

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **144,490** With **8** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

In an Interventionist and Proactive Move, the British Government Imposed Sanctions Against Iran's Morality Police and a Number of Iranian Security Officials in Support of Rioters

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Iran Still Committed To Talks on Reviving Nuclear Deal

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has reaffirmed its commitment to continue the talks aimed at reaching an agreement on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal as the US and its European allies blame the protraction of the negotiations on Tehran.

"Iranian Foreign Minister [Hossein] Amirabdollahian recently reiterated that the Islamic Republic of Iran's approach is to remain in the course of negotiations so as to reach a lasting and sustainable agreement that would simultaneously guarantee the fundamental interests of the government as well as those of the Iranian nation," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani told reporters.

Kanaani said the three EU parties to the deal - France, Britain and Germany - and the United States have linked the talks to the latest violent riots in Iran, asserting that Tehran will not allow other states to interfere in its domestic affairs. "Iran's positions and stances on the talks have been frequently declared, and we are prepared to follow the [diplomatic] path as before," he said.

He further made clear that the Islamic Republic is ready for bilateral interaction with all parties so that the negotiations would come to fruition. **See Page 7**

Athletes Boycotting Israeli Opponents Are Real Victors



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says Iranian athletes who have refused to face Israeli opponents at the expense of not getting a medal are the real victors.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks during a meeting held with officials from the second National Congress of Sports Martyrs last month. His remarks were published on Monday.

The Leader said although success in sports is very important and is unlike other victories, the Iranian athletes who chose to boycott Israeli opponents at the expense of not getting a medal are actually victorious.

If anyone violates this principle, it means that they are violating their moral victory for the sake of obtaining a technical victory in appearances, he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei noted that competing with Israeli opponents constitutes an official recognition of the "usurping" regime that kills innocent civilians.

The leader also said that Western leaders and their followers who slam the boycott of Israeli players as a politicization of sports are adopting double standards, making a reference to the exclusion of Russia from major sports events over the war in Ukraine.

"You've seen what they have done with sports after the war in Ukraine. They banned some countries from participating in sporting events for political reasons. That is, they cross their own red lines with ease when it's in their interest. But then when our athlete refuses to compete with a Zionist opponent, they complain about it."

Athletes from Iran and other Muslim countries have repeatedly refused to compete against Israeli opponents at major international events to protest Israel's crimes and occupation of Palestinian land.

Last July, Iranian athlete Hamid Amraei decided to withdraw from AJP Tour Fujairah International Pro Jiu-Jitsu Championship in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to avoid facing an Israeli counterpart.

Iran Embassy in London Is Calm

LONDON (IRNA) - The chargé d'affaires of Iran's embassy in London has said that the situation of the embassy is calm here and the flag of the Islamic Republic was hoisted again.

The Islamic Republic flag which the anti-Revolution elements had insulted was raised on its place again, Mehdi Hosseini-Matin said.

The situation is now calm after the attack mounted by the anti-Revolution elements on Iran's representative office in the absence of the London Police, the official announced.

Following the brutal measures in recent weeks, those elements climbed up the embassy's building and insulted "our country's flag," he said, adding that they also caused some damage to the windows.

It seemed that they had ambushed to damage the building of Iran's embassy in the absence of the police, he underlined. According to the police, five men have been arrested for damaging the representative's office; three other men and a woman have also been detained because they were after creating disorder and attacking the police forces. **See Page 7**

NIOC, Gazprom to Develop 8 Iran Oil, Gas Fields

TEHRAN (Shana) - The Deputy Minister of Petroleum for International Affairs and Trade said that during the trip of the Minister of Petroleum to Moscow implementation of the comprehensive memorandum with Gazprom was followed up.

Ahmad Asadzadeh said the Russian side is developing a comprehensive development plan for 6 oil fields and 2 gas fields in Iran and contracts for these fields are planned to be signed by the end of the current calendar year, which began on March 21.

Referring to the visit of Iranian Minister of Petroleum Javad Owji and his accompanying delegation to Moscow to participate in the Caspian Economic Conference, Asadzadeh said: "In this trip, the Petroleum Minister met Alexander Novak, the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia and the head of the Russian side of the Joint Economic Commission and consulted on holding a joint commission in Russia from October 30 to November 1 and it was decided that the two sides should finalize and prepare the road map for cooperation as soon as possible." **See Page 7**

Iran Exports to U.S. Rise 8.5 Folds

TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of Iran's exports to the United States increased by 8.5 folds in the first eight months of 2022 from the same period in 2021.

Based on the data released by the United States Census Bureau, the U.S. imported commodities worth \$5.1 million from Iran in the first eight months of this year, while the figure was only \$600,000 in the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported.

According to the mentioned data, the two countries traded \$33 million worth of goods in the mentioned eight months, rising 28 percent from the figure in the first eight months of 2021.

The United States Census Bureau's data shows that the value of U.S. export to Iran increased 11 percent to \$27.9 million in the eight-month period of this year, from \$25.1 million in the same time span of the previous year. **See Page 7**

Strikes at French Oil Refineries Continue

PARIS (Dispatches) - French motorists have been made to wait in long queues across the country to refuel their vehicles as petrol pumps run dry amid ongoing strikes at the country's oil refineries and storage sites.

The leading French trade union, General Confederation of Labour (CGT), which represents labor forces at TotalEnergies and ExxonMobil's Esso France, was quoted as saying on Monday that the strikes at the companies' oil refineries and storage sites will continue.

Hundreds of gas stations around France and particularly in the Paris region were reportedly running out of fuel on Monday after almost a third of the petrol stations had problems getting deliveries of fuel.

The strike, announced by French tanker drivers responsible for delivering fuel, gas, and chemical products on Friday, is over low wages and harsh working conditions amid a cost of living crisis in France.

The CGT union is demanding the management open talks over wages and working conditions and has threatened to do what it takes to get them around the negotiating table.

The union has blockaded some fuel depots around the country and in the greater Paris region of Ile-de-France it is controlling how many fuel tankers can leave. French petrol industry chiefs from UFIP have downplayed worries over fuel shortages, saying that only around a hundred stations, out of a total of 11,000, were completely out of fuel.

These figures are in line with the CGT, which is claiming that more than 180 stations have run out of gas.

However, going by the petrol availability app mon-essence.fr, which bases its data on information from its users, the situation is a bit direr than what industry officials claim.

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Esso France told Reuters that a meeting will be held on Monday with the participation of representatives from all four labor unions representing workers at the company.

The oil strikes have mounted added pressure on French President Emmanuel Macron whose government is already facing discontent among the public over inflation and higher cost of living.

Thousands of protesters gathered in Paris on Sunday to protest soaring inflation and high cost of living, demanding that France pull out completely from membership in the US-led NATO military alliance.

Similar protests have been held across the European Union against soaring inflation and the rising cost of living caused by sanctions imposed on Russia in the wake of the Ukraine war.

Protesters across Europe demand their governments properly address the pressure of soaring cost of living for the masses and downgrading public living standards. Since the beginning of Russia's military operation in Ukraine in late February, Western countries have slapped waves of sanctions on Russia, disrupting the global energy and food market.

Disruption in supply chains has led to higher fuel and food prices across the EU, driving inflation to record levels and causing the cost of living to soar. The European Union leaders accuse the Kremlin of wielding energy as a weapon, cutting gas supplies in retaliation for sanctions.

Hezbollah Will Defeat Israeli Military in Any New Confrontation

BEIRUT (PressTV) - A high-ranking Hezbollah official has said that the Lebanese resistance movement will defeat Israel in any potential new military confrontation waged by the Tel Aviv regime, emphasizing that his comrades will remain on the path of steadfastness and will not stop fighting off the enemy's plots.

Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem made the remarks on Sunday as he addressed a ceremony in the Jabal Amil region in southern Lebanon.

"We have defeated Israel," Sheikh Qassem said, adding that resistance fighters will continue to crush the Israeli regime in any battle as long as there are male and female Hezbollah resistance fighters, members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and devotees to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei within the group's ranks.

"They (Israelis) are confused and do not know how to confront us in order to obliterate the legitimacy of our presence. Nonetheless, we face up to them by means of logical reasoning - something in which they are fairly weak. We strongly believe that weapons must be used to protect the homeland and must be exclusively in the hands of the Lebanese army forces," he said. **See Page 7**

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Army Air Force Ready to Confront Any Threat

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Commander of the Army Air Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi says that the Air Force is ready to confront any threat decisively.

Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi also added that the Air Force is trying to improve its combat power compared to the past and provide its needs from inside the country.

“Today, the powerful air force is ready to deal with any type of threat and execute any type of mission based on receiving orders from the command hierarchy,” he noted.

Enemies Instigate Riots After Frustration At Iran's Advances

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi said that the enemies resorted to provoking riots in the country after being frustrated with the nation's advances despite all pressures.

Speaking at a cabinet meeting on Sunday afternoon, President Raisi pointed to the recent foreign-backed riots in the country and said the people's insight will put an end to the disturbances instigated by the enemies.

He urged the security apparatuses of the country to quell the disturbances with the help of the nation's prudence and insight in order to create a proportionate environment for businesses to flourish.

“The enemy seeks to target the people's minds with psychological warfare and create fear and frustration in the society,” he pointed out.

He also urged the media to give a clear picture of the incidents to tackle the psychological warfare waged by the enemy.

The president said that defending human rights is at the essence of the Islamic Republic, calling for intensifying efforts to meet people's needs in the economic area.

Raisi described the jihad of explanation and awareness as another important mission of those concerned about the country and the Islamic system today and pointed out, “The enemy seeks to confuse the public mind with psychological warfare and spreading rumours and create fear and despair in the society”.

Accordingly, the President emphasized to the activists of the media and cyberspace to use all their efforts to explain the facts and provide accurate narratives about the dimensions and behind the scenes of the recent riots and disturbances so that the enemy cannot distort the reality with confusing narratives.



Raisi emphasized that defending human rights is in the essence and foundation of the Islamic Republic, and said, “In every incident, the necessary follow-up should be done so that no one is oppressed, but secondary issues should not be placed in the place of the main issues and the main issue should not be sidelined”.

The President considered it important to pay attention to the production of accurate and fact-based content in the media and cyberspace to present a true and real narrative of the country's events and added, “It is necessary for the field of diplomacy and for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies, cultural advisers and those concerned about the Islamic Revolution to clarify the dusty atmosphere created by the enemy by informing and explaining the issues correctly”.

In another part of his speech, referring to the recent economic progress of our country, Raisi said, “The enemy has been harmed by the work and continuous efforts to realize the progress of the country and wants to create disruptions and interruptions in this path, and we must frustrate the enemy by redoubled work and solving people's problems”.

Emphasizing the need to solve the economic concerns of the people, the President noted that the continuous effort to meet the economic needs of the people and continue the progress of the country is the most effective way to deal with the enemy's plots.

Protests Allowed in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Police Chief Brigadier General Qasem Rezaei said protests are people's rights, describing riots as police's red-line.

Addressing a meeting with foreign military advisors residing in Iran, Rezaei said that some countries are affected by the US and the usurping Zionism and say that human rights are not respected in Iran, but foreign media show the facts upside down.

If the Iranian police wanted to act militarily, it would have behaved differently, he said adding that there is freedom of speech for protests in Iran.

Some people abuse these protests and disrupt the norms of society, he noted.

Iran has no limit for interacting with other countries, although it has nothing to do with some arrogant countries or the Zionist regime, he stated.

As the police, we are ready to share our experiences, Rezaei stressed.

Judiciary Official Releases New Details of Esmailzadeh's Death

KARAJ (IRNA) - Head of the Justice Department of Iranian Alborz Province Hossein Fazeli released new details about the death of Sarina Esmailzadeh noting that there were different scenarios and distorted narratives surrounding this incident.

Referring to distorted news reports by hostile media which had expressed doubt over the death of Ms. Esmailzadeh, Fazeli said that she died as a result of falling from height.

He rejected news reports by anti-Iranian media as “ridiculous, strange and full of distortion” in which they claimed that the young Iranian girl had been killed in one part of the city and then carried to her grandmother's house in another part and thrown down from the roof.

Fazeli said that these media even insulted Sarina's mother when she clarified about her death, claiming that she has made the remarks under pressure or even raising doubt that she has not been her mother.

Official investigation results show that Sarina and her mother were in her grandmother's house at the night of the incident. They ate dinner together and stayed up until 23:00 when they went to bed at the grandmother's house. Sarina's mother found out about the incident after the midnight.

Fazeli said that the enemies of the Islamic Revolution are resorting to every effort, including media hype, to increase the alleged number of deaths in Iranian riots so as to prolong unrests across Iran.

Iran Supports Poland's Constructive Role in Preserving Int'l Peace

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani said in a meeting with his visiting Polish counterpart that Iran supports Poland's constructive role in preserving international peace and stability.

Bagheri Kani, the host of Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski, said that keeping in mind Poland's political and economic capacities in the European Union, and the international status of that European country, Iran supports Poland's role in preservation of the international peace and stability.

Bagheri Kani also referred to the Islamic Republic of Iran's constructive role in preservation of peace and stability in the region, stressing, “In any field that the EU will choose the option of interactions and cooperation, it can count on the Islamic Republic of Iran's positive reaction.”

The Iranian deputy foreign minister said that Iran is strongly favoring ending the armed engagement in Europe, reiterating, “The interest of the European nations, too, dictates that the negotiations table will be available for the two warring sides.”

Pawel Jablonski, the deputy foreign minister of Poland, too, in the meeting with his Iranian counterpart exchanged viewpoints on bilateral ties, and the regional and international issues, especially the Ukraine war.

Meanwhile earlier in meeting with Jablonski, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said that the Islamic Republic of Iran has not provided any weapon for either side in Ukraine war, as Tehran's basic stand is opposing to arm any side in order to help end the war.

During the meeting, both sides discussed the horizons of bilateral cooperation in various political, economic, cultural and consular fields.

The Iranian foreign minister in the meeting welcomed comprehensive activation of bilateral relations and their further improvement using the existing capacities in both countries.

On Ukraine issue, Amirabdollahian once again emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran has by no means provided any weapons for any of the two sides of the Ukraine war, as Tehran's basic stand is opposing arming both sides to expedite the end of that war.

The Polish deputy foreign minister, too, appreciated the Iranian foreign minister for his comprehensive elaboration of the bilateral relations and cooperation.

Pawel Jablonski, too, elaborated on Poland's viewpoints on bilateral relations, regional and international issues of mutual interest in the meeting.

Tehran's Ties With Taliban Depend on Their Behavior

TEHRAN (IP) - A member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Iranian Parliament said that Tehran's relationship with the Taliban government depends on their behavior toward the Afghan people.

Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi, in a meeting with the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Hideo Ikebe, added: “All the countries of the region and the international community should work together to prevent the spread of the crisis in Afghanistan.”

He added: “Iran's policy is to provide all-out assistance to the Afghan people to prevent humanitarian disasters.” Rahimi Jahanabadi stated: “The Islamic Republic of Iran has supported and hosted the people of Afghanistan for several decades and provided them with livelihood, health, and education facilities, and now hosts more than 5 million Afghan citizens.”

Stating that the US surrendered Afghanistan to the Taliban to restrain Russia and China, Rahimi Jahanabadi added: “At the same time, the US is trying to revive ISIS once again to destabilize the region.”

Referring to the need for the United Nations to play a greater role in Afghanistan, the parliament member said: “The United Nations can play a greater role in the developments in Afghanistan and efforts to reach a consensus among the countries in the region to encourage the Taliban to Inter-Afghan dialogues are needed.”

Ikebe also thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for accepting and supporting millions of Afghans and said: “The people of Afghanistan should be supported, and the United Nations is thinking of a solution to help the people of Afghanistan despite the obstacles of the Taliban government.” The head of the office of the United Nations Deputy Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated: “The United Nations has offices in different parts of Afghanistan, and hears the voices of the people and communicates with the local authorities. Policies in Afghanistan differ from one region to another, and the United Nations, in cooperation with neighboring countries, works to protect the interests of the Afghan people.”

IRGC Commander Warns Enemies Behind Recent Riots Again

TEHRAN (MNA) - The commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami once again warned the enemies who were behind recent riots in the country.

Salami made the comments at the second National Congress of Sports Martyrs on Monday.

At the start of the ceremony, the IRGC commander congratulated the arrival of the birthday anniversary of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

He hailed the achievements made by the Iranian sportswomen who shone on the international stage after the Islamic Revolution.

General Salami pointed to the recent riots in the country and said the scenario and the media warfare are plotted against Iran “inside think tanks in Washington and New York and in the capital of some European countries and their mercenaries in Riyadh.”

He pointed out that the enemies resort to provoking violent riots in Iran after they could not stop the country's progress toward development.

He added that the enemies failed in their economic warfare against Iran after facing people's resistance that's why they resorted to instigating riots in the country.

The IRGC commander said that a small number of Iranian youth have been

Bolivian Envoy Condemns West's Role in Iran's Unrest

TEHRAN (IP) - The ambassador of Bolivia in Iran emphasized that his country condemns the riots in Iran in which the British and American Zionists are involved.

In some cities across Iran, there have been sporadic protests and unrest after the death of Mahsa Amini. On Sunday, Romina Perez, the Bolivian ambassador to Iran, in a meeting with Tabriz mayor Yaghoob Hoshyar, said: “Bolivia and Iran are two brother countries, and we have anti-imperialist ideas and stand together against imperialism.”

Stating that the two countries could establish a friendship house, the ambassador added: “There are many common points between Tabriz and the cities of Bolivia, so they should expand their connections.” Romina Perez condemned the west's role in supporting rioters as apparent interference in Iran's internal affairs.

The mayor of Tabriz, in his turn, called the sisterhood between Lapaz and Tabriz and said: “We can expand our relations in the cultural fields.”

Yaghoob Hoshyar also stated that in the next ten years, we would see the definitive defeat of imperialism and Zionism, adding: A common front established by the people against Zionists and Western imperialists is critical, Zionism thinking is barbaric and does not respect any religion, nationality, or language.



deceived by the enemy while calling on them to awaken and not fall victim to the enemies' policies.

General Salami addressed the foreign enemies who seek to create disturbances and riots inside the country, saying, “We will come to you with these young people who have been deceived by you one day. These young people will return to the open arms of their nation and will become aware of you soon.”

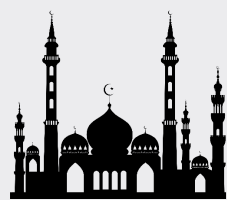
“We will take revenge with these young people. Watch your behavior,” he concluded.

Iran, Bangladesh Sign Agreement To Prevent Double Taxation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran and Bangladesh signed agreement to prevent double taxation and tax evasion to encourage cooperation between businesses.

President of Iranian National Tax Administration Davoud Manzour and his Bangladeshi counterpart signed the agreement in Tehran to increase the trade between the two countries and encourage Iranian and Bangladeshi businesses to cooperate.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:51
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:52
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:45
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:08

79. To Solomon We inspired the (right) understanding of the matter: to each (of them) We gave Judgment and Knowledge; it was Our power that made the hills and the birds celebrate Our praises, with David: it was We Who did (all these things).

Surah 21. The Prophets (79)

Poland Invited to Open Trade Center in Tehran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) Masoud Mirkazemi in meeting with Poland's Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski on Sunday invited Poland to open a trade center in Tehran.

During the meeting the two sides also discussed launching a direct flight between Tehran and Warsaw by the end of 2022, ISNA reported.

Referring to the establishment of Iran's trade center by the private sector in Poland, Mirkazemi, who is the head of the Iran-Poland Joint Economic Committee, invited the authorities and the private sector of this country to set up a trade center in Tehran.

He expressed dissatisfaction with the level of trade between the two countries, saying: "Both countries have high capacities, but the level of economic relations is not at all commensurate with this capacity; a lot of effort is required to increase trade exchanges."

Pointing to the importance of creating infrastructure for the development of relations between the two countries, he added: "Establishing a direct flight between Tehran and Warsaw is one of the necessities."

"Iran is ready to cooperate with Poland in the fields of energy, agriculture, industry, mining, marine economy, export of knowledge-based products and development of tourism industry," the official said, referring to the recent negotiations with the



minister of foreign affairs of Poland.

He further underlined the importance of holding a joint economic committee meeting between the two countries, and emphasized: "The officials of the two countries should work actively to solve the problems of their private sectors to increase trade between the two countries."

Jablonski for his part called for the increase of economic relations between the two countries, saying: "This year, several economic delegations from Poland have come to Iran, but this process should be accelerated."

Referring to Warsaw's efforts to establish a direct airline between the two countries, he said: "One of the important and well-known airline companies is obtaining permission and coordination with the Iranian authorities, and we hope that these flights will be opened before 2023."

Referring to Iran's capabilities in various sectors, Poland's deputy foreign minister called for increasing cooperation in the fields of agriculture, energy, and taxes.

FAO Welcomes Caricature Cooperation With Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – In the meeting with the Head of Iran's Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization in Rome, the capital of Italy, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) welcomed cooperation with Iran in the agriculture sector.

Iran's Abbasali Nobakht and Qu Dongyu held a meeting in Rome, the capital of Italy, and discussed cooperation.

Nobakht has left Tehran for Rome to participate in the Forestry Committee of FAO.

The two sides also emphasized cooperation to accelerate investments and measures to enhance the endurance of Iran's agricultural sector against sand and dust storms.

The meeting of the FAO Committee of Forestry (COFO26) was held from October 11 to 15 this year at the FAO headquarters in Rome.

2nd Steam Unit of Assalouyeh Combined Cycle Power Plant Comes on Stream

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The second steam unit of Assalouyeh combined-cycle power plant with capacity of 160 megawatts came on stream in presence of Energy Minister.



Speaking in the inaugural ceremony of this project where the CEO of Thermal Power Plant Holding Mr. Abdolrasool Pishahang was present, Head of MAPNA Group Mr. Abbas Aliabadi said that the first two units of the power plant have become MAP2B and the two next units will soon turn into MAP2B, adding that each unit will see rise in resistance and power.

He went on to say that the fifth and sixth are the version 5 unit which should turn into MAP2B and at least 100 megawatts will increase through upgrading.

Aliabadi expressed hope that soon the third unit would be synchronized, stating that one of the challenges of this power plants is lack national development fund loan facility and private sector investor.

He went on to say that turbine, generator and ACC are the main components of this power station which are home-made.

He added that Assalouyeh power plant is currently working with six gas units as well as two steam units with capacity of 1,333 megawatts and with completion of the steam units, the total capacity of the power plant will increase to 1493 megawatts.

Meanwhile in the ceremony, Mr. Pishahang, for his part, said that with inauguration of this project, the capacity of national electricity production network will increase.

He added that the main fuel of this power plant is gas and its backup fuel is gas oil. He added that construction of the steam units of this power plant complex will save 282m metric cube per year for the steam unit of the power station and will save totally 846m cubic meters of fuel per year in the whole power station and it will increase the output by 50%.

Exclusive Exhibit of Iranian Products to Open in Doha

TEHRAN (IRNA) - An exclusive exhibition of Iranian products will kick off in Doha on Wednesday, the managing director Iran International Exhibitions Company (IIEC) announced.

Hooman Razdar said that the four-day event will be opened in about 1000 square meters of exhibition space with the participation of more than 15 capable Iranian companies and with the presence of Iran's vice president for the economic affairs.

The companies present in this exhibition showcase their capabilities in the fields of carpets, handicrafts, food, furniture, and jewelry, and with the approach of introducing Iran's trade capabilities in Qatar and using this country as a connecting corridor to the third countries, he further explained.

According to Razdar, the ultimate goal of holding these exhibitions is B-2-B meetings so that businessmen can connect with each other in their respective fields.

Back on June 6, Iran and Qatar had inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at the end of the two countries' eighth Joint Economic Committee meeting in Doha to outline avenues for future cooperation.

The MOU was signed by Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian and Qatar's Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohammed Bin Hamad Bin Qassim Al-Thani who co-chaired the committee meeting.

This memorandum determines the framework of cooperation in various fields including transit, transportation, industry and trade, energy, customs and free zones, tourism, culture, agriculture, sports, etc.

Negotiations for Increased Iran Gas Sales to Iraq Underway



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesman of Iraq Electricity Ministry said on Sunday that Iraq has paid its debt to Iran for gas exports and negotiations are now underway for increased gas imports from Iran.

The Iraqi National News Agency (NINA) quoted the Spokesman of Iraq Electricity Ministry, Ahmad Musa as saying, "We are now importing 20 million cubic meters of gas from Iran and Iraq's former debt for gas imports from that country is fully paid."

He said that the volume of gas imports does not suffice for Iraq, particularly because some of "our electricity generator stations" have decreased their production because of gas shortage.

The spokesman of Iraq Electricity Ministry said that the negotiations, meetings and rotating visits of their two countries' officials aimed at increased Iran gas exports to Iraq are now underway.

He said that a delegation of Iraqi officials are going to visit Iran now that Iraq's debts for its former gas imports are paid off, and the new contracts that will be signed for the purpose are complete with sufficient guarantees on both sides.

Musa said that now the electricity consumption is at medium level, but in the winter it will reach the peak, and Iraq will need 55 million cubic meters of gas per day to provide sufficient electricity.

Musa added that his country paid all its debts for gas imports to Iran, adding an Iraqi delegation will visit Iran to discuss an increase in gas imports.

He said that his country imports 20 million cubic meters of gas from Iran every day and that Iraq needs more gas now

The spokesman for the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity added that has no debts to Iran over the gas imports, adding that "Negotiations, meetings and visits to Iran are ongoing with the aim of coordination on an increase in gas imports."

Iran's Exports to Russia Hit 70% Growth in H1

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's Economic Commission said that the country's export capacity to Russia in the first six months of the current year registered a 70 percent growth.

Mohammad-Reza Pour-Ebrahimi said that Iran's export growth to Russia shows that a giant step has been taken in increasing bilateral cooperation in economic and trade fields.

Turning to the 2nd Caspian Economic Forum (CEF) held in Russia's capital of Moscow on Friday as well as a new chapter of banking-trade ties between Iran and Russia, he noted that new capacities of cooperation have been provided between Iran and Russia given the drastic measures taken in a few months ago and change of economic relations between Russia and European countries.

Pour-Ebrahimi termed the joint cooperation between the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and the Central Bank of Russia as well as agreements formed for trade exchanges between the two countries as a capacity to increase the level of economic relations between Iran and Russia.

The lawmaker pointed to the 70 percent increase in Iran's export to Russia in the first half of the current year (from Mar. 21 to Sep. 22) and emphasized that giant steps have been taken by senior officials of the two countries in enhancing bilateral trade.

Bolstering economic cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Russia was emphasized at the 2nd Caspian Economic Forum, he said, adding that suitable opportunities have been provided for the country to expand trade and economic relations with other countries in the world.

H1 Output of Bu Ali Sina Petchem Plant Exceeds 1 mt

TEHRAN (Shana) - The H1 report of Bu Ali Sina Petrochemical Plant shows that in addition to the increase in the feedstock supplied to the complex, its output has exceeded one million tons during the period reaching 116% of its nameplate capacity.

According to National Petrochemical Company (NPC), the report of the first 6 months of the calendar year of 1401 which began on March 21 shows that the amount of feedstock received by the complex has exceeded one million tons and has reached 112% of the received feedstock capacity.



According to this report, which was published on the eve of the Extraordinary General Assembly with the aim of increasing capital by 312%, the production volume of the complex has reached more than one million tons in the first 6 months, which indicates realization of 116% of the complex's capacity.

In the sales sector, the growing trend has continued and the sales volume of products has seen an increase of 43% compared to the same period last year and has reached more than 1 million tons in the first 6 months, from about 750,000 tons in the same period last year.

Iran Resumes Gas Export to Turkey

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Director of Dispatching of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) announced that Iran has resumed its gas exports to Turkey after repairing damages.

Mohammad Reza Joulai said that Iran's exports to Turkey stopped on October 2 for carrying out periodical repairs by both countries and with a previous agreement.

He added that the gas flow to Turkey resumed on Monday October 10 after carrying out the repairs.

Turkey's Petroleum Pipeline Corporation (BOTAS) issued a notice confirming this issue: "Due to the inspection and maintenance work on the Iran-Turkey gas transmission pipeline on October 2 to 9 of 2022, which is planned in advance, there will be no gas supply from the entry point of Gurbulak to our transmission network for eight days."

In this announcement, it is emphasized that during the maintenance operation of this pipeline, there will be no problems in the supply and demand balance of Turkish gas.



Somalia Orders Media Not to Publish al-Shabab Propaganda

MOGASISHU (Dispatches) - Somalia's government has declared a crackdown on media organisations that publish what it deems propaganda for the armed group al-Shabab, warning offenders will be punished.

The armed forces, backed by local militias and international allies, have waged an aggressive campaign against the al-Qaeda-linked group.

"I want to inform the Somali media and all Somali people in general that we will regard all al-Shabab related propaganda coverage – including their terrorist acts and their ideology – as punishable crimes," Deputy Minister for Information, Culture and Tourism Abdirahman Yusuf said on Saturday.



7 Djibouti Soldiers Killed In Armed Group Attack

GARABTISAN (Dispatches) - Djibouti's military said seven soldiers were killed in a clash with an armed group in the East African country's north.

A statement from the defense ministry on Saturday said the attack occurred a day earlier at an army base in Garabtisan.

The ministry blamed the attack on the "Armed FRUD", referring to a splinter group of the Front for the Restoration and Democracy. "Despite the fact that our soldiers defended themselves valiantly, this attack caused the death of seven of our soldiers, wounded four and left six missing," it said in a statement.



Deadly Russian Missile Attack Hits Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia City



KYIV (Dispatches) - At least 12 people have been killed in overnight Russian missile attacks in the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia, according to Ukrainian officials, in the latest attack that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called "absolute evil".

Zelenskyy and regional official Oleksandr Starukh provided a death toll of 12, with the latter saying that more victims may be under the rubble as a search and rescue operation was launched.

"Zaporizhzhia again. Merciless strikes on peaceful people again. On residential buildings, just in the middle of the night," Zelenskyy said on Telegram of Sunday's attack, adding that 49 people including six children were in hospital. "Absolute meanness. Absolute evil. Savages and terrorists. From the one who gave this order to everyone who fulfilled this order. They will bear responsibility. For sure. Before the law and before people."

Earlier, Anatoliy Kurtev, secretary of Zaporizhzhia city council, said 17 were killed in missiles attacks. "After night missile attack on Zaporizhzhia, at least 20 houses and about 50 multi-storey buildings were damaged," he wrote on Telegram on Sunday.

Al Jazeera could not independently verify the casualty figures.

The attack came after an explosion on Saturday caused the partial collapse of a bridge linking the Crimean Peninsula with Russia, damaging an important supply artery for the Kremlin's faltering war effort in southern Ukraine and hitting a symbol of Russian power in the region.

Ukrainian officials said the overnight shelling targeted houses and apartment buildings in the southern city, which has been at the receiving end of Russian attacks in recent weeks.

At least 14 people died in a Russian missile attack on apartment buildings in Zaporizhzhia on Thursday, while 30 people were killed last week when a convoy of civilian cars was shelled in an attack blamed on Russia.

Al Jazeera's Rory Challands, reporting from Kyiv, said the city has been "pounded repeatedly" over recent days by Russian air raids and missile attacks.

"It's indiscriminate at best, at worst, it seems intentional," he added. "The authorities in Zaporizhzhia say that the Russian aeroplanes launched at least 12 missiles at the city."

Zaporizhzhia, home to Europe's largest nuclear plant, lies close to the front line where Kyiv's forces have been carrying out a large-scale counteroffensive against Russian troops.

The Ukrainian-controlled industrial city is located in the eponymous Zaporizhia region, also home to the Russian-occupied nuclear plant that has been the site of heavy shelling. Both sides have blamed each other for the shelling around the plant amid fears of a radiation accident.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog, said on Saturday that the Zaporizhzhia plant has since lost its last remaining external power source as a result of renewed shelling and is now relying on emergency diesel generators.

German State Vote Tests Public Mood as Energy Crisis Bites

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - Germans in the coastal state of Lower Saxony headed to the polls in a closely-watched regional election seen as a test for Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats amid an acute energy crisis.

Voting stations will close at 6:00 pm (1600 GMT), with latest surveys putting Scholz's centre-left SPD slightly ahead of the conservative CDU party of former chancellor Angela Merkel.

Anxiety about sky-rocketing energy bills has dominated the race in the northwestern region on the North Sea, reflecting the national mood.

Russia's war in Ukraine has sent energy costs soaring, pushing German inflation to a record-high of 10 percent in September and fuelling fears of a looming recession in Europe's top economy.

Greece and Egypt Call Turkish-Libyan Gas Deal Illegal

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Egypt and Greece said a deal allowing Turkish hydrocarbon exploration in Libya's Mediterranean waters was "illegal" as Athens said it would oppose it by all "legal means".

Last Monday, Turkey said it had signed a memorandum of understanding on exploration for hydrocarbons in Libya's seas with the authorities in Tripoli.

"This agreement threatens stability and security in the Mediterranean," Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said in Cairo, where he met his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry.

The deal follows an agreement Turkey signed three years ago with Tripoli that demarcated the countries' shared maritime borders.

Greece, Egypt and Cyprus believe the 2019 agreement violates their economic rights in an area suspected to contain vast natural gas reserves.

"We will use all legal means to defend our rights," Dendias added. He said Tripoli "does not have the necessary sovereignty over this area", and that the agreement is therefore "illegal and inadmissible".

Shoukry charged that the mandate of the authorities in Tripoli has "expired" and that "the government of Tripoli does not have the legitimacy to sign agreements".

A rival Libyan administration in the war-torn country's east -- which since March has been attempting to take office in Tripoli and also argues the government's mandate has expired -- has rejected the accord.

Monday's deal builds on an agreement signed between Ankara and a previous Tripoli-based administration in 2019, at the height of a battle for the capital after eastern-based military chief Khalifa Haftar attempted to seize it by force.

The delivery of Turkish drones to Tripoli-based forces shortly afterwards was seen as crucial in the victory over Haftar, who was backed at the time by Egypt, Russia and the United Arab Emirates.

The question of rights to Libya's vast hydrocarbon resources has become more urgent this year as global energy prices have soared.

North Korea Fires Two Missiles After U.S.-South Korea Drills

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea has fired two short-range ballistic missiles towards the eastern waters of the peninsula — the seventh launch in two weeks of weapons tests after South Korea and the United States concluded their latest round of naval drills.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Pyongyang fired the two missiles from the southeastern coastal city of Munchon early on Sunday. The first was fired at about 1:47am local time (16:47 GMT) and the second one some six minutes later.

The Japanese government also said North Korea had fired what appeared to be ballistic missiles.

The two missiles reached an altitude of 100km (60 miles) and covered a range of 350km (217 miles), Japan's State Minister of Defence Toshiro Ino told reporters.

Both fell outside Japan's exclusive economic zone, and authorities were looking into what kind of missiles were launched, including the possibility that they were submarine-launched ballistic missiles, he said.

South Korea's military condemned the launches as a

"serious provocation" that undermined peace, noting they were a "clear violation" of UN Security Council resolutions.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement that it was discussing the situation with its allies and partners, and highlighted the "destabilizing impact" of North Korea's nuclear arms and ballistic missile programs. It reiterated that the US commitment to the defence of South Korea and Japan remained "ironclad".

North Korea has carried out an unprecedented number of weapons tests this year, including its biggest-ever intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un steps up efforts to modernise and expand the country's military capabilities.

The most recent launches have taken place around military exercises held by the US, South Korea and Japan, with naval drills involving the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan wrapping up on Saturday.

Sunday's launch also came on the eve of the 77th anniversary of the founding of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party, a major event for Pyongyang.



Projections Show Austrian President Re-Elected

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen has been re-elected, projections showed, after campaigning on promises of stability as the Alpine country struggles with an energy crisis and inflation.

The projections showed the 78-year-old incumbent swept 54.6 percent of the votes with six other candidates — all men — lagging far behind.

The final official result is not expected until today. Campaigning on a slogan of "clarity" and "stability", Van der Bellen had been widely tipped to clinch a second mandate.

"It would be nice if we had clarity today," the economics professor said after casting his ballot in central Vienna earlier Sunday.

"Nice for Austria, nice for us — if we can then fully concentrate on the diverse tasks ahead, the multitude of crises... that we in Austria, in Europe, are facing."

Polls ahead of the election had suggested the pro-European liberal would secure more than 50 percent of the vote, thus avoiding a run-off.

Some 6.4 million people were eligible to cast their ballots from the European Union country's total population of nine million.

The presidential post, which has a term of six years, is largely ceremonial. "I am in favour of consistency," 73-year-old retiree Monika Gregor told AFP outside a Vienna polling station earlier Sunday, saying she had voted for Van der Bellen and thought he was "very clever".

Posters proclaim the former Greens leader to be "the safe choice in stormy times" as the ripple effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine push up inflation throughout Europe.

Van der Bellen was running again as an independent, but he has the explicit or implicit backing of Austria's major parties except the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ).

The latter has fielded its own candidate, Walter Rosenkranz who, according to the projections, got 18.9 percent.

Also standing for the presidency was 35-year-old punk rocker Dominik Wlazny, founder of the Beer Party, named for its advocacy of the popular beverage.

He came in fourth place with 8.1 percent, according to the projections.



Divided European Aviation Sector Seeks Cure To Travel Chaos



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - European airlines and airports, reeling from delays that caused widespread disruption as demand roared back after COVID-19, are counting the cost of efforts to avoid a repeat next summer.

Industry leaders meeting at the headquarters of air traffic control agency Eurocontrol sparred over who was to blame for the chaos that upset passengers and politicians.

"We found ourselves more in the news than we would have wished over the summer," Olivier Jankovec, director general of airports association ACI Europe, told a Eurocontrol conference.

Labor or parts shortages and strikes led to cancellations of hundreds of flights, prompting some airports to introduce capacity curbs and exposing slim margins for error.

"We somehow survived the summer but it was not great and it should not be happening again. We have to put appropriate resources in the system to deal with the challenges," Wizz Air Chief Executive Jozsef Varadi said.

For the budget carrier, that may mean unusually recruiting more people than it needs for the time being. "We are redesigning the operating model to make sure that we build ... more slack in the system so we're going to be losing some efficiency," Varadi said.

"I'm not optimizing for today, but optimizing for demands to make sure that we remain as low-cost as possible."

Airports too are increasingly upping pay or handing out recruitment bonuses to hire back workers laid off during the pandemic. Many defected to new-economy jobs like ride-sharing.

Officials gave no estimate for the overall cost of making the network more delay-proof but airports said they were facing a 7 billion euro (\$6.98 billion) funding crunch.

"We are not attractive any more and that is one of the problems that airports face," said Arnaud Feist, chief executive of Brussels Airport. Automation will increase, he added.

Those left behind were exposed to "unprecedented levels of violence" as tempers rose over the summer, said Livia Spera, general secretary of the European Transport Workers Federation.

The airline industry's overall drive to contain costs is unlikely to take a backseat for long.

"I think this is temporary. I don't think this is a structural change," the head of the International Air Transport Association, Willie Walsh, said in an interview.

Airlines say they are squeezed between regulations requiring them to compensate consumers for delays while bearing the full cost of disruption from a long list of suppliers from manufacturers to airports, air controllers or ground handlers.

Airports complain they did not get state support available to traditional carriers and point the finger back at airlines.

"Some airlines were hiding their own staffing issues behind airports and that wasn't helpful," Jankovec told Reuters.

Walsh, who regularly clashed with Heathrow while running British Airways, pulled out official airport data showing security waiting times well above target at the London hub.

"If customers aren't getting through in time then you're getting into delayed departures, delayed arrivals. So everything gets knocked out," he told Reuters.

Heathrow has said rebuilding capacity quickly after the pandemic is "challenging" but that the entire aviation supply chain is affected.

Now, airlines and airports are once again at odds over rules for the usage of airport slots over the coming winter.

Ten Years of Afghan Economic Growth, Reversed In Just 12 Months



LONDON (Dispatches) - A year on from the Taliban takeover in Kabul, Afghanistan is gripped by "cascading crises", including a crippled economy that humanitarian aid alone cannot address, according to a new report from the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

It says that the already-declining regular economy, as opposed to the black market, lost nearly \$5 billion after August 2021 and is reversing "in 12 months what had taken 10 years to accumulate."

The cost of a basket of essentials needed to avoid food poverty has meanwhile risen 35 percent, forcing poorer households to go deeper into debt or sell off assets, just to survive.

Nearly 700,000 jobs have vanished, said UNDP, further threatening a population reeling from impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict, drought, and war in Ukraine.

"The Afghan people have been relentlessly subjected to extremely difficult circumstances. They have survived numerous challenges in the last 40 years and shown enormous resilience", the report states, officially entitled, One Year in Review: Afghanistan Since August 2021.

"Yet the last 12 months have brought cascading crises: a humanitarian emergency; massive economic contraction; and the crippling of its banking and financial systems in addition to denying access to secondary education to girls and the restrictions on women's mobility and participation in the economy".

The head of UNDP, Achim Steiner, praised the UN's "strong, coordinated response to the crisis" saying it proved critical in averting a catastrophe last winter.

"Building upon what worked last year including tailored efforts across multiple sectors to improve the livelihoods of more than half a million people, there is a pressing need to support further measures to prevent a deeper crisis."

"We need to help Afghans cope with the coming winter including through our ABADEI programme which aims to support two million people with livelihood and job opportunities over the next two years - with a focus on particularly vulnerable groups such as women entrepreneurs and young people."

The report paints a bleak fiscal picture of the country, dating back more than a decade before the Taliban ascendancy.

With GDP in steady decline since 2008, Afghanistan had come to rely on international aid to sustain its economy, which accounted for a staggering 75 percent of total Government spending and nearly 40 percent of GDP at the time of transition. But foreign donors largely suspended aid after the transition, UNDP notes.

Without support from outside, Afghanistan must now rely on limited domestic revenue from agriculture and coal exports.

Authorities have sought to address revenue shortfalls by cracking down on corruption in key revenue streams, such as customs, and by reaching out to the private sector and foreign investors.

"Two decades of heavy dependence on international aid and imports, a lack of industrialization and competitiveness, and limited mobility and connectivity among regions, among other factors, have hindered Afghanistan's forward momentum," the report says.

UNDP analysis forecasts that restricting women from working can result in an economic loss of up to \$1 billion - or up to five percent of the country's GDP.

"The rights of women and girls are critical for the future of Afghanistan," said UNDP Asia-Pacific Director Kanni Wignaraja. "It starts with education and continues with equal opportunity when it comes to employment and pay."



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Italy Business Lobby Cuts 2023 Economy Growth Forecast to Zero

MILAN (Dispatches) - The Italian economy will grow more than expected in 2022 but will stagnate in 2023, the country's main business lobby said, warning that tensions between the European Union and Russia over gas supplies made the outlook highly uncertain.

In a report Confindustria downgraded its expectation for GDP growth in 2023 to zero, from 1.6% forecast in April, while revising its estimate for 2022 to 3.4% from 1.9% thanks to the Italian economy's excellent performance in the first half year.

The 2023 downgrade echoes government projections and comes after Mario Draghi's outgoing administration last week slashed its growth forecast for next year to 0.6%, due to sky-high energy costs. Still it said GDP would expand 3.3% in 2022, up from 3.1% forecast in April.

The lower forecasts for next year underscore the economic headwinds facing Giorgia Meloni, who led a right-wing alliance to victory in elections last month and is expected to be named prime minister this month.



Political Paralysis in Iraq Hampers Economic Growth

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - A year since Iraq's last elections, it remains without not only a new government but a budget too, obstructing much-needed reforms and infrastructure projects in the oil-rich but war-ravaged country.

Iraq has raked in huge revenues from oil exports this year, but the profits are locked up in the central bank's coffers, which have amassed a colossal \$87 billion in foreign exchange reserves.

The government can't invest that money without an annual state budget -- which Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi is not authorized to submit to parliament in his capacity as caretaker.

"Infrastructure projects require years of steady financial planning by government," said Yesar al-Maleki, Persian Gulf analyst at the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES).

"The political situation has caused a massive disruption that has further weakened Iraq's poor standing with investors."

Iraqis voted on October 10, 2021 in an early election triggered by a wave of protests that began two years earlier, condemning endemic corruption, rampant unemployment and decaying infrastructure.

The country has been mired in a seemingly impenetrable political deadlock since then, with rival Shiite factions in parliament vying for power and the right to select a new prime minister and government.

The impasse pits the powerful cleric Moqtada Sadr, who wants snap elections, against the Iran-backed Coordination Framework, which has been pushing to appoint a new head of government before any new polls are held.

Tensions boiled over on August 29, and more than 30 Sadr supporters were killed in clashes with Iran-backed factions and the army in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, which houses government buildings and diplomatic missions.

"The situation remains highly volatile," the United Nations envoy to Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, told the Security Council on Tuesday.

"Too many Iraqis have lost faith in the ability of Iraq's political class to act in the interest of the country and its people."

While the World Bank has offered projections of average annual growth of 5.4 percent between 2022 and 2024, it has also warned of the many challenges ahead.

"Further delays in government formation and in the ratification of the 2022 budget could restrict the use of the country's revenue windfall from oil," it said in a report issued in June, stressing that "new investment projects are put on hold".

Without a budget for 2022, the government is bound by the provisions and rates set out in the 2021 budget, meaning public spending is extremely limited.

An emergency finance bill totalling 25 trillion Iraqi dinars (about \$17 billion) was approved by parliament in June to ensure gas supplies and purchase grain for "food security".

But the ongoing deadlock hinders "the creation of opportunities for economic growth", Mazhar Saleh, the prime minister's financial adviser, told AFP.

China's Holiday Home Sales Fall 37.7% y/y

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese new home sales by floor area fell 37.7% year-on-year over the week-long National Day holiday starting from Oct. 1, a private survey showed on Saturday, as tough COVID-19 curbs further dented fragile demand.

The property market has lurched from crisis to crisis, with slumping sales and developers defaulting on debts, while consumer confidence has been soured by repeated COVID-19 lockdowns and a mortgage boycott.

Among 20 cities monitored by the China Index Academy, the average daily floor area of homes sold in four tier-one cities all fell sharply from last year's holiday season, with declines of 64% in Beijing, 49% in Shenzhen and 47% in Shanghai.

The sharpest fall, of 80% on the year, was in the eastern city of Hangzhou, higher than the rest of the cities monitored. "Homebuyers are still in a wait-and-see mood in the near term, and stimulus measures will take time to take effect," said Chen Wenjing, an analyst from an independent real estate research firm.

"The new-home market is likely to gradually stabilise in the fourth quarter."

Many Chinese cities advised against unnecessary trips for the public holidays, worsening the impact of COVID-19 policies that have kept tens of millions under lockdown.

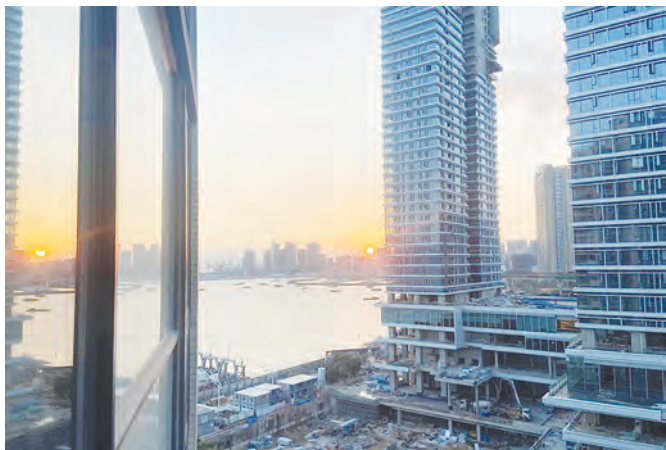
China's 422 million tourist trips over the National Day holiday this year were down 18.2% from a year earlier.

Beijing is ramping up efforts to prop up the distressed property market by easing mortgage rate floors, cutting the interest rate on provident fund loans and offering individual income tax rebates for home buyers.

But with few signs that COVID-19 measures will ease in the near term, demand remains bleak.

"Property sales during the National Day holiday are the first test of policy effectiveness," analysts at ANZ said in a research note.

There was no reason to cheer up, they added, as "the policy effectiveness is still tied to several uncertain factors which could limit the upside of any rebound".



Bangladesh's Economy In Solid Position Despite Global Downturn

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh's economy is "not at risk, rather it is in a consolidated state" despite the ongoing global economic downturn, economists and policymakers said at a roundtable.

"My estimate is a bit optimistic. If the ongoing process of imports is effective, and if it can be kept at \$80 billion, which was \$82 billion in the last fiscal year, exports at \$55 billion, and remittances at \$24-25 billion, then we can move from current account deficit to surplus," said Zaidi Sattar, chairman of the Policy Research Institute (PRI).

"Then, we will recover from the balance of payments shocks. And reserves may increase a little," he told the discussion on "Challenges of Global Slowdown and Bangladesh" organised by the Editors Guild, Bangladesh at the Dhaka Gallery.

The economist said the post-Covid situation, the Russia-Ukraine war, an increase in fuel and food prices and around 20% appreciation of dollars internationally have created a problem in Bangladesh's balance of payments.

"It's an import-driven problem that has driven up our inflation. But our big problem is the current account deficit," he added.

The PRI chairman said, "For global geopolitical reasons, some export opportunities are coming to Bangladesh. So this is also a hope to increase our exports."

Professor Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem), said the current challenge of the global downturn will slow down Bangladesh's growth.

"It is realistic to accept some lower growth. If GDP falls from 7.5 to 5.5%, that would still be high growth in the current global context," he added.

In spite of various challenges, he pointed out some hope in terms of exports to Europe and the US markets, he said, "Our main export products fall into the basic needs of consumers in Europe and North America. So, it offers us some hope."

Economist KAS Murshid said, "We have never faced such uncertainty before. So it is impossible to make any forecast. If there is no control over the global situation, we are left completely at our own devices. We are lucky that we have a very dynamic domestic market."

Putting emphasis on non-farm, farm and industrial sectors, he said, "We need to encourage smaller guys. They are very dynamic."

At the discussion moderated by Editors Guild President Mozammel Babu, the economists said the comparison of Bangladesh with Sri Lanka is irrelevant in terms of import, export, remittance and labour migration rate.

They described Bangladesh as very resilient in the economic crisis.

IMF Approves Review of Argentina's \$44b Loan Program



BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - The executive board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the second review for Argentina's \$44 billion extended fund facility program, the lender said, noting the country's efforts to meet the established targets.

The approval allows for the issuance of \$3.8 billion, bringing total disbursements under the arrangement to about \$17.5 billion.

"Decisive actions by the new economic team have been critical to stabilizing markets and rebuilding confidence," the IMF said in a statement.

Argentina, a major grains producer, struck a new IMF deal earlier this year to replace a failed program from 2018.

The new program came with economic targets, including rebuilding depleted international reserves and reducing a deep primary fiscal deficit to improve the country's finances.

"Relevant end-September quantitative program targets were met, including for net international reserves and monetary financing of the fiscal deficit," the IMF said.

Its managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, added that the decision comes after Argentina's new economic team, named in July, had adopted "decisive corrective measures" that were starting "to restore confidence and policy credibility."

The South American country is still struggling with a high annual inflation rate, with forecasts that it will top 100% this year. But compliance with the agreed fiscal and monetary policies will allow Argentina to gradually reduce inflation, an IMF source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Through the implementation of lasting fiscal and monetary measures, the (exchange rate) gap and inflation can be reduced little by little," the source said, noting that the process would "take time."

Mexico's Economic Growth to Slow in Next Few Quarters

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Mexico's growth is projected to slow in the next few quarters, despite the country's fiscal and monetary policy putting it in a good position to navigate global turmoil, the International Monetary Fund said in a statement.

Impacts from the coronavirus pandemic and a turbulent global environment could exacerbate long-standing inequality and low growth in Mexico, the IMF said after a mission to the country.

Mexico's interest rate hikes, combined with its neutral fiscal stance in 2022 and 2023, are the appropriate policy steps to disinflate the economy, the IMF said.

The country is vulnerable to a slowdown in U.S. economic growth, the IMF said, which could be offset by speeding up near shoring, or bringing production from overseas closer to its final sale point.

Mexico's central bank, known as Banxico, has taken a proactive approach to broad-based inflation by raising interest rates, the IMF said. The bank hiked its key rate last week by 75 basis points to a historic 9.25%.

However, the Fund added that taming annual inflation - which steadied at an estimated 8.7% in September - will likely require further interest rate hikes. Banxico targets inflation at 3%, plus or minus one percentage point.

"There is significant uncertainty about the timing, speed, and durability of the downward path for inflation in 2023," the IMF said.

The Fund also judged fiscal measures implemented to mitigate the cost of living as "untargeted."

Britain May Join Trans-Pacific Free Trade Pact This Year

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Members of a trans-Pacific free trade pact could agree in principle to allow Britain to join as a new member this year, using the European country's case as a model for future aspirants, Japan's economic minister Daishiro Yamagiwa said.

Yamagiwa said at a joint press conference, following a ministerial meeting in Singapore of the regional trade deal, he believes that based on the views of some members, there could be a basic agreement "perhaps within this year."

The process of Britain's accession to the 11-member pact, formally known as the

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, "will be a good precedent" in meeting the high standards for trade rules and transparency, said Yamagiwa, minister in charge of economic revitalization.

The one-day meeting discussed Britain's entry into the CPTPP, or the acronym for the regional free trade deal. Japan is chair of a working group on Britain's envisaged membership.

The country applied for accession in February last year, and a few months later, the CPTPP Commission, the group's top decision-making body, agreed to formally commence negotiations with Britain.

"Our energies are focused on getting the accession of the United Kingdom completed, this will serve as a pathfinder," Singapore Trade and Industry Minister Gan Kim Yong said at the same press conference.

Gan said at outset of the meeting that five countries have expressed interest in joining the CPTPP, without naming them.

But asked later on whether other applications, such as from China, Taiwan, Ecuador and Costa Rica, had been discussed, he said, "We did not discuss economy-specific applications."

In September last year, China, the world's second-biggest economy, filed its bid to join the pact, in an apparent bid to boost its clout in the Asia-Pacific region.

Singapore and Malaysia have said that they welcome China's bid to join the CPTPP.

Days after China's application, Taiwan submitted its own. Members of the CPTPP issued a ministerial statement after the meeting saying progress has been made in the areas such as e-commerce, and aimed to push for digital trade. Gan also said the members are keen on pursuing "green" and digital economy.

To join the trade deal, the approval of all 11 members -- Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam -- is needed.

The pact, which entered into force in 2018, does not include the United States following its abrupt withdrawal from negotiations the previous year.

Iranian Player Shocks World's Chess Grandmaster

TEHRAN (IRNA) - World's chess grandmaster, Magnus Carlsen, tied versus Iranian grandmaster chess player Parham Maghsoodlou, in the European Chess Club Cup 2022.

The 37th European Chess Club Cup and the 26th European Women's Club Cup concluded yesterday in Mayrhofen, Austria.

These competitions were held in seven rounds with the participation of 502 chess players and 70 European teams.



How Can Europe Contain Gas Prices?

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Leaders of European Union countries will debate whether and how to cap gas prices on Friday, after member states increased the pressure on Brussels to limit fuel costs.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen suggested gas price cap options for the EU leaders to discuss, after France, Italy, Poland and 12 other countries urged Brussels to propose an EU-wide gas price cap as a way to contain inflation.

Other countries are opposed - among them Germany, Europe's biggest gas buyer, and the Netherlands - and say capping prices could cause demand for gas to rise, or leave countries struggling to attract supply from global markets.

The Commission has also raised doubts, and until Wednesday had suggested the EU instead move ahead with more limited versions of a price cap.

Here are the ways Europe could cap the price of gas.

This is what the 15 EU countries asked the European Commission to propose urgently in a letter, saying a price cap was "the one measure that will help every member state to mitigate the inflationary pressure".

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in a letter to EU leaders on Wednesday suggested they consider a temporary price cap, while the Commission works on launching an alternative benchmark price to the Dutch Title Transfer Facility (TTF) gas price.

"We should consider a price limitation in relation to the TTF in a way that continues to secure the supply of gas to Europe and to all member states," her letter said.

She did not specify whether such a cap would apply to all gas trades and import contracts that are pegged to the TTF price, or have a more limited scope.

The Commission has been sceptical about a wholesale gas price cap for exchange transactions. In a paper analysing various options last week, the EU executive said a broad cap could be complex to launch, pose risks to energy security and disrupt flows of fuel between EU countries.

That is because in a supply shortage, regions that urgently need gas may no longer be able to outbid other countries to ensure they secure enough. A cap also risks triggering supply disruptions if foreign suppliers send gas to buyers outside Europe where prices are higher, the Commission paper said.

While a price cap would be a temporary fix, the Commission wants to implement a more lasting alternative price benchmark for gas in Europe.

Historically, the gas price at the Netherlands' TTF hub has been used as a benchmark for LNG deliveries into Europe. But the major reduction of Russian gas supplies this year has made the TTF price extremely volatile, and more expensive than LNG prices in other regions.

Brussels says a new index is needed since the TTF is guided by pipeline supply and no longer represents a market that includes more LNG.

Some industry sources have suggested industry should develop a new benchmark on its own. Its success would depend on whether the gas industry uses it.

Belgium, Greece, Italy and Poland put forward their own proposal on Thursday for a "dynamic price corridor" for gas.

"The corridor would apply to all wholesale transactions, not limited to import from specific jurisdictions and not limited to specific use of natural gas," the countries said a document outlining the "corridor" - a price range with a central value below the market price.

The document, seen by Reuters, suggested setting the corridor at a level that was high and flexible enough to ensure European countries can still attract supply. If necessary,



that could mean allowing gas transactions at prices above the corridor, it said.

The gas price would be able to fluctuate within the corridor range, the document said, adding that it the scheme should also apply to long-term contracts that are pegged to existing gas price benchmarks.

Von der Leyen said the EU should also consider an EU price cap specifically on gas used for power generation.

European electricity prices are set by the last power plant needed to meet demand - typically, a gas plant. Lowering the cost of gas-fuelled power could therefore bring down the overall power price - though governments would need to compensate gas plants for the gap between the capped price and the higher market price at which they buy fuel.

Spain and Portugal implemented a scheme to do this in June - which has helped to reduce local power prices, but at the same time Spain's gas use increased.

The Commission has said any interventions to lower gas prices must be coupled with measures to avoid driving an increase in demand when countries need to save scarce fuel.

The Commission suggested a Russian gas price cap in September, but dropped the idea after resistance from central and eastern European countries worried Moscow would retaliate by cutting off the gas it still sends to them.

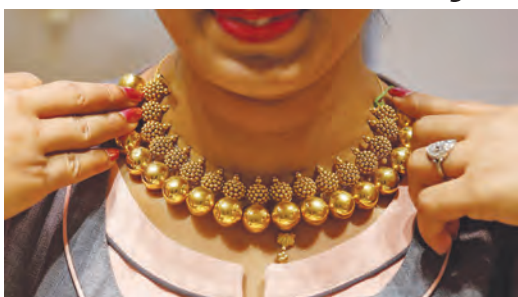
Europe relied on Russia for roughly 40% of its gas before Moscow invaded Ukraine. That share has dropped to 8% as Russia has cut supplies to Europe.

Given the fall in Russian volumes, some EU diplomats said a price cap would do little to reduce European gas prices, and would function as more of a geopolitical move to cut revenues to Moscow.

The EU country leaders' discussion on Friday will give a steer to Brussels on what type of measures they would support. EU countries' energy ministers meet on Oct. 11-12 to continue debating gas price caps.

The Commission, which drafts EU policies, has said it is ready to propose extra measures to tackle the energy crisis. Once the Commission puts forward proposals, the bloc's 27 countries will negotiate them and try to find a final deal.

Banks Divert Gold Supply From India To China, Turkey



MUMBAI (Dispatches) - Gold-supplying banks have cut back shipments to India ahead of major festivals in favor of focusing on China, Turkey, and other markets where better premiums are offered, three bank officials and two vault operators told Reuters.

That could create scarcity in the world's second-biggest market for gold, and force Indian buyers to start paying hefty premiums for supplies in the approaching peak-demand season.

Leading gold suppliers to India - which include ICBC Standard Bank, JPMorgan and Standard Chartered - usually import more gold ahead of festivals and store it in vaults.

But vaults now hold less than 10% of the gold they did a year ago, the sources said on Tuesday.

"Ideally a few tons of gold should be there in vaults during this time of the year. But now we only have a few kilos," said one Mumbai-based vault official.

JPMorgan, ICBC and Standard Chartered declined to comment. In India, premiums over the international gold price benchmark have slid to \$1-\$2 an ounce, against around \$4 this time last year.

Premiums were driven sharply lower by a now-closed loophole that led some Indian trading houses to import gold as lower-tariff platinum alloy, allowing some to even offer gold at a discount, Chanda Venkatesh, managing director of Hyderabad-based bullion merchant CapsGold, said. That contrasts with the \$20-45 premiums offered in top consumer China, helped by pent-up demand being released after COVID-related lockdowns, and \$80 in Turkey, where gold imports have risen sharply against a backdrop of rampant inflation.

Germany's Economy Can't Catch a Break

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Europe's largest economy can't catch a break, as fresh economic data released on Friday showed industry shrinking and consumers closing their wallets.

To make matters worse, the German government is also coming under increasing pressure from its EU neighbors about the massive relief package it laid out for its own economy this month, with outgoing Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and others lambasting it for a go-it-alone approach to the energy crisis that takes no account of the rest of the bloc's needs.

Statistics Office Destatis said that industrial output fell 0.8% in August, more than expected by economists, as supply chain bottlenecks persisted, while exceptionally low water levels in the River Rhine closed a key transport route for fuel and other essential industrial goods.

Those problems squeezed the costs of vital imports up even further, generating fresh pressure in the inflationary pipeline that is likely to be reflected in consumer prices with its usual time lag. Import prices rose 4.3% from July, more than twice the expected increase of 2.0%, and are now up 32.7% on the year.

NIOC, Gazprom to...

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He added: "Another issue that was pursued in this conference concerns accelerating the implementation of the comprehensive memorandum with Gazprom. The Russian side is preparing a comprehensive development plan for 6 oil fields and two large gas fields in Iran, and we hope to see the signing of contracts for these oil and gas fields by the end of the year."

The official went on to add that on the sidelines of the Caspian Economic Conference, useful meetings were also held with Gazpromneft and Zarubzhneft companies, and the two sides exchanged views on the axes of cooperation.

He stated: "Following the emphasis of the Supreme Leader on the development of knowledge-based industries, a visit was made to two Moscow technology parks named 'Technopolis' and 'Skolkova' and it was decided that a draft memorandum of cooperation with the 'Technopolis' park should be prepared and signed and exchanged between the two parties during the meeting of the joint commission."

Asadzadeh continued: "These technology parks consist of knowledge-based companies with advanced technology in the field of Russian oil and gas industries. During this visit, a part of the capabilities of these companies was observed. The issue of technology is one of the axes that, if seriously addressed, will deepen the strategic relations of the two countries."

He clarified: "In the round table of the energy projects of the Caspian countries, which was held on the sidelines of

the Caspian Economic Conference, we proposed on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran that two categories of infrastructural and case issues should be included in the agenda of this meeting and should be continuously followed up. The attendees welcomed the proposal. The development of the oil and gas fields of the Caspian Sea, the establishment of transportation corridors and energy connections between the countries bordering the Caspian Sea, and the formation of the Caspian Joint Investment Fund in order to develop energy projects were among the proposals that were presented in this meeting."

Referring to the meeting of the Minister of Petroleum in the presence of the First Vice President with the Prime Ministers of Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan on the sidelines of the Caspian Economic Conference, the Deputy Minister of Petroleum for International Affairs and Trade said: "Useful meetings were held in the presence of Russian governors and major Russian companies and the axes and opportunities of economic cooperation among other things, were investigated in the oil and gas sector. The statements of the managers of the Russian companies indicated the very high cooperation capacities of the two countries in various fields of the oil industry, and the exploitation of these opportunities requires seriousness and follow-up from both sides."

Asadzadeh stated: "We are planning to hold a conference of petroleum industrialists and private companies of Iran and Russia in the oil industry in the near future."

Iran Still Committed...

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"We will firmly stand up against any attempt by Western parties and the US government to impose new sanctions, exert pressure or set restrictions for the sake of concessions and compromise. We will respond in due time," he added.

Kanaani also censured the recent attacks on Iranian embassies in some European countries and the meddlesome actions of Washington and certain European states in Iran's affairs.

"We are witnessing double standards on the part of these countries. They are advising the Iranian government to exercise self-restraint in the face of those who are disturbing security. They should know that the Islamic Republic welcomes criticism and protests and believes in dialogue. But at the same time, it must guarantee public security and cannot remain silent in the face of unrest," he said.

"The governments that are advising the Iranian administration not to use violence are instead allowing violent people to attack Iranian embassies in their own respective countries despite the fact that missions enjoy diplomatic immunity. They allow violent people to assail Iranian diplomats. They allow an assailant holding a cold weapon to barge into the Iranian embassy and attack the female Iranian ambassador and other staff. The Islamic Republic is obliged to ensure the security of its citizens," Kanaani noted.

"The countries that are lecturing us on democracy allow terrorist groups to freely operate" on their soil against the Islamic Republic, he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks on Monday, Kanaani pointed to the recent strikes by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force against the positions of terrorist groups in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, saying they followed the "official and transparent measures" that Tehran had already taken.

"Iran's move to hit the bases of armed terrorist groups in the [Iraqi Kurdistan] region followed all measures that Iran has already adopted," he said.

Kanaani said Iran expects Iraq to fulfill its promises and ensure full security along the common border.

Iran Embassy...

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After the assault of anti-Revolution members on the representative office, the staff of Iran's embassy has repeatedly stressed the necessity of reinforcing security.

In a related development, the spokesman for the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nasser Kanaani stated a few days ago that according to Vienna Convention, countries have to provide security for foreign embassies and that the Foreign Ministry via telephone contacts has stressed the need to ensure the security of its embassies. Meanwhile, it seems that the UK officials are still taking no serious action.

Iran Exports to...

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As previously reported by this bureau, the value of trade between Iran and the United States was \$23.8 million in the first half of 2022, rising 18 percent from the figure in the first half of 2021.

The U.S. imported commodities worth \$5 million from Iran in the first half of this year, while the figure was \$300,000 in the same period of time in the past year.

The United States Census Bureau's data shows that the value of U.S. export to Iran fell five percent to \$18.8 million in the six-month period of this year, from \$19.8 million in the same time span of the previous year.

Hezbollah Will...

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The top Hezbollah official further said, "We know that Israel will not hesitate to kill us on a daily basis, occupy our territories and construct settlements in southern Lebanon in case the anti-Israel resistance front ceases its activities. We will not accept the alternative, which would seek to install its allied president and impose its tailored political and economic system in Lebanon."

On Friday, Vice President of the Executive Council of Hezbollah Sheikh Ali Damoush said Israel only understands the language of force, expressing the movement's preparedness for "all possibilities" in the face of the occupying regime's threats.

He said Israeli threats against Lebanon are worthless in the face of the "stronger than ever" resistance in the Arab country.

Sheikh Damoush maintained that the Israeli regime does not understand the language of diplomacy.

"The enemy does not understand the language of diplomacy, and whoever thinks that the enemy can recognize Lebanon's rights through the logic of negotiation alone is wrong," he said.

"The enemy only understands the logic of force, and this is what all past experiences have proven," the top Hezbollah official added.

Melo Out for Three To Four Months

LONDON (Dispatches) - The Brazilian joined Liverpool on loan from Juventus at the end of the summer transfer window and has made just one substitute appearance under Jurgen Klopp so far. And he now looks set to be out for the remainder of the year, according to The Athletic.

The 26-year-old sat out the midweek Champions League win over Rangers having suffered a training injury on Monday and further assessment by the medical staff has led to the belief that surgery is necessary.

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Lingard and Forest Teammate Slammed by Pundit

LONDON (Dispatches) - Darren Bent says he has expected "more" from Nottingham Forest duo Jesse Lingard and Morgan Gibbs-White this season.

The Reds are currently bottom of the Premier League having only won one of their opening eight fixtures. There was a great deal of excitement going into the season with the club returning to the top flight following a 23-year hiatus. On top of this, boss Steve Cooper was heavily backed in the transfer window, bringing in 20 new players in what was a bloody crazy summer.

Verstappen Retains F1 World Championship With Win at Japanese GP

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Max Verstappen said it was a "crazy feeling" to retain his Formula One world championship in dramatic fashion after winning a rain-shortened Japanese Grand Prix and then seeing his nearest rival Charles Leclerc relegated to third by a five-second penalty.

The result gave Red Bull driver Verstappen an unassailable 113-point lead in the championship, making him only the third driver after Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel to clinch the title with four races to spare.

Ferrari's Leclerc crossed the line second in front of Red Bull's Sergio Perez, but he was hit with a penalty after squeezing Perez in the final chicane and being deemed to have gained an advantage by leaving the track.

Verstappen was only informed he had retained his title midway through the post-race TV interview, and even the driver himself was not sure if he had sealed the deal.

"It's a crazy feeling of course as I didn't expect it when I crossed the line," said a surprised Verstappen.

"Was it going to be half points? I didn't know how many points I was going to get. I was happy with the race we had."

The race got off to a chaotic start in heavy rain.

Leclerc was quicker off the line than pole sitter Verstappen, who admitted he made "a terrible start", before the Dutchman regained the lead with a brave overtake around the outside of turn one.

"It was very close but that's what people like to see," Verstappen said.

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz spun out on the first lap and the Williams of Alex Albon broke down prompting a safety car.

A red flag soon followed and forced the drivers back to the pit lane for more than an hour before the action restarted at the second time of asking under a safety car rolling restart.



Verstappen resumed with a lead over Leclerc and Perez and extended it with ease once the safety car period ended and track conditions gradually improved.

"It was very difficult and they made the right call," Verstappen said of the red flag. "The first time they tried to restart it was not right. Once we got going it was fine."

Verstappen took the chequered flag but there was a furious battle for second behind him, with Leclerc cutting across a corner while jostling for position with Perez.

Leclerc beat Perez to the line but later conceded that his penalty was "the right thing to do".

"I don't have much to say -- I made a mistake and tried to minimize it," said Leclerc, who led the championship early in the season.

"Huge congratulations to Max and Red Bull. Max has been incredible and it's a title fully deserved."

Verstappen has won 12 of 18 races in 2022 and thanked his team for an "incredible" year. "The first (championship) is a little more emotional, the second one is beautiful," he said.

"It's been a special year, and you need to remind yourself as these kind of years you don't have very often."

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said Verstappen had "grown" as a driver. "Carrying that number one this year, he's done it with a lot of pride," he said.

French driver Pierre Gasly reacted furiously after passing a tractor on the track early in the race. AlphaTauri's Gasly said he could have been killed after encountering the vehicle, which was deployed to recover Sainz's car.

It brought back painful memories of the tragic 2014 race at Suzuka, when another French driver Jules Bianchi died after colliding with a recovery vehicle in poor conditions. That prompted a review of safety and the introduction of the "halo" cockpit head protection system for drivers.

Djokovic Takes 90th Career Title With Astana Victory

ASTANA (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic claimed the 90th title of his career and the fourth of 2022 with a dominant straight-sets victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas in the ATP final in Astana.

The 35-year-old Djokovic triumphed 6-3, 6-4 in 75 minutes to add to the trophies he won this season in Israel, Rome and at Wimbledon.

It was the ninth consecutive match victory for the fourth seed, who guaranteed himself a spot at the 2022 ATP Finals as a result of the win.

"I dared to dream, actually," Djokovic replied when asked if he had ever imagined he would win 90 titles.

"I always hoped that I would be going to have a great career. Obviously, didn't know the amount of finals I was going to play, the amount of tournaments I was going to win, but my intention was always to reach the highest heights in our sport."

The Serb won in Tel Aviv a week ago, his first singles tournament since wrapping up a seventh Wimbledon crown and 21st Grand Slam title in July.

He was banned from the US Open and the entire North American hard court swing over his refusal to be vaccinated before returning for Roger Federer's farewell in the Laver Cup team event in London last month.

O'Sullivan Beats Fu to Win Hong Kong Masters

HONG KONG (Dispatches) - Snooker legend Ronnie O'Sullivan beat home favourite Marco Fu 6-4 to win the Hong Kong Masters on Sunday in front of a record crowd estimated to be over 8,000.

The seven-time world champion held a comfortable early lead, only losing the second of the first five frames to Fu, ranked 100 in the world.

Cheered on by an energetic crowd, Fu brought the score to 4-2 with a 98 break, only to find O'Sullivan firing a century in response to take the next frame.

Fu fought from the brink of defeat to take the following two frames, but could not replicate the fairytale ending he conjured during Saturday's semi-final against John Higgins.

The 44-year-old compiled a maximum 147 break against Higgins in the deciding frame to storm into the final.

But he was outclassed by O'Sullivan, who played a 114 break to clinch the win.

Sunday's match capped off Hong Kong's first major international sports events since the pandemic began as the city gradually loosens its strict Covid-19 restrictions to lure overseas visitors.

The city scrapped its unpopular hotel quarantine in time for the arrival of six of snooker's top players, but maintained a compulsory masking mandate for spectators.

Organisers said Sunday's final, held in the cavernous Hong Kong Coliseum with more than 9,000 tickets sold, would set the record for the largest live snooker audience in history.

O'Sullivan, who lost to Neil Robertson in the last Hong Kong Masters in 2017, will this time take home the £100,000 (\$111,000) first prize.

Fu, who reached career best at world no. 5 in 2017, saw his rankings slide as he struggled to overcome an eye illness and a two-year career hiatus due to the pandemic.

But he was buoyed on Sunday by enthusiastic local supporters, one of whom, Kenneth Yeung, told AFP that Fu "represented Hong Kong to the world".

Snooker fan Liu, who came with his wife and daughter, said he began supporting Fu after his 2007 landmark win over O'Sullivan.

Defending Champions Italy to Again Face England



LONDON (Dispatches) - Defending champions Italy will face England in their Euro 2024 qualifying group, a repeat of last year's tournament final, following the draw on Sunday in Frankfurt's Festhalle.

The Italians, who beat England 3-2 on penalties at London's Wembley stadium in 2021 to lift the trophy, will also play North Macedonia, who prevented Roberto Mancini's side from reaching the World Cup, and Malta in Group C.

"I was sure we would end up getting either England or France, but that's fine," Mancini said. "It's a workable group. There won't be any simple games but they are all still to be played."

Group B looks equally difficult with former champions Netherlands and current world

champions France drawn alongside 2004 Euro winners Greece, Ireland and Gibraltar. A total of 53 national associations were included in the draw with Germany already through as hosts.

Russia was not included following its invasion of Ukraine and the suspension of all Russian teams by European governing body UEFA.

Belarus, which has supported Russia's war in Ukraine, was included. They will play Switzerland, Romania, Kosovo, Israel and Andorra in Group I.

This season's Premier League top scorer Erling Haaland's Norway will face three-time champion Spain in Group A, along with Scotland, Georgia and Cyprus.

"We avoid France, England and Serbia from pot two," said Norway coach Stale Solbakken. "We have to be satisfied with that, but we could also have been luckier."

The qualifying group matches will be played from March to November, 2023. The playoffs will take place in March, 2024.

The 24-team finals will be held in 10 stadiums across Germany.

Hoeness Critical of Un-Bayern-Like Performance in Dortmund

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Honorary Bayern Munich President Uli Hoeness has slammed his side's performance in Saturday's 2-2 draw with Borussia Dortmund as 'not Bayern-like'.

Dortmund came back from 2-0 down to snatch a draw, with under-fire striker Anthony Modeste scoring in the fifth minute of injury time.

Hoeness, who played 239 games for Bayern and later served as manager and president as the club established itself at the forefront of German football, said letting Dortmund come back from 2-0 down to draw the match in the last seconds was at odds with the club's ethos.

"It's actually not Bayern-like. If you lead 2-0, then you should win the game," Hoeness said on German television on Sunday morning.

When asked what being 'Bayern-like' meant, Hoeness said the club should have had "a lot of self-confidence and said to the opposition, we're going to score against you a third time".

While crediting Dortmund as "probably the second best club in Germany", the former striker said Bayern "let the game go a bit too much and gave Dortmund another chance."

Hoeness said he felt the club was feeling the loss of star striker Robert Lewandowski, who departed for Barcelona in the summer, but that coach Julian Nagelsmann had the ability to "compensate" for the loss of the striker.

"There is absolutely no reason for a discussion of the coach's future."

"Firstly, we started with three wins and secondly, we are still within reach of the top of the table."

"I'm absolutely convinced that when everything returns to normal, we'll soon be on top of the table again."



Real Madrid, Juventus And Barca Not Giving Up on Super League

MADRID (Dispatches) - The main advocates of the Super League are not giving up.

Barcelona chief Joan Laporta on Sunday followed Real Madrid president Florentino Perez and their Juventus counterpart Andrea Agnelli in defending the project to his club's supporters.

"It's a competition that's necessary, to choose our destiny. We, the clubs, will rule," Laporta told the club's annual general meeting. "I'm optimistic. Given the inaction of UEFA, regarding the distortion which the financial doping by state-owned clubs generates, we have to react."

Perez led a group of 12 major European clubs into the Super League project in April 2021 but it vanished a few days later after pressure from fans and authorities.

Real, Barcelona and Juventus are the only clubs that have tried to keep alive a project that would be direct competition with the Champions League.

Last week, Perez compared European football with tennis.

"What is the point of depriving the fans of the big matches? Nadal and Federer met 40 times. Nadal and Djokovic, 59, is it boring? Liverpool and Real Madrid have faced nine times in 67 years," he told Madrid's members' assembly.

A court decision in 2023 will be crucial in determining the project's future.

The Super League project came back to life in July, when litigation for an alleged abuse of a dominant position by UEFA was brought to the European Union Court of Justice, at the request of a Madrid judge to whom the Super League chiefs turned.

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin responded to Perez, telling a news conference in Rome: "Once again he has shown that his idea is to close everything off, without games against smaller teams."

