Radio Medicines and Has Plans to Increase Its Production Capacity

2 DOMESTIC

U.S. No Well-Wisher of Iranians With Sanctions in Place



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran Ready to Play Important Part in Supplying Energy to Japan



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Ukraine Advance on Russian Outpost Challenges Moscow Grip



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Verstappen Rates Himself Long Shot To Clinch Title In Singapore



> SEE PAGE 8

Tehran Warns UAE Against Attacking Its Territorial Integrity

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's mission to the UN warns the United Arab Emirates that staking out a claim to the three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb, and the Lesser Tunb amounts to targeting the Islamic Republic's territorial integrity.

The Iranian mission issued the caution through a statement that was read out at the end of the 77th annual meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The statement came as a response to Reem Ebrahim Al Hashimi, the Emirati minister of state for international cooperation, who had alleged during her speech to the world body that Abu Dhabi enjoyed a "legitimate right" to the threesome islands. "The Emirati official's allegations and repetition of baseless claims concerning the Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf, is tantamount to an attack on Iran's territorial integrity," read the statement.

It added that Iran considered such "irresponsible" remarks to be intervention in its internal affairs and a violation of the fundamental principles of the international law, including the principle of good-neighborliness.

See Page 7

UNSC Urged to Support Constructive Syria, OPCW Interactions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations, Amir Saeed Iravani, has called upon the UN Security Council to throw its influence behind the constructive interactions between the Syrian government and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

During Thursday's Security Council meeting on chemical weapons in Syria, Iravani pointed to Syria's efforts to implement its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), stressing that adoption of a politicized approach and double standards vis-à-vis the Syrian chemical file will only diverge technical-oriented discussions and can undermine the credibility and authority of the UN Security Council.

The senior Iranian diplomat went on to highlight that the Islamic Republic, as the primary victim of the most systematic use of chemical weapons in modern history, has always condemned in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by any party, anywhere and under any circumstances.

See Page 7

Iran Foreign Trade Exceeds \$50b Mark in H1 Fiscal Year



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian customs office (IRICA) figures show trade between the country and the rest of the world exceeded the \$50 billion mark at the end of the first half of the current fiscal year in late September.

IRICA figures published on Thursday showed that Iran's foreign trade had reached a total of \$50.282 billion in the six months to September 22, up 13.2% from the same period in 2021.

The figures, which do not cover Iran's crude oil exports, showed that the country had exported 51.783 million metric tons (mt) worth \$24.251 billion of goods over the March-September period.

IRICA said exports had increased by 13.32% in value terms but decreased 12.5% in volume terms year on year in the current calendar year's first half.

The customs data, covered in a report by the official IRNA news agency, showed that imports into Iran had reached \$16.32 million mt worth \$26.031 billion in March-September, a drop of 14.7% in volume terms and an increase of 13.1% in value terms compared with the same period last year.

Five products, namely liquefied propane, methanol, liquefied butane, liquefied natural gas, and low density polyethylene film grade 5, had accounted for 26.5% of the value of Iran's non-oil exports over the six months to late September, said IRICA.

It said main goods imported into Iran over the six months to late September were rice at a total value of \$1.218 billion, followed by wheat at \$1.191 billion and animal feed corn at \$1.171 billion.

China remained the largest buyer of Iranian goods over the March-September period with some \$7.842 billion worth of purchases, followed by Iraq at \$3.382 billion and the United Arab Emirates at \$3.112 billion, showed IRICA figures.

Suicide Attack at Tutoring Center in Kabul Kills 19

KABUL (Dispatches) - A suicide attack at a tutoring center in the Afghan capital Kabul killed at least 19 people and wounded dozens, police said on Friday, but there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast.

Many of those living in the western area where the blast occurred are Hazara, an ethnic mostly Shi'ite Muslim minority targeted in past attacks launched by the ultra-radical Islamic State and others.

Kabul police spokesperson Khalid Zadran said the official toll was 19 people dead and 27 wounded.

He said the attack took place at a private tutoring centre where an exam was taking place. Schools are usually closed in Afghanistan on Fridays.

"Attacking civilian targets proves the enemy's inhuman cruelty and lack of moral standards," he said, without specifying who was believed to be behind the attack.

The official death toll is likely to rise. A hospital source said 23 people had been killed. A Taliban source said 33 people had been killed and that female students were among the casualties.

Ghulm Sadiq, a local resident, said he was at home when he heard a loud sound and went outside to see smoke rising from the centre where he and neighbours rushed to help.

"My friends and I were able to move around 15 wounded and 9 dead bodies from the explosion site ... other bodies were lying under chairs and tables inside the classroom," he said.

Karen Decker, the U.S. charge d'affaires in Afghanistan, condemned the blast.

"Targeting a room full of students taking exams is shameful; all students should be able to pursue an education in peace & without fear," she said in a message on Twitter.

The age of the students was not immediately clear, but private institutes such as the one targeted prepare teenage students in their final years of high school for university entrance exams.

Girls' high schools have been closed in Kabul in recent months after the ruling Taliban made a U-turn on promises to open all schools, but Kabul residents and education workers have said that female students have still been attending private tutoring centers.

Since taking over Afghanistan in August 2021, the Taliban have emphasized that they are securing the nation following decades of war, but in recent months there have been a series of blasts at mosques and civilian areas.

Teenage students were among the 24 people killed in a 2020 attack claimed by Islamic State at a similar education center in west Kabul.

Iran Offers 30% Stake In Farzad-B Field To Indian Firms

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Iran has offered a 30% interest in the Farzad-B gas field development project in the Persian Gulf to India's ONGC Videsh (OVL) and its partners, reported the Press Trust of India (PTI).

Located at water depths ranging from 20m to 90m within the 3,500km² Farsi offshore block, the Farzad gas and condensate field straddles the Iran-Saudi Arabia maritime border.

According to the estimates, the field holds approximately 23 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves and gas condensates of 5,000 barrels per billion cubic feet.

In 2002, the Indian consortium comprising OVL, the overseas investment arm of India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC), the Indian Oil Corporation, and Oil India secured an exploration service contract for the Farsi block.

Later in 2008, the consortium discovered the gas field in the Farsi offshore block. In 2009, a consortium announced an approximately \$3bn investment plan to develop Farzad-B.

Following the submission of a master development plan (MDP) to bring the discovery into production in April 2011, negotiations were stalled as a result of international sanctions imposed on Iran over its nuclear plans.

See Page 7

Emergence of Terrorist Groups Poses Serious Threat to Entire Region

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian envoy to the United Nations warns that terrorism and the emergence of terrorist groups pose a "serious threat" to Afghanistan, its neighbors, the region, and the entire international community.

Addressing a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Afghanistan, Iran's deputy permanent representative to the UN, Zahra Ershadi, expressed concern over the reports on the resurgence of Daesh-affiliated terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

"The de-facto authorities must commit to fighting terrorism and ensure to take all appropriate steps to protect diplomatic and consular premises against any intrusion or damage and prevent attacks on diplomatic premises, agents, and consular officers," she said.

"Afghanistan must no longer serve as a haven for terrorist groups like Daesh and al-Qaeda," she added.

The Iranian diplomat urged the de-facto Afghan authorities to fulfill their international obligations as a member of the international community and to establish an "inclusive and representative" government that accurately reflects the country's multi-ethnic society.

See Page 7

U.S. Imposes New Iran-Related Sanctions On Several Int'l Companies

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States has slapped illegal sanctions on a number of international companies saying they are involved in Iran's petrochemical and petroleum trade, including some firms based in China.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement on Thursday warned of further actions to enforce its economic curbs on Tehran.

Blinken said the US imposed sanctions on two China-based companies, Zhonggu Storage and Transportation Co. Ltd, and WS Shipping Co Ltd, saying these companies are helping Iran to sell its Iranian petroleum and petrochemical products, according to Reuters.

The U.S. Treasury Department also placed sanctions on a network of companies saying it was involved in the sale of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Iranian petrochemical and petroleum products to users in South and East Asia.

The Treasury said it targeted Iranian brokers and front companies based in the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong and India.

See Page 7

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Iran Test-Fires New Anti-Ship Missile

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran has test-fired a new surface to sea missile. Footage released by Iran's IRNA news agency showed Abu Mahdi anti-ship missile being fired at a hypothetical target.

The projectile belongs to the family of Soumar cruise missiles.

Other missiles of the family include the Soumar ground to ground attack missile with a range of 700 kilometers and the Hoveyzeh ground to ground attack missile with a range of 1300 kilometers that were unveiled in 2014 and 2018.

Abu Mahdi is the anti-ship version of Hoveyzeh and has a range of 1000 kilometers.

U.S. No Well-Wisher of Iranians With Sanctions in Place

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top human rights official has strongly denounced the U.S.' dual policy on human rights, stressing that Washington is in no position to comment on the rights of Iranians as it has endangered their lives through crippling sanctions.

Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights and the Judiciary chief's deputy for international affairs, made the remarks on Wednesday in separate meetings with the Belgian and German ambassadors to Tehran, Gian Marco Rizzo, and Hans-Udo Muzel respectively.

He emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to pursue the rights of its citizens, including Mahsa Amini, a young woman who died on September 16 at a hospital a few days after collapsing at a police station in Tehran while receiving educational training on dress code rules.

Gharibabadi noted that different investigative teams were immediately formed by the government, judiciary and the parliament after the news broke out.

"A special medical team, consisting of the heads of the Iranian Forensic Medicine Organization, Medical Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran and representatives of several medical associations, was set up and tasked with investigating the circumstances surrounding Ms. Amini's death and reporting their findings in the shortest possible time," Iran's rights chief pointed out.

"Unfortunately, some European countries and international human rights organization have hastily and of course in a politicized manner made claims that she was beaten up. Such allegations have been rejected according to preliminary investigations and the Kasra Hospital's report. The cause of the death is under investigation, and the results will be compiled and published soon," Gharibabadi said.

He also denounced the United States and certain European countries over their support for recent deadly riots in Iran.

There is "nowhere in the world where violent gatherings, during which cold weapons as well as firearms are awash and public property is damaged, described as peaceful."



"In Iran, hundreds of peaceful rallies and protests are held every year without any problems. However, what has taken place in some Iranian cities over the past few days has been accompanied by violent and terrifying actions, acts of vandalism and damage to public and private property," Gharibabadi said.

He said, "Rioters incite anyone to confront the police and destroy public and private property. During the gatherings, a great number of public and private property was set on fire or looted; several police officers and ordinary citizens were killed or injured as a result of cold weapons and firearms used by rioters. Banks, automated teller machines (ATMs), ambulances, public transportation vehicles, police cars, fire engines and religious places were widely attacked, destroyed and set on fire."

Iran's human rights chief also criticized the positions of some European states concerning recent protests in Iran, saying, "The countries that support and encourage non-peaceful demonstrations and acts of violence are complicit in the damage caused and the blood of innocent people spilled."

He also condemned Washington's meddlesome actions under the pretext of protecting the human rights of Iranians.

"How can [the United States of] America, which has violated the human rights of millions of Iranians through its sanctions and endangered the lives of many Iranians, claim to be supporting their rights?" Gharibabadi questioned.

Despite Iranian officials' clarification on circumstances surrounding Amini's death, violent street protests have led to attacks on security officers and acts of vandalism against public property and sanctities.

Iran, Island of Stability In Turbulent Region

TEHRAN (IP) - Foreign Minister talked on the presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, calling Iran an island of stability in fighting against terrorism.

Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, who had traveled to New York to participate in the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, left New York for Tehran on Tuesday evening local time.

He wrote in a report on his page on Instagram about the consultations of the Iranian diplomatic team at the United Nations General Assembly session:

"In all the meetings and sessions, while following up on the agreements of the Islamic Republic of Iran with other countries and international forums, an effort was made to convey the correct analysis outside the conventional media atmosphere to the dialogue parties by realistically describing the current situation of the region and the world.

Amirabdollahian added: "In most of the meetings in New York regarding the negotiation process of lifting the sanctions, the consultation and the logical position of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which wants a good, strong and stable agreement, provided the economic benefit from the deal would be obtained, was explained.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran stated that the officials of different countries referred to the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the fight against terrorism and Iran's important position as an island of stability in a turbulent region and stated: "It is this stability and power that makes the enemies want to stick to any excuse to hinder the progress and development of Iran, which they definitely cannot."

Iran's top diplomat emphasized: "Efforts to neutralize the sanctions and to foil the oppressive sanctions against Iran are continuing."

Operations in Iraqi Kurdistan to Continue Until All Terrorists Disarmed

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force has defended the latest ballistic missile and drone strikes against terrorist bases in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, stating that operations will continue until all anti-Iran separatist and terrorist outfits holed up in the rugged mountainous area lay down their arms and surrender.

"In the wake of an uptick in the seditious acts of separatist and terrorist groups stationed in Iraq's northern region (of Kurdistan), the proven role and involvement of some terrorist and separatist outfits in the recent riots that have gripped some Iranian towns and cities, the discovery and neutralization a major sabotage plot hatched by Komala terrorist group against Iran's nuclear facilities, and disregard of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials for calls demanding the destruction of the terrorists' bases, the IRGC Ground Force identified their command centers and headquarters, which were also instigating and supporting recent wicked acts, and heavily bombarded them in a decisive and retaliatory response," it announced in a statement.

The statement went on to highlight that the IRGC Ground Force employed various types of ballistic missiles as well as armed combat drones to pound and destroy terror bases in northern Iraq after its calls and warnings to KRG authorities regarding the terrorist groups' vicious acts and conspiracies went unanswered.

"The latest string of operations will continue until the [full] disarmament of all terrorist groups holed up there. We are calling on the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government to demonstrate more seriousness as to their responsibilities towards the Islamic Republic of Iran as their neighbor," it pointed out.

Enemy Seeking to Disintegrate Iran by Sowing Discord

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi said that the enemy is seeking to damage the unity of the Iranians by sowing the seed of discord in the society.

In his 7th live televised interview, President Raisi said the enemies have targeted Iran's territorial integrity and national sovereignty by creating differences among the Iranians.

The Iranian president, meantime, described the results and achievements of his latest two trips to Samarkand and New York. He referred to his trip to Samarkand to attend the Summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organization and discussed meeting with heads of 10 regional countries as successful and in line with the development of neighborhood policy.

President Raisi also referred to his visit to the New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly and said, "This was the first visit of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to American after the assassination of Haj Qasem Soleimani, and it was necessary to broadcast the voice of the authority and innocence of the Iranian nation to the world."

He went on to discuss the achievements of the two recent trips to Samarkand to participate in the Shanghai Summit and the trip to New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly and stated, "Iran's membership in the Shanghai Organization is an important issue."

President Raisi stated that with Iran's membership in the Shanghai Organization, Iran was economically connected to the economic infrastructure of Asia, and emphasized, "The members of the Shanghai Organization have a significant part of the world's population and control an important part of the world's economy."

Recalling that the members of the Eurasian Union and Shanghai are significant countries, the President said, "Naturally, Iran's economic and commercial relations with these countries and with these infrastructures can definitely contribute greatly to the development of trade and economic development of our country."

The Iranian president also said that the policy pursued by Iran with neighboring countries has led to mutual trust between our country and the Shanghai member countries, and now "we must seek to improve this trust". "In general, the neighborhood policy has worked in the continuation of objective and practical cooperation between us and the neighboring countries".

The Iranian president stated, "This year's trip was my first trip to New York after the martyrdom of Haj Qasem Soleimani. Our inference was that I had to be the voice of the Iranian nation there, and I had to express the right positions of the Islamic Republic and the Iranian nation, and broadcast the voice of the innocence and authority of the nation in my speeches, statements, and communications."

Iran Stands Committed Comply With NPT

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami has reaffirmed the Islamic Republic's commitment to the Safeguards Agreement and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), stressing that Tehran will continue

to facilitate the UN nuclear agency's monitoring of the country's activities as in the past.

Eslami made the remark after attending the 66th annual regular session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s General Conference in the Austrian capital of Vienna on Thursday as he elaborated on the results of his participation in the event and his meetings with senior foreign officials, including IAEA's Director General Rafael Grossi.

The Iranian official said he had met and conferred with Grossi and his deputies over remaining issues concerning Iran's nuclear activities, also reviewing the cooperation between the UN nuclear watchdog and the AEOI.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is always bound to comply with Safeguards regulations and we are also committed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; we facilitate the [International Atomic Energy] Agency's supervision of our activities in accordance with the Agency's regulations and will do so in the future," Eslami told reporters.

"Iran prepares the ground for continued cooperation with the IAEA regarding nuclear activities and does it in a reassuring manner, and the IAEA has time and



again acknowledged it," he added.

The convention of the 66th annual regular session of the IAEA's General Conference comes amid stalled talks in Vienna on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of

Action (JCPOA), which was unilaterally abandoned by the United States in 2018.

In exiting the JCPOA, the U.S. initiated a "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran, prompting the Islamic Republic to reduce its nuclear commitments in a legal move stipulated under the deal itself.

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran also said he had held talks with the members of a delegation from Russian state atomic energy corporation Rosatom and Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto on the sidelines of the international conference.

"We talked and exchanged opinions about joint cooperation between Iran and Russia and in the context of speeding up the construction of the second and third power plants," Eslami said, referring to his meeting with the Rosatom delegation.

Pointing to his talks with the Hungarian foreign minister, Eslami said Tehran and Budapest have long-lasting research, scientific and educational relations.

The Iranian official also said a Hungarian delegation is set to visit Iran in the future to look into ways for implementing mutual agreements.

France's Chargé d'Affaires Summoned

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has summoned France's chargé d'affaires to Tehran to protest meddlesome measures by the French government in Iran's domestic affairs and its stance about riots instigated by counterrevolutionary elements across the country.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said the envoy was summoned on Wednesday over a meddlesome statement issued by the French Foreign Ministry, the participation of three French government advisors in protests in Paris and the ridiculous action of the French daily Charlie Hebdo.

The French envoy, who was summoned to the Iranian Foreign Ministry in the absence of the country's ambassador to Tehran, was told that the Islamic Republic categorically condemns and rejects the French Foreign Ministry's and officials' interference in the domestic affairs of Iran through using "false interpretations."

The charge d'affaires was told that the French Foreign Ministry's statement sought to exonerate rioters who had no goal but to encourage vandalism and jeopardize the lives and property of people in Iran.

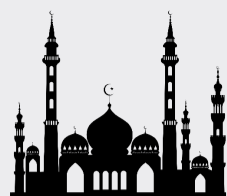
"The French authorities are following a double game because on the one hand, they host groups that have been directly involved in the recent unrest in Iran over

the years, and on the other hand, they censure the Iranian police forces for confronting such rioters," the head of the Second Bureau of West Europe at Iran's Foreign Ministry told the French diplomat.

"It's possible that the French authorities have forgotten how severely the country's police forces dealt with the Yellow Vest protesters disrupting order and security in the country."

In response to a part of the French Foreign Ministry's statement declaring that France, the European Union and other allies would consider all possible options to deal with the recent developments in Iran, the Iranian diplomat said, "Under no circumstances will the Islamic Republic tolerate any interference in its internal affairs, and Iran will consider a proportionate and timely measure by carefully monitoring the stances and movements of foreigners."

The Islamic Republic has over the past days summoned the British and Norwegian ambassadors as well as the charge d'affaires of Sweden to voice the country's protest at the respected governments' stances about recent riots in Iran and their failure to protect the Iranian embassies.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:54
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:06
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:36
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:00

66. (Abraham) said, "Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm?"

67. "Fie upon you, and upon the things that ye worship besides Allah. Have ye no sense?!"

Surah 21. The Prophets (66 - 67)

Iran Ready to Play Important Part in Supplying Energy to Japan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Oil Minister Javad Owji voiced Iran's preparedness to cooperate with Japanese companies in the field on energy, and said: "Iran can play an important role in providing the energy needed by Japan."

Javad Owji, in a meeting with Nishimura Yasutoshi, the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan on Wednesday, stated that this is his first visit to Japan, adding: "Japanese companies are very well-known in Iran and the Iranian people specially regard the Japanese."

He stated the purpose of his trip to Japan was to attend Shinzo Abe's memorial ceremony, participate in the Asia Green Growth Partnership Ministerial Meeting (AGGPM) and meet with some large Japanese companies, and added: "Mr. Abe is a respected and influential figure in the field of Japanese politics and economy and his trip to Iran in 2018 was a turning point in the relations between the two countries."

Stating that the leaders of the two countries recently met in New York he added: "We have examined the fields of cooperation in the meeting with Japanese companies and are trying to expand them."

Owji added: "The Iranian people will never forget the memory of the Japanese Oil Refining Company (Idemitsu), which bought oil from Iran during the embargo on the sale of Iranian oil due to the nationalization of the oil industry."

Stating that Iran can play an important role in providing the energy needed by Japan, Mr. Owji clarified: "The unprecedented drop and low level of trade and economic cooperation caused by the unilateral and cruel sanctions of the United States is not worthy of the two countries."

The Iranian petroleum minister emphasized Iran's readiness to develop cooperation in the oil and gas sector with Japan, and added: "Iran's oil industry needs \$160 billion of investment in the oil, gas, refinery and petrochemical sector in the next eight years."

Stating that there is a possibility of cooperation between Iran and Japan in the field of optimization and training under the sanctions, Owji said: "There are very high capacities for Japanese companies to cooperate with Iran from upstream to downstream."



Referring to the signing of \$100 billion worth of contracts and memorandums of understanding with foreign and domestic companies under the 13th administration, he said: "The Ministry of Petroleum has not been delayed by the outcome of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) talks and has started initial negotiations with foreign parties, and these negotiations are progressing well."

Emphasizing that Iran welcomes cooperation with Japanese companies that have the necessary experience and technical knowhow in the field of optimizing energy consumption and reducing carbon emissions, collecting flare gases, etc., he said: "Any company that invests in this sector can take away half of the volumes it produces."

Nishimura Yasutoshi, Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, in this meeting, referred to the good relations between the two countries and Iran's high cultural history, and said: "Iran is an important country in the region and the world, and Japan is interested in strengthening relations with Iran."

Recalling that he is the secretary of the Iran-Japan Friendship Group and has traveled to Iran since he was a student, he clarified: "The late Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, had special respect for Iran."

The Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan expressed regret for the withdrawal of the country from the Azadegan Field development project, and said: "The Japanese government has always supported the JCPOA and hopes that the negotiations will be concluded as soon as possible and that Japan will be able to cooperate with Iran, especially in the oil and gas sector."

Emphasizing that the Japanese government encourages companies to operate in Iran, Yasutoshi added: "Even in the conditions of sanctions, there are good opportunities for cooperation, especially in the field of optimizing energy consumption, collecting associated gases, etc."

Stating that many Japanese companies kept their offices in Tehran and are present in Iran, he said: "This shows the importance of interaction with Iran for Japanese companies."

Iranian Company Signs Deal to Develop Afghan Lead, Zinc Mines

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A contract has been signed with an Iranian company for the extraction of lead and zinc in Afghanistan's Ghor province, the press office of the provincial governor has said.

Under the contract, the company will begin mining operations in the western province in a month, Iran's Fars news agency reported.

A domestic company has also signed a contract to extract 100,000 tons of coal, the report said.

According to the press office of Ghor's governor, a delegation from the mines and petroleum ministry of the Taliban government will arrive in the province with the aim of monitoring and fast-tracking mining operations.

Various estimates of Afghanistan's hidden wealth have been made in recent years, but the challenge of exploiting the resources in a country at war and with little mining infrastructure is daunting for most investors.

Afghanistan hopes that untapped mineral deposits valued at \$3 trillion could help bankroll its impoverished economy and for its soldiers to maintain security after the withdrawal of foreign troops.

The untapped mineral resources include iron ore, copper, lithium, oil gas and gems which Afghanistan hopes to put for developing in coming years. In August 2010, Afghanistan said it had discovered an oilfield with an estimated 1.8 billion barrels in the north of the war-ravaged country.



Officials said then the discovery of the basin between northern Balkh and Shiberghan provinces was made after a survey conducted by Afghan and international geologists.

China acquired a 30-year lease on the Mes Aynak copper mine for around \$3 billion in 2008 but the project has been

plagued by delays due to contractual wrangling. Back in March, the Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Reza Fatemi-Amin said he had held talks with the Taliban government to help exploit iron ore mines in Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan is rich in mineral reserves. A huge deposit of an Iranian iron ore mine named Sangam, which is situated in Khaf lies in Afghanistan. Thanks to its facilities and high-tech know-how, Iran can help exploit the iron ore in Afghanistan. This will be mutually beneficial. We are following up the negotiations with the Afghan party to gradually build processing capacities in Afghanistan. We can swap Iranian goods for the ore we exploit in Afghanistan," Reza Fatemi-Amin noted.

Iran sees Afghanistan's development as a boon to its own. The constant principle for Iran has been the development of its neighbor irrespective of who rules the country, because underdevelopment and insecurity in Afghanistan also affect Iran. Iran is Afghanistan's largest trading partner, with around \$2 billion in bilateral trade each year, nearly a third of Afghanistan's total trade volume.

Iran Reports 20% Surge in Gasoline Demand Over Summer

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Figures by the Iranian government show demand for gasoline in the country rose by 20% this summer amid warnings by authorities that rising domestic demand could affect Iran's fuel exports at a time the country faces foreign sanctions.

An official in the Iranian Oil Ministry's fuel department (NIORDC) said that the demand for gasoline in Iran had reached a record daily average of 105 million liters over July-September.

Peyman Jazayeri said that demand for diesel fuel in Iran had also increased by 9% year on year over the three months to late September to reach an average of 106 million liters per day.

The figures come amid statements by government authorities suggesting that Iran might be forced to resume gasoline imports more than a decade after it reached self-sufficiency in the production of the fuel.

Iran introduced massive plans since early last decade to ramp up gasoline production at its old or new refineries after the United States imposed sanctions on sales of gasoline to the country.

Gasoline demand in Iran dropped to all-time lows of less than 75 million liters per day in 2019 when the government announced fuel price hikes.

However, current price of gasoline in Iran is around a tenth of prices charged in neighboring countries, causing a major surge in fuel smuggling activities across the borders.

That comes as the government has indicated it has no plans to increase fuel prices although it has lowered the amount of monthly fuel quotas assigned to motorists in the country.

Cement Exports Down, Clinker Shipments Surge by 29%



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has reported a major increase in exports of cement clinker in the five months to late August although figures show that overseas shipments of finished cement dropped slightly over the same period.

Secretary of Iran's syndicate of cement producers Abdorreza Sheikhan said on Thursday that clinker exports from the country had reached a total of 4.1 million metric tons (mt) over the five months to August 22, up 29% against the same period last year.

That comes as Iran's total cement clinker output had risen by 7% year on year over the April-August period to reach 31.5 million mt, said Sheikhan.

He said that finished cement exports from Iran had dropped by 2.3% over the five months to late August to stand at 1.7 million mt, adding that domestic demand for cement had remained flat compared with the same period last year at 26.09 million mt.

Sheikhan said Kuwait was the top buyer of Iran's cement and clinker shipments over the April-August period, followed by Iraq, Afghanistan, Oman, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Qatar.

Iran had reported declines in production and exports of cement and clinker last summer mainly because of gas shortages that caused shutdowns across the industry.

Iran has boasted of its ability to provide a stable supply of natural gas to manufacturers in the country this summer despite facing a heavy demand for gas from power plants, households and businesses.

A Tuesday statement from Iran's Energy Ministry said that the average daily gas supply to industries had increased by 13% over the five months to late August to reach 145 million cubic meters.

Industrial Products Exports Up 70%

TEHRAN (IP) - Head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran announced a 70% growth in Iran's industrial products exports.

Alireza Peyman-Pak stated that strict monitoring of the quality and packaging of export products has resulted in no export goods being returned in the last 11 months.

The Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization announced the dispatch of an Iranian delegation to Indonesia.

He noted that this delegation consisted of officials and experts from the Ministries of Agriculture Jihad, Foreign Affairs, Industry, Mine and Trade, and the Presidential Legal Assistant. They are negotiating a preferential tariff in Indonesia.

The head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran pointed out that in line with the macro-economic policy and within the next two months, the production line of home appliances would be started jointly with the investment and financing of one billion dollars with Russia.

"In the African region, we are witnessing a 100% growth in exports, and in the next month, the volume of exports with these countries will exceed one billion dollars, and in the European region, we have concluded various insurance contracts," he concluded.

Foreign Investment In Iran Doubled

TEHRAN (IP) - The Deputy Minister of Economy announced the doubling of foreign investment in Iran.

"Ali Fekri," the Deputy Minister of Economy, said: "4 billion and 800 million dollars of foreign capital has been attracted in one year."

Head of Organization for Investment Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran added: "During this period, we have issued more than 8 billion and 900 million dollars in foreign investment permits, but in practice, the gradual process of entering only 4 billion and 800 million dollars from the plans has started.

Raisi's government policy has based its goals and plans on developing relations with neighboring countries.

Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and economic exchanges with neighboring countries can be interpreted in the way of fulfilling this policy which at the same time has been aimed at attracting investment and developing economic relations.

Deputy Oil Minister Meets With Belarusian Envoy



TEHRAN (Shana) -- The deputy oil minister for international affairs and trade had a meeting with the ambassador of the Republic of Belarus in the Islamic Republic of Iran with the aim of expanding the level of cooperation.

Ahmad Asadzadeh met with Dmitry Koltsov to discuss the development of the level of cooperation and the future prospects for cooperation in the oil and petrochemical sectors.

According to the agreements made in this meeting, it was decided that Vladimir Sizov, the deputy of the state oil company Belneftekhim, will soon travel to Tehran to talk with his Iranian counterpart.

Vladimir Makei, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, at the head of a delegation consisting of the Ministry of Roads and the Bank, in line with the recent agreements between President Ebrahim Raisi and Alexander Lukashenko, Presidents of the Republic of Belarus, will visit Iran on the sidelines of the 2022 Shanghai Summit in Samarkand from October 2 to 5.

Finland to Join European Neighbors In Shutting Out Russian Tourists

HELSINKI (Dispatches) - Finland said it would close its border to Russian tourists at midnight, shutting off the last remaining direct land route to the European Union for them as thousands of Russians seek to avoid conscription into the war in Ukraine.

The government said the move would lead to a significant drop in cross-border traffic after almost 17,000 Russians crossed the border into Finland during the weekend.

"The entry of Russian citizens in tourist purposes into Finland endangers Finland's international relations," Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto told a news conference, explaining that the decision had followed talks with Ukraine and neighbors.



UK's Labour Has 33-pt Lead Over Ruling Conservatives

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's opposition Labour party has surged to a 33-point lead over the ruling Conservatives, according to a YouGov poll on Thursday, after days of chaos in financial markets triggered by the government's planned tax cuts.

The lead was a record high share for Labour in any YouGov poll as well as the highest figure the party has ever recorded in any published survey since the late 1990s, YouGov said.

The YouGov poll of voting intention conducted over Wednesday and Thursday showed 54% support for Labour and 21% for the Conservatives. It was a survey of more than 1,712 British adults.



Ukraine Advance on Russian Outpost Challenges Moscow Grip on Donbas



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian troops are moving to capture the Russian-held eastern town of Lyman, threatening a new setback for Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin's campaign in the Donbas as he prepares to declare the region part of Russia. The capture of the town in the north of Donetsk region could pave the way for Ukraine to make inroads into the adjacent Luhansk province, foiling Putin's goal of seizing all of the industrial Donbas region declared after his forces failed to subdue the entire country in February, military analysts said.

The regions are among four chunks of eastern and southern Ukrainian territory that Putin is expected on Friday to declare Russian-annexed land after what Kyiv and Western countries say were bogus referendums staged at gunpoint.

Putin has said Moscow could use nuclear weapons to defend Russian territory if necessary. Kyiv has said it won't be swayed by such threats and will press ahead with its plans to drive all Russian forces out of Ukraine.

Lyman has served for months as a logistics and transport hub anchoring Russian operations in Donetsk region's north and its capture would be Kyiv's biggest gain since a lightning counter-offensive retook swathes of Kharkiv region this month.

The window is narrowing for Ukraine to make major advances before winter sets in, slowing down operations and giving Russia, which has declared a partial mobilization, more time to fortify its lines.

Konrad Muzyka, director of the Rochan military consultancy in Poland, said Russian forces were trying to hold on in Lyman to buy time to prepare defensive lines and that the town would fall to Kyiv.

"The Russians are trying to delay the Ukrainian actions as much as possible so that they can create or upgrade their line of defense between Sievierodonetsk and the border with Russia," he said.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy told Ukrainians in his nightly speech on Tuesday that there was "good news" from the front, though he did not elaborate.

Luhansk region's exiled governor said this week: "When the situation around Lyman is resolved, then we can closely watch the actions of the Ukrainian army because Lyman is close to the river and on the other bank begins Luhansk region."

"The weather doesn't really play into our hands, but in general, I still think we'll get the result soon," he said.

On Thursday, a Russian proxy official in Donetsk region said it was "pretty tense" and "difficult" in Lyman and that Kyiv's forces were constantly trying to attack.

"Of course we understand that such attempts will continue, at the moment our units are able to repel all these attacks," the official was quoted as saying by Russia's Tass news agency.

Lyman has seen its role as a hub for Russian forces diminish since Moscow's troops were routed in northeast Kharkiv region, analysts said. The town had a population of 20,000 before Russia invaded on Feb. 24.

"Ukrainian forces have made substantial gains around Lyman in the past 24 to 48 hours, with both Russian and Ukrainian sources indicating that Ukrainians have advanced west, north and even northeast of Lyman," said Karolina Hird, a researcher at the Institute for the Study of War.

Nicaragua Leader Calls Catholic Church a Dictatorship

MANAGUA (Dispatches) - Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega has called the Catholic Church a "perfect dictatorship" for not allowing members to elect the pope.

In the church, "everything is imposed. It's a perfect dictatorship. It's a perfect tyranny," Ortega said during a televised speech on Wednesday to mark the 43rd anniversary of the Nicaraguan police's establishment.

"If they are going to be democratic, let them start with Catholics voting for the pope, for cardinals, for bishops." The church in Nicaragua has been under increasing government pressure since the 76-year-old leader accused it of backing the protests against his government in 2018. A crackdown against the demonstrators killed hundreds.

Ortega maintains the protests were part of a United States-backed opposition plot to unseat him and accused bishops of complicity. Ortega called out bishops and priests as "killers" and "coup plotters" in his speech, accusing them of working on behalf of "American imperialism". "I would say to his holiness the pope, respectfully, to the Catholic authorities, I am Catholic.

As a Christian, I don't feel represented," he said, referencing the church's "terrible history".

Ortega criticized subjects ranging from the Inquisition in Spain and South America to the abuse of Indigenous children in Canada.

Longstanding tensions between the Catholic Church and Nicaragua grew in March when Managua expelled the Vatican's ambassador to the country.

In August, a bishop critical of the government, Rolando Alvarez, was put under house arrest for what police called "destabilising and provocative" activities, drawing concern from leader of the Catholic Church Pope Francis.

At least four priests and two seminarians were also arrested, but police did not specify the charges.

Pope Francis earlier this month insisted on the importance of "never stopping the dialogue" with Nicaragua.

"There is a dialogue. We are talking with the government," the pontiff said. "That does not mean that we approve of everything the government does, or that we disapprove."



Lula's Lead Over Bolsonaro Widens Days Before Brazil Election

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has widened his lead over incumbent Jair Bolsonaro, less than a week before one of the most divisive presidential elections in Brazil's history.

A Genial/Quaest poll released on Wednesday showed Lula, who served as president from 2003 to 2010, with a 13-percentage-point lead over his far-right rival. Recent polls indicate that the former left-wing leader could beat Bolsonaro in the first round of voting on Sunday.

The survey put support for Lula at 46 percent in the first round, compared with 33 percent for Bolsonaro - up from 44 percent for Lula and 34 percent for Bolsonaro a week earlier.

In a potential October 30 runoff, Lula's lead rose to a 14-point advantage, from 10 points a week ago, the poll found.

Brazil remains tense in advance of the upcoming vote, as experts have raised concerns over election-related violence should Bolsonaro refuse to accept defeat.

The former army captain in recent months has repeatedly taken aim at leading Supreme Court justices and alleged - without providing any evidence - that Brazil's electronic voting system is vulnerable to widespread fraud.

Legal experts have rejected that allegation, while the president's critics have accused him of sowing doubt in the run-up to the election in order to dispute the results, as was done by former US President Donald Trump, whom Bolsonaro has emulated.

Guilherme Casaroes, a political scientist and professor at Fundacao Getulio Vargas in Sao Paulo, said Bolsonaro has continued to cast doubt on the voting system, as well as recent polling before Sunday's contest.

"He's made this clear, several times, that he doesn't trust the electronic voting machines of Brazil. He keeps casting suspicion over the electoral court. He totally disregards the polls and the polling numbers. So tough times ahead, I'd say," Casaroes told Al Jazeera.

U.S. Denounces N. Korea, Pyongyang Fires More Missiles

PANMUNJOM (Dispatches) - U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris said North Korea is a country with a "brutal dictatorship", an illegal arms program and rampant human rights violations, issuing unusually strong criticism during a visit to the inter-Korean border on Thursday.

Soon after Harris wrapped up her Asia trip, North Korea fired two ballistic missiles from north of its capital, Pyongyang, late on Thursday in the direction of her flight from South Korea, the third such launch in five days.

Harris, in her first visit to the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas, said the heavily armed border area offered a stark reminder of the "dramatically different paths" the two sides have taken.

"In the North, we see a brutal dictatorship, rampant human rights violations and an unlawful weapons program that threatens peace and stability," Harris said.

"The United States and the world seek a stable and peaceful Korean peninsula where the DPRK is no longer a threat," she said, referring to North Korea by the initials of its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Harris was in the DMZ after arriving in the South Korean capital, Seoul, early on Thursday amid simmering regional tension over North Korea's missile launches and China's actions in the Taiwan Strait.

North Korea launched two ballistic missiles from north of Pyongyang into the sea off its east coast,

South Korea's military said, about two hours after Harris' flight departed for Washington.

The missiles flew about 300 km (186.4 miles) reaching a maximum altitude of 50 km (31 miles), Japan's Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada said, indicating they were likely short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM).

The visit by Harris came amid fears that North Korea is about to conduct a nuclear test. South Korean officials say North Korea has completed preparations for what would be its seventh nuclear test and it's first since 2017.

Harris and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol held talks and condemned North Korea's intensifying nuclear rhetoric and a series of missile tests, the latest of which was conducted on Wednesday.

"They condemned the DPRK's provocative nuclear rhetoric and ballistic missile launches," a White House statement said. "They discussed our response to potential future provocations, including through trilateral cooperation with Japan."

Harris and Yoon reaffirmed the goal of the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, the White House said.

Harris also reaffirmed a U.S.-extended deterrence commitment to its Asian ally, including "the full range of U.S. defense capabilities", it added.



Russia Says Nord Stream Likely Hit by State-Backed Terrorism



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia said that leaks spewing gas into the Baltic Sea from pipelines to Germany appeared to be the result of state-sponsored "terrorism", as an EU official said the incident had fundamentally changed the nature of the conflict in Ukraine.

The European Union is investigating the cause of the leaks in the Gazprom-led Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines and has said it suspects sabotage was behind the damage off the coasts of Denmark and Sweden.

Four days after the leaks were first spotted, it remains unclear who might be behind any attack on the pipelines that Russia and European partners spent billions of dollars building.

"This looks like an act of terrorism, possibly on a state level," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, adding: "It is very difficult to imagine that such an act of a terrorism could have happened without the involvement of a state of some kind".

Russia also said the United States stood to benefit, in a war of words with the West over who was responsible. Moscow has previously said the leaks occurred in territory that is "fully under the control" of U.S. intelligence agencies.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told a news briefing Washington would be able to boost its liquefied natural gas (LNG) sales if the pipelines were put out of use.

But U.S. news channel CNN, citing three sources, reported that European security officials had observed Russian navy support ships and submarines not far from the leaks.

Asked to comment on the CNN report, Peskov said there had been a much larger NATO presence in the area.

Zakharova called for an EU investigation to be "objective", and said Washington would have to "explain itself" - a reference to President Joe Biden's comment in February that, if Russia invaded Ukraine, "there will no longer be a Nord Stream 2".

The White House has dismissed Russian allegations that it was responsible for the damage to Nord Stream and Biden's comments were referring to efforts at the time to secure certification to bring Nord Stream 2 into commercial use.

Heat Waves, Dry Winter Push Melting of Swiss Glaciers To Record Rate



LONDON (Dispatches) - A dry winter, and constant and repeated summer heat waves have meant that Switzerland's glaciers lost 6% of their total volume this year, shattering previous ice melt records, according to a new report.

The study by the Cryospheric Commission (CC) of the Swiss Academy of Sciences laid bare the drastic scale of glacial retreat – which is only set to get worse.

The CC said, "2022 was a disastrous year for Swiss glaciers: all ice melt records were smashed," adding that a 2% loss in 12 months had previously been considered "extreme."

Some 3 cubic kilometers (0.72 cubic miles) of ice – 3 trillion liters (0.79 trillion gallons) of water – have melted away, the report said.

"It's not possible to slow down the melting in the short term," said glaciology professor Matthias Huss, head of Glacier Monitoring in Switzerland, which documents long-term glacier changes in the Alps and is coordinated by the CC.

If carbon dioxide emissions are reduced and the climate protected, "this might save about one-third of the total volumes in Switzerland in the best case," he told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Otherwise, the country "will be losing almost everything by the end of the century." At the start of the year, the snow cover in the Alps was exceptionally light, then a large volume of sand dust blew in from the Sahara Desert between March and May, settling on the surface.

The contaminated snow absorbed more heat and melted faster, depriving the glaciers of their protective snow coating by early in the European summer.

The continuous heat between May and early September therefore ravaged the glacial ice. By mid-September, the once-thick layer of ice that covered the pass between the Scex Rouge and Tsanfleuron glaciers had completely melted away, exposing bare rock that had been frozen over since at least the Roman era.

And in early July, the collapse of a section of the Marmolada glacier, the biggest in the Italian Alps, killed 11 people and highlighted how serious the situation had become.

According to an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report published in February, the melting of ice and snow is one of the 10 key threats from climate change.

"The loss was particularly dramatic for small glaciers," the CC said.

The Pizol, Vadret dal Corvatsch and Schwarzbachfirn glaciers "have practically disappeared – measurements were discontinued," the commission said.

In the Engadine and southern Valais regions, both in the south, "a 4- to 6-meter-thick layer of ice at 3,000 meters (9,842.52 feet) above sea level vanished," said the report.

Significant losses were recorded even at the very highest measuring points, including the Jungfrauoch mountain, which peaks at nearly 3,500 meters.

"Observations show that many glacier tongues are disintegrating and patches of rock are rising out of the thin ice in the middle of glaciers. These processes are further accelerating the decline," said the report.

"The trend also reveals how important glaciers are to the water and energy supply in hot, dry years," the report stressed – something to consider given that hydroelectricity provides more than 60% of Switzerland's total energy production.

The glacial meltwater in July and August alone would have provided enough water this year to completely fill all the reservoirs in the Swiss Alps.

Experimental Alzheimer's Drug Slows Cognitive Decline in Trials



LONDON (Dispatches) - A new experimental drug might give hope to Alzheimer's patients as the companies developing it said that it significantly slowed cognitive and functional decline in a large trial of patients in the early stages of the disease, marking a rare win in a field littered with failed drugs.

The drug, lecanemab developed by Eisai Co Ltd and Biogen Inc., slowed the progress of the brain-wasting disease by 27% compared with a placebo, meeting the study's main goal, and potentially offering hope for patients and their families desperate for an effective treatment.

"It's not a huge effect, but it's a positive effect," said Ronald Petersen, director of the Mayo Clinic Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in Rochester, Minnesota.

Eisai, leader of the 50-50 partnership's lecanemab program, is seeking U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval under an accelerated pathway, with a decision expected in early January. On Tuesday the Japanese drugmaker said it will use the new efficacy results to submit lecanemab for traditional FDA review as well.

The company said it will also seek authorization in Japan and Europe during its current fiscal year, ending March 31.

Eisai said results from the 1,800-patient trial prove the longstanding theory that removal of sticky deposits of a protein called amyloid beta from the brains of people with early Alzheimer's can delay the advance of the debilitating disease. "This means that treating amyloid is a step in the right direction," Petersen said.

Shares of Biogen and Eisai were halted, but shares of Eli Lilly & Co, which is also developing an Alzheimer's drug, rose as much as 6.7% in after-hours trade.

The lecanemab data suggest "a potentially new multibillion dollar franchise," Jefferies analyst Michael Yee said in a research note.

Lecanemab, like the partners' previous drug Aduhelm, is an intravenous antibody designed to remove amyloid deposits. Unlike Aduhelm, lecanemab targets forms of amyloid that have not yet clumped together.

"If you can slow a disease by almost 30% that's fantastic. This is what we have been looking for," said Dr. Jeff Cummings, director of the Chambers-Grundy Center for Transformative Neuroscience at the University of Nevada Las Vegas.

The so-called amyloid hypothesis has been challenged by some scientists, particularly after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's controversial approval of Aduhelm in 2021 based on its plaque-clearing ability rather than proof that it helped slow cognitive decline. The decision came after the FDA's own panel of outside experts had advised against approval.

Aduhelm was the first new Alzheimer's drug approved in 20 years after a long list of high-profile failures for the industry.

Patient advocacy groups hailed the news of positive lecanemab trial results.

"This is important because it demonstrates that each of these drugs is different ... I would hope that the FDA approves the drug in January," USAgainstAlzheimer's Chairperson George Vradenburg told Reuters.

The Phase 3 trial evaluated the drug's ability to reduce cognitive and functional decline based on the Clinical Dementia Rating-Sum of Boxes (CDR-SB), a numerical scale used to quantify the severity of dementia in patients in areas such as memory, orientation, judgment and problem-solving and personal care.

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U.S. New Vehicle Sales to Increase on Strong Demand

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - U.S. new vehicle sales are set to rise in September as consumers spent more money on new vehicles than any previous September on record, an industry report from consultants J.D. Power-LMC Automotive showed. Customers have been unaffected by higher vehicle prices and lack of incentives or discounts from automakers, who have been taking advantage of strong demand and tight inventory. "Transaction prices still rose and consumers spent more money on new vehicles this month," said Thomas King, president of the data and analytics division at J.D. Power, adding auto sales are yet to see an impact from the ongoing monetary policy tightening by the U.S. Federal Reserve to curb inflation.



Lebanon to Slash Official Exchange Rate From Nov. 1

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon plans to slash its official exchange rate, replacing the 1,507 per dollar rate adopted 25 years ago with a rate of 15,000 in a step towards unifying numerous exchange rates, the finance minister told Reuters.

After saying the move would come into effect on Nov. 1, the ministry later said the step was conditioned on the approval of a plan to address the crisis, which is under discussion in parliament.

The Lebanese pound has plunged by more than 95% from the official rate since Lebanon fell into financial crisis three years ago, with dollars currently changing hands at around 38,000 on a parallel market.

"The goal is for there to be a unification of the exchange rates in Lebanon," Finance Minister Youssef Khalil said, calling the decision a "fundamental step" in that direction. The step would come into force on Nov. 1, the ministry said.

"Today, Lebanon has entered a new phase and is no longer using an official U.S. dollar exchange rate that makes no sense ... Now we have one that is useful, based on which you can steer the economy toward a better situation," he said.

The decision - which Khalil said was agreed with central bank governor Riad Salameh - marks a milestone in the meltdown that has plunged swathes of the population into poverty in the worst crisis since the 1975-90 civil war.

Salameh told Reuters via text message that the decision "will require time before it is implemented."

"We have to wait before anticipating further moves," he said. Ruling politicians have so far taken scarcely any action towards tackling the crisis.

Unifying the numerous exchange rates operating in the country is one of several conditions set by the IMF for Lebanon to secure a badly needed aid package. The Fund has said this is crucial to boosting economic activity.

The IMF said last week progress in implementing reforms remained very slow, with the bulk yet to be carried out.

In addition to official and parallel market exchange rates, authorities have created several others during the crisis, including unfavourable rates applied to withdrawals of Lebanese pounds from hard currency deposits in the frozen banking system.

Khalil noted that unification of the exchange rates was an IMF demand, but added it was also something that must happen regardless, saying the government was taking a gradual approach.

On Monday, the parliament approved a state budget that applied the 15,000 rate to customs taxes - a step aimed at boosting state revenues. Khalil said this had paved the way for the decision he announced on Wednesday.

He said discussions were under way with stakeholders including banks and depositors on the implications of the decision and how it would be applied. "We have taken this month to explain to everyone carefully what is happening," he said.

EU Vows to Protect Energy Network

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The European Union promised a "robust" response to any intentional disruption of its energy infrastructure after saying it suspected sabotage was behind gas leaks discovered this week on subsea Russian pipelines to Europe.

As gas spewed out under the Baltic Sea for a third day after first being detected, it remained far from clear who might be responsible for any sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines that Russia and European partners spent billions of dollars building.

Russia, which slashed gas deliveries to Europe after the West imposed sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, has also said sabotage was a possibility.

"Any deliberate disruption of European energy infrastructure is utterly unacceptable and will be met with a robust and united response," the EU foreign policy chief Borrell said.

Echoing the views of Germany, Denmark and Sweden, he said the EU believed sabotage was probably the cause, although the EU has not named a potential perpetrator or suggested a motive.

The United Nations Security Council will convene on Friday at the request of Russia to discuss damage to the Nord Stream pipelines, the French U.N. mission, which holds the presidency of the 15-member council for September, said.

Russia's embassy in Denmark said any sabotage on Nord Stream's pipelines was an attack on both Russia's and Europe's energy security.

Russia Aiming to Fly Solo Without Airbus and Boeing

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's aviation industry will aim to go it alone without the West, using locally built parts to produce 1,000 airliners by 2030 and end a reliance on Boeing and Airbus, state-owned engineer Rostec said.

The remarks from Rostec, a vast state corporation headed by a close ally of President Vladimir Putin that includes Russia's only manufacturer of civil aircraft, are the strongest indication yet that the country's aviation sector sees the confrontation with the West as a permanent schism.

The West's imposition of the most severe sanctions in modern history after Moscow sent thousands of troops into Ukraine has forced the biggest change on Russia's economy since the Soviet Union crumbled from 1989 to 1991.

The post-Soviet assumptions of the aviation sector have been turned on their head: foreign aircraft, mainly from Boeing and Airbus, account for 95% of passenger traffic, but sanctions mean there are no spare parts - and no prospect of any.

Reuters reported in August that Russian airlines, including state controlled Aeroflot (AFLT.MM), were stripping jetliners to secure spare parts they can no longer buy abroad because of Western sanctions.

But Rostec, headed by Sergei Chemezov who worked with Putin in East Germany in the 1980s, sees the upheaval as an opportunity to build a strong, self-reliant aviation industry. "Foreign aircraft will drop out of the fleet," Rostec said in a written response to Reuters questions about its plans and the situation in Russia's aviation industry.

"We believe that this process is irreversible and Boeing and Airbus planes will never be delivered to Russia," it said.

Rostec has run some of Russia's prime industrial, defence and engineering assets since Putin signed a decree creating the corporation in 2007.

Russian airlines, including Aeroflot, splurged on Boeing and Airbus aircraft as they sought to rebuild their fleets after the chaos of the 1990s. Forging a competitive domestic alternative will be difficult.

The target of building 1,000 airliners by 2030 is "basically impossible", according to aerospace analyst Richard Aboulafia, managing director of U.S.-based AeroDynamic Advisory.

"Even when they could get semiconductors and other vital components from the West, they were having a very hard time producing more than a handful of jets," he said.

Turkish State Banks to Drop Russian Mir Payments

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The last three Turkish banks still processing transactions made with Russia's Mir cards are pulling out of the payment system, a senior official said Wednesday, following U.S. warnings of secondary sanctions on entities if they are found helping Moscow skirt financial sanctions.

The move, if and when publicly announced, would come after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan last Friday convened a top-tier meeting to discuss Mir. Erdoğan has said they were looking for alternatives to the system, which allowed Russian tourists and those living in Turkey to access their accounts.

Two private Turkish banks, DenizBank and İşbank, were the first to suspend the use of Mir last week after the U.S. warned financial institutions against entering new agreements or expanding existing ones with the Russian operator of Mir cards.

The three state lenders - Halkbank, VakıfBank and Ziraat - still worked with the cards. Local media also reported on Wednesday that the banks decided to halt the use of the Mir system.

A senior Turkish official did not say when Russians would no longer be able to access their cards in Turkey at all.

Banks in several other countries, including Vietnam and Kazakhstan, have withdrawn support for Mir. Mir is Moscow's alternative to Visa and Mastercard, which suspended operations in Russia over its actions in Ukraine and whose cards issued in Russia have stopped working abroad.

The three banks "are still processing (the outstanding) payments, but they have set a future date" for pulling out, the official told Agence France-Presse (AFP), speaking on condition of anonymity because no formal decision by the banks has been announced.

The pull-out was also reported by Bloomberg, which cited a senior Turkish official as saying that the three banks decided on Tuesday to exit the system.

The Kremlin on Wednesday condemned Washington for forcing Turkish banks to cut their Russian ties.

"They are threatened with secondary sanctions on the banking system. And this decision, of course, was made under this unprecedented pressure," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

New York Hosts Informal Ministerial Meeting of CICA, CSTO Council of Foreign



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - An informal ministerial meeting of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) was held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly under the chairmanship of Kazakhstan, which was attended by the foreign ministers of the CICA member states. The meeting focused on the preparation for the 6th CICA Summit, which will be held on October 12-13 this year in Astana.

Opening the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tileuberdi noted the importance of the upcoming CICA Summit, which will launch the transformation of the Forum into a full-fledged international organization, and expressed gratitude to the member states for supporting this initiative.

The participants discussed the final documents planned for adoption at the upcoming Summit, including the draft of the main final document of the Summit, the Regulations on the CICA Foundation, the statements of the leaders of the CICA member states on cooperation in the field of secure use of information and communication technologies, the CICA Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, etc.

In addition, an exchange of views took place on the prospects for further institutional development of the CICA and practical steps to advance the transformation process of the organization.

During the event, the Executive Director of the CICA Secretariat, Kairat Sarybay, informed the participants about the main organizational and protocol issues of the upcoming Summit.

The participants agreed to continue active joint work within the framework of the Forum in order to successfully conduct the 6th CICA Summit.

During the meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the heads of the foreign ministries of the CSTO member states exchanged views on topical issues on the international agenda, reviewed a wide range of current activities and discussed the further development of the Organization.

The ministers also discussed the engagement of the CSTO member states within the framework of the implementation of the parties' priorities outlined in the agenda of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, as well as collaboration on the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution on cooperation between the UN and the CSTO.

ECB Policymakers Put 75 bps Hike on Table for October

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - The European Central Bank may need to raise interest rates by another 75 basis points at its October meeting and move again in December to a level that no longer stimulates the economy, policymakers said.

The ECB lifted interest rates by a combined 125 basis points at its past two meetings, the fastest pace of policy tightening on record, but inflation may still be months from its peak, pointing to even more tightening from a bank that started hiking well after most of its top peers.

"I have to say that 75 bps is a very good candidate for (our next move to) maintain the pace of tightening, but it is also necessary to wait for fresh data," Slovak central bank governor Peter Kazimir told a news conference.

"We have to be vigorous, even ruthless, regardless of the looming recession," Kazimir added.

Finnish central bank chief Olli Rehn, considered a moderate swing voter, also said that 75 basis points could be among the options.

"There is a case for taking a decision on another significant rate hike, be it 75 or 50 basis points or something else," Rehn told Reuters without elaborating on what 'something else' may entail. "There is a stronger case for frontloading and determined action."

Outspoken policy hawk Robert Holzmann, Austria's central bank governor, also backed a 75 basis point move in an interview with Bloomberg TV, arguing that 100 basis points would simply be too much.

Markets see the ECB's 0.75% deposit rate rising to 2% by the end of the year, then to around 3% next spring. Inflation is forecast to stay above the ECB's 2% target through 2024 and even longer term expectations are above target.

ECB President Christine Lagarde said the "first destination" in the rate hiking cycle will be the "neutral" rate, which neither stimulates nor slows growth.

"We have return inflation to 2% in the medium term, and we will do what we have to do, which is to continue hiking interest rates in the next several meetings," she told a conference.

While the neutral rate is a loosely defined concept, economists see it in the 1.5% to 2% range, a mark Rehn said should be hit this year.

"In my view, we are heading towards the range of the neutral rate by Christmas," Rehn said. "Once we get there, we'll see if there's a case to move into restrictive territory."

Kazimir added that there was consensus on the 25-member Governing Council that the "neutral" must be hit but there was no consensus on what precise level this meant.



Turkmenistan Removes Goods Transit Tariff for Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - The manager of Lotfabad border terminal in Khorasan Razavi said that Turkmenistan has annulled the heavy tolls for transporting transit goods by Iran through the cross borders.

Mohsen Rukni, manager of Lotfabad Khorasan Razavi border terminal, stated: "From October 1st, Turkmenistan will remove the goods transit fee (\$1.5 per kilometer) for Iranian goods."

The tariff for the passage of foreign transit fleets from Turkmenistan up to 10, 20, and above 20 tons has been set at 130, 180, and 250 dollars, respectively, and the fees for entering the country have also been reduced from \$170 to \$150.



Disturbing Nord Stream Leaks Show Danger of Global Methane Emissions

PARIS (Dispatches) - Planet-heating methane spewing into the atmosphere from the damaged Nord Stream pipelines only has a modest impact on climate change, say scientists, but sharply highlights the risks of fossil-fuel driven greenhouse gas emissions.

The European Union has said it believes the leaks to the strategically important pipelines, Nord Stream 1 and 2, were caused by a "deliberate act".

While not in operation the pipelines still contained gas, and Danish authorities said they will now likely continue to empty out, with leaks expected to continue for at least a week.

With only rough estimates available as to how much natural gas might bubble up through the Baltic Sea, scientists expressed concerns about climate and environmental impacts -- but stressed that the amounts of methane involved were a tiny fraction of global emissions.

"It is a real travesty, an environmental crime if it was deliberate," said Jeffrey Kargel, senior scientist at the Planetary Research Institute in Arizona, calling the leak "disturbing".

But he added: "Although the amount of gas lost from the pipeline obviously is large, it is not the climate disaster one might think."

Natural gas is composed primarily of methane.

This is about 28 times more powerful than carbon dioxide on a century-long timescale -- although it only lingers in the atmosphere for about a decade, compared to hundreds or thousands of years for CO2.

Some of the methane emitted from the pipes will be oxidized in the water into CO2, said Grant Allen, professor of Atmospheric Physics at the University of Manchester.

"But given how violent the venting of natural gas appears to be, most of the gas will reach the sea surface as methane," he said.

Methane is responsible for roughly 30 percent of the global rise in temperatures to date, even though it is far less abundant in the atmosphere than CO2.

This is the subject of much uncertainty, although some experts and organisations have attempted to calculate the potential amount of gas in the pipelines.

One estimate is that there was up to 177 million cubic metres of natural gas still in Nord Stream 2, said Allen.

"This is not a small amount of gas, and represents a reckless emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere," he said, adding it was equivalent to the natural gas used by 124,000 UK homes in a year.

Greenpeace have used similar figures to roughly estimate that the leak emissions could be equivalent to eight months of Denmark's total greenhouse gas emissions.

Paul Balcombe, an honorary lecturer at the Department of Chemical Engineering at Imperial College London, said estimates for the gas in the pipes range from around 150 to 300 million cubic metres.

"It is unlikely that they will release all their contents," he told the Science Media Centre. But he added if just one of the pipes did completely empty out it would be about



twice as much as the worst methane leak recorded in the United States, the 2015 Aliso Canyon leak.

"It would have a very large environmental and climate impact indeed, even if it released a fraction of this," he said.

Lauri Myllyvirta from the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said he has calculated an estimated potential leak of between 180 and 270 kilotonnes from the two pipelines.

This figure is significant but, he said, is probably only 1.5 percent of the total annual methane emissions from oil and gas operations in Russia.

The International Energy Agency estimates this was some 18 million tonnes in 2021.

The IEA has decried the enormous amount of methane that leaks from fossil fuel operations every year -- estimating the amount lost last year globally was broadly similar to all the gas used in Europe's power sector.

The leak will certainly have a "strong immediate warming effect and cause poor air quality" Piers Forster, director of the Priestley International Centre for Climate at the University of Leeds.

But ultimately its effect is small compared to the daily leaks from the world's poorly-maintained gas networks, which see around 10 percent of global gas supply lost.

Experts said the incident further underscores the need to urgently switch from polluting fossil fuels, both to combat climate change and ensure energy security.

This year's energy crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine has already "supercharged the clean energy transition", Myllyvirta said.

Kargel, who calculated that the Nord Stream leak was roughly equivalent to 2.5 hours of global emissions, said it was a reminder of the urgent need to slash greenhouse emissions.

"The global climate is changing drastically, with huge impacts on extreme climate mounting every year, decade after decade," he said.

Lack of Credit Sends Venezuelan Businesses Seeking Loans Abroad



CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuelan business owners struggling to get access to credit amid their country's continued economic crisis are seeking loans through foreign banks, business people and finance industry sources told Reuters.

Local banks in the South American country offer few loans to the private sector because of efforts by Nicolas Maduro's government to lower inflation by increasing the supply of foreign cash, limiting the expansion of credit, reducing public spending and raising taxes.

Large companies in need of financing have begun seeking loans from foreign banks with local partners or connections, private sector and finance sources said. The loans have market-rate interest rates and a high collateral threshold, they said.

Under law, local banks must retain 73% of their deposits in the central bank, which leaves little margin for loans.

"Industries have to seek options to maintain their operations," said one businessman, adding that because loans are costly due to interest and guarantees, only large companies can seek them. "Small and medium businesses can't carry them."

Several companies seeking credit are from the agricultural sector and need the funds to purchase wheat, fertilizers and other goods from abroad, three sources said.

Other businesses looking for loans are focused on export of food and drink, they added.

Neither the central bank nor the banking regulator responded to requests for comment.

U.S. sanctions imposed in 2019 are focused on limiting Maduro's access to financing and do not prohibit private Venezuelan companies from operating abroad.

Loans being sought in other countries by large Venezuelan companies are generally for more than \$500,000, two of the sources said, asking that the names of the companies and the banks remain confidential for security reasons.

Emergence of...

FROM PAGE 1

"Only a government comprised of all Afghans can guarantee and protect their rights," Ershadi said.

Elsewhere in her remarks, the envoy stressed the importance of fighting drug trafficking, saying that Iran is directly affected by this menace and pays a high price for it.

"Over the past 40 years, Iran has played an active role in combating drug trafficking in the region, in which, nearly 4,000 members of Iran's law enforcement forces have been martyred and over 12,000 others have been injured," Ershadi added.

She also noted that Iran has used its capacities and resources to help the Afghan people overcome their challenges and said the Islamic Republic has been hosting millions of refugees who have unfortunately received minimal international assistance in the last 40 years.

After the Taliban takeover, Iran never closed its border with Afghanistan and thousands of Afghans have entered Iran on a daily basis since last year, she added.

"However, neighbors of Afghanistan, including Iran, should not feel all the burdens associated with receiving Afghan refugees. Other countries should welcome refugees as well," Ershadi pointed out.

She once again urged the international community to continue to assist Afghanistan, saying, "Other conflicts must not divert attention away from or ignore the situation in Afghanistan."

"While humanitarian and development assistance

is critical to keeping Afghans alive, maintaining basic services, and bolstering the economy, they are not long-term solutions and must be supplemented by sustained economic growth," the Iranian envoy added.

She further emphasized the need to fully release the frozen assets belong to the Afghan people in full, "without being politicized or conditional in any way."

Ershadi said, "Sanctions imposed on specific individuals and entities in Afghanistan must also not obstruct humanitarian, economic, or development cooperation with Afghanistan. The sanctions should not have an impact on efforts to revitalize the Afghan economy, as the Secretary-General has repeatedly called for measures to give the Afghan economy breathing room."

She pledged the continuation of Iran's efforts to assist the Afghan people and work with the war-ravaged country's neighbors and other partners to "ensure durable peace and sustainable development in Afghanistan."

Ershadi welcomed the appointment of Roza Otunbayeva as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

She vowed Iran will support UNAMA in its "efforts to address the humanitarian crisis and facilitate the intra-Afghan political process to promote peace and stability in the country."

Iran Offers 30% Stake...

FROM PAGE 1

Although negotiations restarted in 2015, technical studies could not be concluded due to sanctions on Iran in November 2018, ending deliberations between the Indian consortium and Iran.

In 2020, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) decided to award the contract to a local firm to develop the field. A development contract was subsequently signed with Iranian company Petropars.

Through the contract, Petropars will produce 28 million cubic metres of sour gas per day over five years.

Officials were cited by the PTI as saying that the exploration contract allowed OVL and its partners to participate in the offshore field development project.

Citing the exploration service contract, the Indian consortium has been asked by Iran to exercise its rights to participate in the field development contract with a minimum stake of 30%. This option period is valid for 90 days

OVL currently owns a 40% stake in the Farsi offshore exploration block while the Indian Oil Corporation owns a 40% stake. The remaining 20% is held by Oil India.

Tehran Warns...

FROM PAGE 1

This is not the first time, when Abu Dhabi alleges enjoying a "right" to the islands.

Tehran has, however, invariably laid emphasis on its ownership of the islands, citing historical facts that date back to the time, when the UAE was yet to be established.

At the same time as asserting its right to the islands, the Islamic Republic has constantly sought to lead a policy of amity with all of its neighbors, including the Emirates, and expressed a willingness to preserve and strengthen its relations with them.

UNSC Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

"Our country is also of the international belief that the use of such inhumane weapons is a serious threat to international peace and security and should not be tolerated," Iravani pointed out.

He added, "The only way to ensure that chemical weapons will never be used again is to eliminate all of them globally, and to take all necessary measures to prevent the production of such weapons of mass destruction."

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations noted that his country has frequently underlined the need for full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the CWC.

"We believe that any attempt to politicize the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and exploit the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for political purposes will place the legitimacy of the convention and the organization at stake," Iravani noted.

The top Iranian diplomat went on to draw attention to Syria's efforts to honor its obligations under the CWC, saying, "We encourage the continuation of communications and interactions between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic, and appreciate the Syrian government to have submitted the 166th monthly report to the OPCW director general [Fernando Arias]. In the report, Syria has elaborated on the details of its actions to eliminate chemical weapons and its production facilities."

Iravani expressed hope that the upcoming meeting between Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad and Arias would help resolve the lingering issues between the two sides.

The Western media and governments have repeatedly accused the Syrian government of using chemical weapons against its own citizens in the war against terrorists.

This is while Syria surrendered its stockpile of chemical weapons in 2014 to a joint mission led by the United States and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which oversaw the destruction of the weaponry. It has also consistently denied using chemical weapons.

U.S. Imposes...

FROM PAGE 1

The United States, under former president Donald Trump, abandoned the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018 and reinstated unilateral sanctions that the agreement had lifted.

The talks to salvage the agreement kicked off in the Austrian capital of Vienna in April last year, months after Joe Biden succeeded Trump, with the intention of examining Washington's seriousness in rejoining the deal and removing anti-Iran sanctions.

Despite notable progress, the US indecisiveness and procrastination caused multiple interruptions in the marathon talks.

In recent weeks, there have been unfruitful, indirect exchanges of responses between Tehran and Washington over an EU draft proposal on restoring the JCPOA, with Iranian officials urging their American counterparts to show "realism" and "flexibility" in order to secure a deal.

European diplomats say talks now appear headed toward a pause until after the US mid-term elections on November 8.

"As Iran continues to accelerate its nuclear program in violation of the JCPOA, we will continue to accelerate our enforcement of sanctions on Iran's petroleum and petrochemical sales under authorities that would be removed under the JCPOA," Blinken said in the statement on Thursday, making baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic.

"These enforcement actions will continue on a regular basis, with an aim to severely restrict Iran's oil and petrochemical exports," he declared.

Smith Rowe Sidelined Until December

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal midfielder Emile Smith Rowe has undergone surgery on a troublesome groin injury and will not return to training until at least December, the Premier League leaders said.

The 22-year-old, who had a breakout campaign last season with 10 league goals, has had limited game time this season with only four substitute appearances, his last match coming against Manchester United at the start of the month.

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

Farah Forced to Pull out of London Marathon

LONDON (Dispatches) - Mo Farah has been forced to withdraw from Sunday's London marathon due to a hip injury with this latest setback raising doubts over the 39-year-old's future in competitive racing.

The four-time Olympic gold medalist was due to run the race for the first time since 2019 after making a return to the track in a failed attempt to compete at last year's Olympics in Tokyo.

Farah did return to form on the road by winning the "Big Half" — a London half marathon — earlier this month.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SATURDAY OCTOBER 1, 2022

Verstappen Rates Himself Long Shot To Clinch Title in Singapore

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Max Verstappen said he thinks he is "quite a long shot" to retain his Formula One world championship at this weekend's Singapore Grand Prix, even though it is mathematically possible.

Red Bull driver Verstappen, who will celebrate his 25th birthday tomorrow, is running away with the title battle but must win Sunday's race and then depend on his closest rivals faltering, or the fight will move on to Japan the following week.

"I don't really think about the championship," said the dominant Dutchman, who has won 11 of 16 races in 2022 and the last five in a row.

"It's quite a long shot and I just want to enjoy the weekend and of course try to win it," he told reporters.

"I need a lot of luck for it to happen here so I don't really count on it."

Verstappen admitted he knew the scenario required for him to secure back-to-back championships.

"I need to win and Checo (Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez) needs to finish fourth or lower and (Ferrari's) Charles (Leclerc) eighth or lower.

"So I mean it's a bit unrealistic for it to happen, so I don't really think about it," he said.

Verstappen said he was more concerned about the single-lap pace of the Red Bull at Singapore, where qualifying in pole position is crucial on a track where it is almost impossible to overtake.

"We really need to focus over one lap. This year we've never really been incredible over one lap," he said.

"We've always been good in the race but around here we know that one-lap performance is very important."

Verstappen has never won Singapore's spectacular night race, which is returning to the calendar for the first time since 2019 because of Covid.

The nature of the city centre circuit and Singapore's tropical heat and humidity means it is the most demanding venue on the calendar, both physically and mentally.



Every running of the Singapore Grand Prix has featured a safety car and the race requires huge powers of concentration.

There are no long straights to give drivers a breather and concrete walls line the bumpy tarmac ready to punish the slightest error.

"We haven't been to Singapore for a while so it will be interesting to see how the track has evolved," said Verstappen, who has a 116-point lead over Leclerc following his victory at the Italian Grand Prix three weeks ago.

He is 125 clear of third-placed Perez.

He needs to extend his lead to 138 points by Sunday's chequered flag to secure the earliest championship win since Michael Schumacher won in 2002 with six GPs remaining.

Verstappen needs two more wins to equal the single-season mark of 13 jointly held by Schumacher (2004) and Sebastian Vettel (2013).

"It will be nice if we get it," said Verstappen. "But for me personally it's not something. It's nice what we've done the last few races but I don't think about it any more.

"I'm just focusing on what we have to do here."

Laver Backs Kyrgios For Success After Run to Wimbledon Final



SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australian great Rod Laver has backed Nick Kyrgios for more success next season after reaching this year's Wimbledon final and says his terrific run of form in the second half of 2022 has convinced him he has what it takes to win a Grand Slam.

After losing to Novak Djokovic in his first major final, Kyrgios won the Citi Open title and went deep into the ATP Masters event in Montreal and the U.S. Open in New York.

Laver said his countryman's defeat to Djokovic at the All England Club was down to a lack of belief, not talent.

"Kyrgios has all the ability in the world, every shot that you could wish to make," Laver, the only player to complete the calendar Grand Slam twice, told The Telegraph.

"He's probably one of the biggest servers in the game. He's accurate, he can play under pressure. I was thrilled that he reached the final, but he didn't think he could win Wimbledon."

Qatar Confirms Covid Test Requirements For World Cup Fans

DOHA (Dispatches) - Fans attending the World Cup in Qatar must show proof of a negative Covid-19 test regardless of their vaccination status, organizers said in a statement.

All visitors aged six and over must present a negative result from a PCR test taken within 48 hours before their departure or from a rapid antigen test taken in the 24 hours before arriving, the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy said.

Results of the rapid antigen tests will only be accepted if they are from official medical centres and not self-administered. No further tests will be required in Qatar if visitors do not develop symptoms of Covid-19.

Visitors aged 18 and above will also be required to download a government-run contact tracing phone application called Ehteraz.

"A green Ehteraz status (showing the user does not have a confirmed case of Covid-19) is required to enter any public closed indoor spaces," the statement added.

Fans will have to wear masks on public transport but vaccination is not mandatory for the unprecedented influx of 1.2 million visitors expected for the November 20-December 18 tournament.

"Anyone who tests positive for Covid-19 while in Qatar will be required to isolate in accordance with Ministry of Public Health guidelines," the statement said.

Qatar has recorded more than 440,000 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 692 deaths from the virus, according to data from the Ministry of Public Health.

China to Host World Tour Finals in December

LONDON (Dispatches) - China will host its first international badminton tournament since 2019 in December, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) said, after two years of disruptions caused by COVID.

The season-ending World Tour Finals, scheduled for Guangzhou from Dec. 14-18, will feature the top eight players and pairs in each category with a prize pool of \$1.5 million, the biggest the event has ever offered, the BWF said.

Mbappe More Restricted at PSG Than With France



The 23-year-old said he was asked "to do different things" for France, where he played alongside Olivier Giroud in the absence of Karim Benzema, than with PSG. "His analysis is right. He's not in the same set-up with us as he is in the national team," Galtier told reporters.

PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris Saint-Germain coach Christophe Galtier acknowledged Kylian Mbappe's claims he has more freedom playing for France, admitting the star forward's club role is "more restricted".

Mbappe drew attention with his remarks after scoring in last week's 2-0 win over Austria in the UEFA Nations League as France narrowly avoided relegation from the top tier.

"It will be nice if we get it," said Verstappen. "But for me personally it's not something. It's nice what we've done the last few races but I don't think about it any more.

Ruud Qualifies for ATP Finals

SEOUL (Dispatches) - World number two Casper Ruud secured a place at the ATP Finals for the second straight year after battling into the Korea Open quarter-finals.

The Norwegian, who was the runner-up at both the French and US Opens this season, saw off Nicolas Jarry of Chile 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 in Seoul.

Ruud reached the semi-finals of the season-ending event in Turin last year before losing to Daniil Medvedev.

"I just got the news that I qualified for the ATP Finals in Turin again this year and I'm so much looking forward to coming back to Italy," Ruud told atptour.com.

"I had such a great time last year, it's a great country for tennis."

Ruud is playing in his first singles tournament since the US Open where he had a chance to take the world number one spot.

But he lost to Carlos Alcaraz in the final, with the Spanish teenager instead becoming the youngest top-ranked men's player in history.

Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal have already booked their places in the eight-man field for the ATP Finals which take place from November 13-20.

"My goal for this year is to finish in the top three in the ranking," Ruud, who played at the Laver Cup last week, added. "But there are many good players that probably feel the same, so if I can do that I'll be very happy."

The 23-year-old will face Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan for a semi-final spot in Seoul on Friday after overcoming a second-set blip against the 111th-ranked Jarry.

"The first set went very well, but in the second set it was tough to break him. I had to work hard and I was very happy to get the win in the end," Ruud said.

Second seed Cameron Norrie also advanced to the quarter-finals by beating Japan's Kaichi Uchida 6-2, 6-2, while third seed Taylor Fritz withdrew due to illness.



Neymar Swept Up in Brazil Vote Battle

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Football superstar Neymar was swept up in Brazil's presidential election campaign after posting a video on social media Wednesday thanking President Jair Bolsonaro for visiting the player's charitable children's foundation.

The Paris Saint-Germain and Brazil striker did not get into politics in the brief message to Bolsonaro, posted four days out from Sunday's voting.

But that did not stop Bolsonaro's camp from playing up the video from one of the country's biggest stars as the far-right incumbent seeks a come-from-behind win against leftist ex-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (2003-2010), who leads in the polls.

"Hello, President Bolsonaro... I wanted to thank you for your illustrious visit," Neymar, 30, said on Instagram.

"I would have loved to be there with you, but unfortunately I'm too far away... I hope you enjoyed your visit to the institute, which is the greatest goal of my life."

Communications Minister Fabio Faria and Bolsonaro's senator son Flavio promptly reposted the video on Twitter.

The message came after ex-army captain Bolsonaro visited the Neymar Jr. Institute, a charitable foundation the football star founded in 2014 that runs educational, cultural and sports programs for 3,000 underprivileged children in the southeastern city of Praia Grande, where Neymar grew up.

Bolsonaro backers have adopted the yellow-and-green jersey of Brazil's national team as a symbol of support for the president, along with the Brazilian flag.

"Let's all go yellow and green with the national team's jersey to vote for our captain Sunday!" Faria tweeted.

