

South Korea Imports No Iran Crude Oil for September and a Year Ago, Preliminary Data From Korea Customs Service Showed as South Korea Imported a Total 11.6m Tons of Crude in September

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 144,516 With Six More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

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Iran Calls for Developing Energy Infrastructure in Eurasia to Boost Cooperation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs Ahmad Asadzadeh has called on the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) to collaborate on developing energy infrastructure in order to expand ties, Shana reported.

Speaking at the Russian Energy Week International Forum (REW) in Moscow, Asadzadeh presented some proposals such as the formation of energy consortia, the creation of a joint investment fund, etc., to strengthen the strategic ties among the countries of this region.

The official, who visited Moscow to attend the four-day event, underlined the necessity of strengthening EAEU's Energy Secretariat for the promotion of energy projects in the countries of this region.

On the sidelines of the forum, Asadzadeh held bilateral meetings with Russian Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov, head of Gazprom Neft Company and some energy ministers and company representatives attending REW. *See Page 7*

President Emphasizes Islamic Revolution Principles In Cultural Structure

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Explaining the necessities and requirements of the revolutionary reconstruction of the cultural structure of the country, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi emphasized, "In addition to the headquarters and the center for the implementation and follow-up of this huge plan, which is obliged to report on the implementation of this plan in a continuous and regular manner, I will personally pursue the implementation and progress of this plan".

Speaking at the "Logic of Revolutionary Reconstruction of the Country's Cultural Structure" conference, Raisi referred to the proposal of the necessity of this reconstruction by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution at the beginning of the work of the Popular Administration, and said, "The proposal of this demand and necessity is a proof of concern of the Supreme Leader towards the issues and cultural field of the country, which has always been under attack".

Stating that the importance of culture comes from its identity formation and authority creation, the President added, "Today's identity and authority of Islamic Iran originates from our rich culture, which has been under attack not only today but always".

Raisi stated that the intellectuals, the educated and the elites of the society are the main guardians of monitoring the developments and they should identify the harms before others and warn them in time and provide solutions to solve them before others, saying, "Throughout the long history of our country, there have always been compassionate people who identified harms before the general public, warned about them and took action to resolve them, and this procedure is basically the indicator and criterion for identifying elites and intellectuals".

The President stated, "Growth and progress in this system should naturally be culture-oriented, and basically, culture should be the flagship of any progress. The dynamism and transformation in all spheres and arenas of the Islamic Republic of Iran system is due to the centrality of culture".

Raisi stated that this explains the position and importance of culture and structure in the Islamic Republic system, and pointed out, "The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, with his accurate understanding of the position and importance of culture, demanded the revolutionary reconstruction of the country's cultural structure. This demand arose from a social necessity, the realization of which requires a sense of responsibility and a different movement than before".

The President added, "Every revolutionary movement, as stated by the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, relies on rationality and wisdom in its heart".

He said, "The realization of this reconstruction requires a revolutionary outlook with emphasis on the principles and foundations of the Islamic revolution, which Imam Khomeini (RA) and the Supreme Leader presented and explained, and our martyrs have established these principles and foundations with their blood". *See Page 7*

Iran Not Land for Velvet Or Colorful Coup

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has underscored that Iran is the anchor of stability and security in the region and not the land of velvet or colorful coup, slamming foreign intervention by some Western countries in Iran.

In a phone call with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, the Iranian foreign minister said that, "the death of the late Mahsa Amini is a painful for all of us," however, he pointed out that this issue is just regarded as a pretext for (intervention of) some western authorities.

The Iranian minister reassured that peaceful protests and demands are different from riots, pointing to the West-backed violent but limited riots that have been taking place in some Iranian cities.

Regarding the death of Amini, a young Iranian women who died in hospital days after arrest by the police, Amirabdollahian reiterated that a detailed and scientific forensic report has been provided by a significant number of highly specialized doctors and experts, and noted that legal actions are going on. *See Page 7*

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Islamic Republic the Very Real "Strong Tree"

The Islamic Republic of Iran in his around four decades of its life has turned into a strong power as the Supreme Leader has said the country is now a strong tree whose uproot is impossible by its enemies and the country is turning into a regional and even global power in a way that it does not fear from any bullies from the hostile countries and it is ready to give due responses to any bully and threat powerfully.

On Friday, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei in meeting with the 36th International Islamic Unity Conference participants hailed Iran's progress and achievements and called it a strong tree that cannot be uprooted by no one.

"The powers had differences in tens of issues but they were united in one thing: opposing the Islamic Republic," he said, adding, "They imagined that they could uproot this seedling [but] this seedling has now turned into a mighty tree."

The Leader said the unipolar world order in which one or two states impose their will on other countries is no longer accepted. "The political map of the world is changing," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

The issue of being in a unipolar world where "one or two countries forcing other states and nations has lost its legitimacy," he said, adding, "Nations have been awakened. The unipolar world order is no longer accepted and is gradually losing its legitimacy."

In a unipolar system, he maintained, arrogant powers such as the US, would design their own schemes and dictate them to other countries such as Iraq, Syria, Iran, or Lebanon.

The people of the world are awakening to the truth of those powers and are opposed to one or two states bullying others into obedience, he said.

The leader also urged Muslim nations to be united against the world arrogant bullies and said that Islamic unity means being united in safeguarding the interests of the Islamic Ummah across the world.

"Unity means being united in protecting the interests of the Islamic Ummah (community)," he said.

It also does not mean geographical unity, he maintained, as some Arab countries tried to get united in the 1960s and 1970s. "This is impossible."

"We should first detect the interests of the Muslim Ummah. Then, nations should come to an agreement on that and see what the Ummah needs at the time; [they should see] to whom they should be foes, [and] with whom friends, and how they should engage in friendship."

Unity means implementing "joint actions against the plots of the Arrogance," he added.

As the Supreme Leader mentioned, the main problem of the Muslim nations is their lack of unity and existing rift which helps enemies and especially the West to take advantage of it. Muslim nations can pursue the path of Iran's progress and achievements in order to become a real power in their regions or in the world.

"Islamic unity, peace and avoiding division and conflict within the Islamic world" had been named as the main theme of this year's Islamic Unity Conference.

The Muslim Ummah can attain a "high position" in the new world which is gradually being shaped, he said, adding that the Muslim world can become a "role model" and a "pioneer."

However, the Leader continued, the only condition for realizing this is to have unity and overcome the temptations of enemies, especially the U.S. and Israel.

"Unity among Islamic nations is possible but it needs efforts," he said, adding, most hope on this issue is pinned on elites and thinkers of the Muslim world as they can guide the public opinion toward the issue. "If the public opinion is formed in a country, the administrative policies of that country will forcibly move in that direction."

Ayatollah Khamenei went on to note that the Islamic Republic stood against two major powers of the time, namely the US and the Soviet Union.

"The powers had differences in tens of issues but they were united in one thing: opposing the Islamic Republic," he said, adding, "They imagined that they could uproot this seedling [but] this seedling has now turned into a mighty tree."

"They are damn wrong in thinking that they can uproot it," he said. *See Page 7*

Iran Slams Macron's Meddlesome Remarks, Double Standards

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani has strongly slammed the "meddlesome" remarks of French President Emmanuel Macron in supporting violent riots in Iran while also reminding Paris of its double standards on human rights.

Macron had on Wednesday condemned Iran's dealing with the recent riots across the country, which erupted after the controversial death of a young Iranian woman, saying, "We stand alongside these women. It's a sovereign people fighting for their freedom."

Condemning the "meddlesome" remarks of the French president, Kanaani said such remarks are politically-motivated accusations and "encourage" those who are engaging in violent riots and breaking the law.

"The right to peaceful protest has been recognized in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic," the spokesman said.

"It is odd that the president of France and some of its officials have condemned the [Iranian] security forces' dealing with violent rioters during recent developments and called on the Iranian government to refrain from violence and observe the rights of the rioters but at the same time, in response to worker strikes in the oil and gas and refinery sector, French authorities, including a government spokesperson, threaten workers that they will end the strikes by use of force."

"This is a blatant hypocrisy and once again proves that human rights is nothing but a tool in the hands of many governments in the West that claim [to be advocating human rights] to achieve their political aims and interfere in the affairs of other states," Kanaani added.

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. *See Page 7*

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Ayatollah Khamenei to Receive Iranian Elites

TEHRAN (MNA) - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei will receive a group of young elites and top scientific talents.

Simultaneously with the holding of the National Young Elites Conference on October 18-19, some of the Iranian leading elites and scientific talents will meet with Islamic Revolution Leader in Tehran.

Tehran Denies Sending Arms to Either Parties Involved in Ukraine War

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says the Islamic Republic has not dispatched arms to either of the parties involved in the Ukraine war, reiterating the need for a political solution to the months-long conflict.

Amirabdollahian on Friday held a telephone conversation with his Portuguese counterpart João Gomes Cravinho about the latest developments in the bilateral ties, the sanctions removal negotiations and revival of the 2015 nuclear deal – officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the crisis in Ukraine, as well as the latest deadly riots in Iran and foreign interference in the country's domestic affairs.

On the Ukraine conflict, the top Iranian diplomat said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has not and will not provide any weapon to be used in the Ukraine war. We believe that arming the either side of the crisis will prolong the war. We do not view war to be the right solution either in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria or Yemen."

He added that Iran faces threats from various Takfiri terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, the so-called Jaish al-Adl and Daesh, who are operating in areas close to the country's western and eastern borders.

Commenting on the developments inside Iran, Amirabdollahian said a large number of weapons has been funneled through western and eastern regions into the country over the past few weeks.

"This comes despite the fact that some countries in interventionist statements have termed riots and terrorist activities as protests, have practically provoked rioters and terrorists, and even put an anti-Iran resolution or sanctions on the agenda of the next meeting of the Council of the European Union. The Islamic Republic of Iran will



reciprocate in case of such an action," the Iranian foreign minister highlighted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amirabdollahian underlined the need for the closure of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) allegations against Iran in regards to the Safeguards Agreement, and elaborated on negotiations in New York on the sidelines of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly as well as the constructive talks between the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami and the UN nuclear agency's chief Rafael Grossi in the Austrian capital city of Vienna late last month.

For his part, Cravinho pointed to the historically good relations between Lisbon and Tehran, and hailed Iran's positions as regards the JCPOA revival talks as well as broader cooperation with the IAEA.

He also called for the continuation of Iran's cooperation in order to assuage the fallout of Ukraine crisis, and expressed his sympathy with the families of all victims of the recent unrest in Iran.

Sanctions Hampering Treatment of MS Patients in Iran

TEHRAN (IFP) - Sanctions against Iran have affected the treatment of patients suffering from multiple sclerosis (MS).

"In order for MS patients to take, begin to take or continue to take some drugs, some tests are needed, which must be done abroad," says the vice-chair of Iran's MS Association.

"Unfortunately, anti-Iran sanctions have kept us from conducting these tests, and some of the patients have been harmed because of that," the same source added.

He said there are around 97,000 MS patients in Iran, but noted that there are almost no problems with regards to the medicines needed by them.

"Now, most MS patients in the country use Iranian drugs, which are currently available, and fortunately we face no challenges as far as drugs for MS patients are concerned," the official explained.

Weekly Commodities Traded On IME Exceeds 2.3m Tons

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week enjoyed trade of 2,344,527 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$521m on its physical market.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 1,772,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$271m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,135,950 tons of cement, 135,000 tons of iron ore, 265,715 tons of steel, 83,000 tons of sponge iron, 13,450 tons of zinc, 14,150 tons of aluminum, 12,738 tons of copper, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 17 kg of gold bars and 50 truck.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 511,980 tons of commodities worth nearly \$245m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 95,050 tons of polymeric products, 148,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 50,000 tons of lube cut, 34,522 tons of chemicals, 16,700 tons of sulfur, 3,750 tons of base oil, 575 tons of insulation, 2,000 tons of slops wax and 159,083 tons of bitumen.

The IME also traded within the same week 59,643 tons of commodities on its side market.

Enemies Suffered Defeat in Recent Riots

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi has lauded the resistance and patience of the Iranian people during the recent nationwide riots, which came after the death of a young woman in a police station, saying enemies bear grudges against the Iranian nation for the stunning progress it has managed to make in various fields.

"Iran's enemies were seeking to cause trouble for the country in the recent riots, but as in the past, the [Iranian] people have routed them with patience and resistance," Raisi said in a meeting between Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and Iranian officials and guests attending the 36th International Islamic Unity Conference in Tehran on Friday.

He pointed to Iran's scientific progress, economic growth, curbed inflation, and enhanced commercial and international cooperation, and commended the Iranian people's sincere cooperation with the administration, especially in the implementation of economic reforms.

The Iranian president warned of plots by ill-wishers of the Muslim world to conceal realities and promote "modern ignorance" and called for efforts to increase awareness based on Islamic unity and avoiding division.

Although Raisi immediately ordered a thorough investigation into the case, the protests soon turned violent, with rioters fatally attacking policemen and indulging in vandalism against public property in several cities.

The foreign-backed violent riots have also claimed dozens of lives from both security forces and ordinary people as the Western media and Persian-language news networks continue to provoke riots in Iran.

Canada Imposes New Sanctions on Iran

TEHRAN - Canada has imposed a fresh raft of sanctions against Iranian individuals and various bodies over what it calls human rights violations in the Islamic Republic.

Ottawa declared the measures on Thursday, saying they affected 17 people, including former foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and ex-defense chief Brigadier General Amir Hatami as well as three entities.

Riots broke out in Iran last month after a young Iranian woman, identified as Mahsa Amini died. The 22-year-old fainted at a police station and was later pronounced dead at a hospital.

The rioters have been going on rampage across the country, attacking security officers, resorting to vandalism against public property, and desecrating religious sanctities.

Late last month, the Iranian Intelligence Ministry announced that the rioters have been backed by Western regimes and their mercenary media, which disseminated misinformation and distorted the sequence of events that led to Amini's death even before the official investigation into the incident concludes.

Experts note that the Western governments and their media outlets have been terming the Iranian security forces' determined attempt to stem the riots as human rights violations in order to try to shore up the riots and glorify unrest.

Announcing the new sanctions, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly likewise accused Tehran of pursuing an "agenda of violence, fear, and propaganda."

She alleged that the rioters "are courageously demanding a future where their human rights will be fully respected."

This marks the second time the Canadian government levies sanctions against the Islamic Republic since the onset of the riots.

Earlier in the month, Ottawa imposed sanctions on a wide range of Iranian institutions and persons, including the 24-hour English-language Press TV, under the similar pretext of "rights violations."

Internet Restrictions in Iran Badly Affecting Economy, Businesses

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Opinion polls suggest restrictions on Internet access in Iran are tightening the noose on numerous businesses as well as the economy.

Roughly all 40 economic players polled by the Iranian newspaper, Donyaye Eghtesad, said their businesses were disrupted due to Internet shutdowns.

The majority of them also said the continuation of Internet restrictions could perpetuate the financial losses they are suffering.

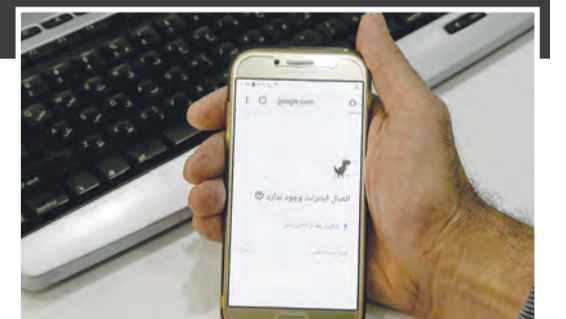
"The Internet shutdown will restrict production in half of the

sectors of the Iranian economy, so much so that the rate of economic growth will tremendously drop," wrote the paper.

"Internet disruptions have also intensified the macro-stagnation in the housing sector, and the capital market, too, will suffer in the short run due to a drop in demand," the newspaper explained.

The report quoting the polls results as saying the Internet shutdown will disrupt the process of manufacturing and production, hence putting the industry under pressure. It will affect all out-of-factory processes, namely procurement, distribution, sales, clearance of goods at the customs and forex issues.

And the last but not least, the paper said, it will have adverse effects such as rising unemployment and a drop in national welfare.



Iranian authorities have limited access to internet following the unrest and riots recently unfolding in the country. They say the rioters use applications like Instagram and WhatsApp to coordinate their activities.

Iran to Set Up Car Production Line in Armenia

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) announced the launch of an auto production line in Armenia aimed at exporting manufactured cars to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) states.

Alireza Payman-Pak said that a leading Iranian car manufacturer and also an Armenian investor have expressed their readiness to launch the car production line as a joint venture, the issue of which is pursued by the Armenian Ministry of Economy and also the Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade.

He added that the initial agreement for the construction of 100 percent Iranian-produced cars has been made in Armenia, based on which, the briefing plan will be readied.

Turning to the bartering deal between Iran and Armenia in the field of auto cooperation, Payman-Pak added that no bartering deal is carried out between the two countries in this area.

Presently, the Armenian private sector purchases cars from Iran and supplies them in its domestic market, he emphasized. All Iranian cars exported to Armenia have totally been manufactured by Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO), he said, adding that about 200 cars have so far been ordered by Armenia.

Offering vast after-sales services and easy accessibility to parts are of paramount importance in the area of exports, so, in cooperation and coordination with the private sector of Armenia, it is hoped that the country will witness the growing trend of exporting cars to this country in the first phase, he noted.

He went on to add that Armenia is among the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) countries which does not pay any trade tariff to these countries.

Suitable opportunities have been provided for the country in order to export quality cars to the Eurasian Economic Union's markets, the TPOI chief added.

36th Islamic Unity Conference Ends, Issues Final Statement

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The 36th Islamic Unity Conference ended here by issuing a statement.

Parts of the statement themed 'Islamic Unity, Executive Strategies, Operative Moves' read as follows: Under such conditions that the world countries, and especially the Islamic countries are more than ever before in need of peace and justice; while the objective of the Prophet Mohammad's appointment as the Messenger of Allah was elevating the exalted ethics, expansion of peace and justice, and brotherhood around the globe, and the prophet of Islam himself was the best pattern for brotherhood, peace and justice and love, beyond doubt contemplating on the biography of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) can lead to the prevailing of peace and justice in the Islamic world.

The global oppression, led by the United States and the looter west, that has throughout the recent decades pursued two major projects, namely disintegration of the Islamic world and looting the capitals and national wealth of the Islamic nations, has roots in secularism and liberalism.

The World Forum for Proximity of the Islamic Schools of Thought sponsored the 36th Islamic Unity Conference with the motto of 'Islamic Unity, Executive Strategies, Operative Moves' to emphasize that there are executive strategies and operative moves for achieving unity in the Islamic world.

The communique then refers to the papers received by the secretariat of the conference and addresses given at the 36th conference, as well as the strategies and practical moves made, and to be made to achieve unity, brotherhood and amicable feelings among the world Muslims.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:49
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:46
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:49
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:12

86. We admitted them to Our mercy: for they were of the righteous ones.
87. And remember Zun-nun, when he departed in wrath:
He imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness,
"There is no god but thou: glory to thee: I was indeed wrong!"

Surah 21. The Prophets (86 - 87)

Iran in Oil Swap Deals With Russia, Kazakhstan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A top advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Iran is in deals with Russia and Kazakhstan to swap crude oil produced by them with its own crude oil for the purpose of delivery to customers in the Persian Gulf.

Ali Akbar Velayati said on Saturday that the oil swap deals with Russia and Kazakhstan is in line with Iran's policies to improve its access to energy supply sources in various parts of the country.

"We receive oil from Russia and Kazakhstan via the Caspian Sea to use it for domestic consumption and then we deliver oil in the same quantity to their customers in the south," Velayati said in an interview with Khamenei.ir.

Iranian Foreign Ministry authorities had announced in early July that Iran would engage in swap deals with Russia and Kazakhstan.

However, there has been no official announcement confirming that swap operations have actually started.

Velayati's statement comes days after the National Iranian Oil Company and Russia's state petroleum company Gazprom signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate on joint projects with an investment of nearly \$40 billion.

Iranian and Russian officials have described the deal as historic and unprecedented but they have not indicated if the agreement would cover swap of crude oil.

The statement also comes amid Russia's efforts to counter a series of American and European sanctions that have targeted its energy exports since it started a military operation in Ukraine in February.

Meanwhile the head of the Iranian Trade Development Organization stated that a large Iranian trade delegation will soon go to Kazakhstan to develop economic relations between the two countries. When meeting with the Deputy Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan, the Iranian Trade Development Organization Alireza Peyman Pak mentioned the different and serious attitude adopted by the new Iranian government in developing trade relations with other countries. He said to his neighbors: In the silent ministry, he is also the president. I have announced many times in the election program and its importance has been recognized.

The head of the Trade Development Organization added: "According to the President's orders and priorities, we have been pursuing the development of trade with neighboring countries, and on this basis, we have formulated a plan for the Trade Development Organization." Therefore, the Eurasian countries are Iran's foreign counterparts. The top priority of trade, enjoys a privileged position in Eurasian countries, Russia and Kazakhstan.

"Kazakhstan is a good market for Iranian products, and at the same time, this country has the ability to meet many of our country's needs," said the Deputy Minister of Industry, Minerals and Trade.



Peman Parker added: "The low data of bilateral trade does not meet the goals of both parties. Increasing bilateral trade volume is the most important goal of developing trade relations. This requires both parties to make a serious determination." He emphasized bilateral peace in the fields of banking, logistics and trade. Multilateral agreements are a way to quickly remove obstacles. He said: "It is necessary to establish bilateral financial channels to overcome the sanctions issue, and significant progress has been made. It was produced with the cooperation of all parties." We have a Kazakh language.

The head of the Iranian Trade Development Organization also announced that a large Iranian delegation is about to visit Kazakhstan for further coordination. Peman Park pointed out the important role of exhibition activities in the development of trade between the two countries, and suggested holding an exhibition of Kazakhstan's capacity in Iran and an exhibition of Iran's capacity in Kazakhstan. After the meeting, Cair Tvrbanf, Deputy Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan, also emphasized the importance of this meeting, which stems from the method of regional development in Kazakhstan. He said: Unfortunately, the corona restriction will hinder the development of the two countries' plans. Advance.

He added: "Considering the important position of the Iranian Trade Development Organization as the foreign trade regulatory agency of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we are trying to remove existing obstacles through cooperation and coordination, including holding multiple meetings to review issues in different countries. Development was completely interrupted.

The Deputy Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan continued: "More than 20 representatives of Kazakhstan's large companies and Iran's private and public sectors participated in these meetings, which demonstrates the desire and determination of both parties to develop trade relations."

Turbanov also suggested that the time lost during the corona should be made up by speeding up the joint plan, especially the preparations for the 17th session of the joint committee. Noting the convening of the 17th Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Cooperation Summit, cleaning issues, strengthening the Caspian Sea trade, and developing cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union and ECO, and announcing that it is preparing to be one of the key topics of discussion in the field of energy exchange.

Second Executive Phase of Kerver Copper Mine Road Construction Begins



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The executive operation of the second phase of road construction of the Kerver Copper Mine with investment with over 17,000b rials started in the town of Anbarabad with presence of Kerman Province Governor General Mohammad Mehdi Fadakar, Prosecutor of Kerman Province Mr. Dakhoda Salari and the CEO of National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) Dr. Ali Rostami.

In the ceremony, the CEO of NICICO Dr. Rostami said that after implementing the project for the access route, the operation for stripping waste from the mine will start. He went on to say that simultaneously, the plant for copper cathode production based on the leaching will start and with production of copper cathode in the region in the next two years, they would hope to develop the downstream copper industries.

The CEO of NICICO also expressed hope that the next phase of the road for access to the mine would come on stream by the next spring.

Then Governor of Kerman Province Dr. Fadakar pointed to the good capacities of Kerver copper mine and announced some identification and primary works for immediate implementation of the project. He stated that some part of the access road to the mine has already been implemented but it had come to a halt which is now under implementation due to efforts of NICICO and the prosecutor general.

He expressed hope some important mining achievement would happen through non-stop work and efforts.

The ceremony was held in Anbarabad on Thursday.

Gov't Pays Special Attention to Rail Transport

TEHRAN (MNA) - The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) said that the current government pays special attention to the transportation diplomacy in the railway sector.

Miad Salehi said, "Last year, thanks to the grace of God, we broke the record of rail transit, the record of exports from rail borders and the total number of international transports in the history of railways."

Stating that the development of railway lines is on the agenda in the current government, the head of the railways said: "Part of the requirements of railway development is the updating of equipment and special attention to the employees, and we are trying to take greater steps in these fields in the second year of the government."

The development of the railway sector is one of the macro policies of the Iranian government as it has been emphasized by the general policies of the country's National Development Plan.

In this regard, the national railway fleet has been constantly receiving new domestically-made locomotives and wagons over the past two years under the framework of a program implemented by the Transport Ministry in collaboration with the country's private sector.

Advantages such as consuming less fuel and creating less pollution as well as high safety attach priority to the railway when compared to some other transportation systems, and makes its development economically viable.

When it comes to railway development, the renovation of existing infrastructures comes also under the spotlight, since according to RAI, currently, the average age of the country's passenger and freight wagons stands at 24 years and there are also rail tracks that have been built over 50 years ago.

Broadening Iran-Spain Ties Needs Resolving Banking Problem

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Spain Embassy's Commercial attaches to Tehran Mr. Inigo Gil-Casares in meeting with the official of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) emphasized that the existing problems in the field of banking relations and money exchanges is the main hurdle for broadening trade ties between Iran and Spain.

In the meeting, deputy on international affairs of ICCIMA Mr. Alireza Yavari pointed to the many existing capacities in the trade ties between Iran and Spain and said that the fields exempted from sanctions are appropriate fields for increasing the trade volume between the two countries.

He added that there are possibilities to broaden cooperation in the non-sanctioned fields like agriculture, medicines, food stuff and some construction materials like tiles and ceramic as well as broadening tourism which are good items for strengthening bilateral ties.



energies, rail transport and food stuff and stated that investment of Iranian companies in production of pistachio and saffron in Spain can have good profits for both parties.

He then called for dispatch of trade delegations from Iran Chamber of Commerce to visit exhibitions in Spain and meeting with their Spanish counterparts.

Then Gil-Casares, for his part, pointed to the start of his mission in Tehran and pointed to the strategy of the commercial sector of the Embassy of Spain in support of active traders and increasing the trade volume, and added that one of the main problems in way of developing bilateral trade ties of both countries is the issue of banking ties and money transactions.

He expressed his optimism over the fate of the JCPOA revival talks and emphasized necessity for keeping the contacts in the current condition and termed positive and useful holding of webinars and online meetings for keeping these contacts.

Gil-Casares expressed the interests of Spanish companies for cooperation with their Iranian counterparts in Iran in the fields like renewable

Gov't Pays Special Attention to Rail Transport

TEHRAN (MNA) - The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) said that the current government pays special attention to the transportation diplomacy in the railway sector.

Miad Salehi said, "Last year, thanks to the grace of God, we broke the record of rail transit, the record of exports from rail borders and the total number of international transports in the history of railways."

Stating that the development of railway lines is on the agenda in the current government, the head of the railways said: "Part of the requirements of railway development is the updating of equipment and special attention to the employees, and we are trying to take greater steps in these fields in the second year of the government."

The development of the railway sector is one of the macro policies of the Iranian government as it has been emphasized by the general policies of the country's National Development Plan.

In this regard, the national railway fleet has been constantly receiving new domestically-made locomotives and wagons over the past two years under the framework of a program implemented by the Transport Ministry in collaboration with the country's private sector.

Advantages such as consuming less fuel and creating less pollution as well as high safety attach priority to the railway when compared to some other transportation systems, and makes its development economically viable.

When it comes to railway development, the renovation of existing infrastructures comes also under the spotlight, since according to RAI, currently, the average age of the country's passenger and freight wagons stands at 24 years and there are also rail tracks that have been built over 50 years ago.

Afghanistan Resumes Flights To Iran After One Year

TEHRAN (IP) - After about a year of pause, the Afghan airliner resumed its flights to Iran on Friday.

The flights of Afghanistan's airliner to Iran were resumed as the tourism activists called for the cancellation of visas between the two countries.

The ceremony of resuming the flights was held with the attendance of a number of Iranian and Afghan officials and the representative from Ariana Afghan Airliner.

Ariana Afghan Airliner's flights are available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Earlier, Iran-Afghanistan direct flights were used to be carried out by an Iranian airliner.

About one year ago, the US forces left Afghan soil after 20 years of invasion but left the country with its infrastructure ruined, including the airports.

NATO to Kick Off Nuclear Drills Involving B-52 Bombers



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - NATO said it would launch its annual nuclear exercise "Steadfast Noon" on Monday, with up to 60 aircraft taking part in training flights over Belgium, the North Sea and Britain to practise the use of U.S. nuclear bombs based in Europe.

The nuclear drills - which do not involve live bombs - are taking place amid heightened tensions after Russia repeatedly threatened nuclear strikes in Ukraine following major military setbacks on the battlefield there.

"Steadfast Noon" is likely to coincide with Moscow's own annual nuclear drills, dubbed "Grom", which are normally conducted in late October and in which Russia tests its nuclear-capable bombers, submarines and missiles.

Hardline Syria Rebels Sweep Across North



IDLIB (dispatches) - Hardline rebel fighters in northern Syria have clawed territory away from their Turkey-backed rivals this week in clashes that have left more than two dozen dead, the factions and a war monitor said.

Tensions erupted earlier this month between a rebel group backed by Turkey and more hardline fighters, including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the former Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, according to statements by the clashing groups.

HTS and its allies captured the town of Afrin, which Turkish-backed forces seized from Kurdish factions in 2018, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor.

Putin Says Ukraine Mobilization Should Be Finished in Two Weeks



ASTANA (dispatches) - Russia should be finished calling up reservists in two weeks, President Vladimir Putin said on Friday, promising an end to a divisive mobilization that has seen hundreds of thousands of men summoned to fight in Ukraine and huge numbers flee the country.

Putin also said Russia had no plans "for now" for more massive air strikes like those it carried out this week, in which it fired more than 100 long range missiles at targets across Ukraine.

Putin ordered the mobilization three weeks ago, responding to Russian defeats on the battlefield with escalation. He has also proclaimed the annexation of four partially occupied Ukrainian provinces and threatened to use nuclear weapons.

The mobilization has led in parts of Russia to the first signs of public criticism of the authorities since the war began. Officials have acknowledged some mistakes were made in determining who would be called up. Members of ethnic minorities and residents of rural areas have complained of being drafted at higher rates than ethnic Russians and city dwellers.

Defending the mobilization order, Putin told a news conference at the end of a summit in Kazakhstan that the front line was too long to defend solely with contract soldiers.

He said 222,000 out of an expected 300,000 reservists had already been mobilized. "This work is coming to an end," he said. "I think that in about two weeks all the mobilization activities will be finished."

Since the mobilization order was given, Russian forces have continued to lose ground in eastern Ukraine and also lost a substantial area in the south. A Western official said that some of the newly mobilized Russian troops were already on the battlefield taking casualties, and that their presence was unlikely to turn the tide in the war in Moscow's favour.

"It is clear that they have been fielded with very, very limited training and very, very poor equipment, and that is the reason why we say that it is really unlikely that they have any sort of positive impact in the near term," the official said.

The official also suggested Russia did not have enough missiles to sustain attacks like those this week: "Russia is rapidly exhausting its supply of long-range precision munitions, in particular its air-launched cruise missiles, so this is not a campaign that it will be able to sustain indefinitely."

Meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group during a NATO defence ministers meeting at the Alliance's headquarters in Brussels

Ukraine's top general Valeriy Zaluzhnyi struck an upbeat tone, meanwhile, after his country's rapid advances in the northeast and south in recent weeks.

"The strategic initiative is in our hands, so the main thing is not to stop," Zaluzhnyi said after speaking by phone with the commander in chief of Europe's combined NATO forces, U.S. general Christopher Cavoli.

Ukraine's General Staff said on Facebook late on Friday that Ukraine's forces had destroyed large amounts of Russian arms and equipment in Antratsyt south of Luhansk, an area where Ukraine is hoping to recapture major towns after its successes in Kharkiv region.

It said Russian forces had launched more artillery and air strikes on towns including Konstantynivka southwest of Bakhmut, their main target in Donetsk region, and Zaporizhzhia city.

Truss Sacrifices Finance Minister, Scraps Tax Plan



LONDON (dispatches) - British Prime Minister Liz Truss fired her finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng and scrapped parts of their unpopular economic package on Friday in a desperate bid for political survival less than 40 days into her premiership.

With financial markets in turmoil, a chastened Truss said she accepted her government's plans for unfunded tax cuts had gone "further and faster" than investors were expecting.

"I have acted decisively today because my priority is ensuring our country's economic stability," she told a brief news conference in Downing Street. "I want to be honest, this is difficult. But we will get through this storm."

The pound and British government bond prices tumbled after she spoke, with economists and investors saying her reversal of 20 billion pounds (\$22 billion) of tax cuts was not yet enough to restore calm.

Britain is engulfed in a political crisis akin to the industrial battles of the 1970s, the sterling crash of the early

1990s and the chaos that followed Brexit. Since it voted to leave the European Union in 2016 it has lost three prime ministers and its reputation as a predictable member of the global economic order.

"This marks the first time in decades - since at least the 90s - that the financial markets have forced the government of a big developed economy with its own central bank to capitulate on core fiscal ambitions," analysts at consultancy Evercore said. Earlier Truss fired her finance minister and close friend, Kwarteng, after he rushed back to London overnight from IMF meetings in Washington where Britain's chaotic recent management of its economy was a focal point.

To replace him, she appointed Jeremy Hunt, a former foreign and health secretary who had backed her rival Rishi Sunak in this summer's race to become Conservative Party leader. He is the fourth finance minister in as many months in Britain, where millions are facing a cost of living crisis.

Kwarteng becomes Britain's shortest serving finance minister except for a predecessor who died suddenly in office in 1970. "You have asked me to stand aside as your Chancellor. I have accepted," he wrote in his resignation letter to Truss.

North Korea Fires Missile, Flies Warplanes Near Border

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea fired a short-range ballistic missile into the sea and hundreds of artillery rounds near the border with the South on Friday, South Korea's military said, the latest military activity by the nuclear-armed country amid heightened tensions.

South Korea also scrambled fighter jets when a group of about 10 North Korean military aircraft flew close to their heavily fortified border, and North Korea fired some 560 rounds of artillery into "sea buffer zones" on multiple occasions, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

South Korea's National Security Council (NSC) condemned the North for escalating tensions, calling its moves a violation of a 2018 bilateral military pact that bans "hostile acts" in the border area.

Seoul imposed its first unilateral sanctions against Pyongyang in nearly five years, blacklisting 15 North Korean individuals and 16 institutions involved in missile development.

The JCS issued a warning to North Korea, urging it to stop provocations and escalating tension.

South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol told reporters that Pyongyang has been "indiscriminately carrying out provocations", vowing to devise "watertight countermeasures".

Yoon's spokesman said that his government respected inter-Korean agreements, and that scrapping the 2018 military pact hinged on Pyongyang's behaviour.

North Korea's military issued a statement via state media KCNA early on Friday saying that it took "strong military countermeasures", over artillery fire by South Korea on Thursday.

South Korea's NSC said the firing was a "regular, legitimate" exercise.

The incidents came after North Korea's state news agency KCNA said leader Kim Jong Un oversaw the launch of two long-range strategic cruise missiles on Wednesday to confirm the reliability of nuclear-capable weapons deployed to military units.

The unprecedented frequency of North Korea's missile launches has raised concerns it may be preparing to resume testing of nuclear bombs for the first time since 2017. Some analysts do not expect any tests before neighbouring China concludes a key ruling Communist Party congress, which begins on Oct. 16.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said it was aware of the latest missile launch and "it does not pose an immediate threat".

Egypt Mediates Talks to Develop Gaza Offshore Gas

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - As Israel and Lebanon moved to resolve a dispute involving offshore gas fields, Egypt has been working with Israeli and Palestinian officials to unlock natural gas production off Gaza's coast.

More than two decades since exploration began, the struggling Palestinian economy could reap huge benefits from natural gas reserves, and a Palestinian official has said an agreement may be imminent.

Banners reading: "Our gas is our right" in both Arabic and English have appeared in Gaza City's fishing port, calling on neighbouring Egypt and Israel to revive a plan to develop the Marine 1 and 2 fields in the Mediterranean.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) had commissioned energy firm British Gas to conduct gas exploration in the area back in 1999.

A year later, British Gas found Marine 1 about 30 kilometres (19 miles) out to sea, and later the smaller Marine 2, but eventually withdrew from the contract.

The project was handed over to energy giant Shell in 2016 only for it to pull out two years later over Israeli objections and other disputes.

Since then, the Palestinians have been looking for investors in the \$1.1 billion project to extract the estimated 28 billion cubic metres (989 billion cubic feet) of natural gas.

Islamist movement Hamas controls the Gaza Strip, but is not included in the talks over its gas field

Israel has held sporadic talks over the years with the Palestinian Authority -- but the PA has exercised no

control over Gaza for the past decade and a half.

The Islamist Hamas movement ousted forces loyal to the PA from the territory in 2007. It, too, would like a share of any gas revenues.

Hamas and the secular Fatah movement, which dominates the PA, signed a reconciliation deal on Thursday in their latest attempt to end the rift, but it remains unclear if this agreement will bear any more fruit than its predecessors.

An Egyptian source told AFP that Cairo has been "in contact with all parties, including Israel, to develop and profit from Gaza's gas reserves, which would also support the Palestinian economy".

A senior PA official told AFP that "serious talks" were underway to reach a framework agreement by the end of the year.

Hamas has been organising demonstrations to demand that the rights of the Palestinians over natural resources are protected

The talks include Palestinian engineering firm Consolidated Contractors Company, the Palestinian Investment Fund, Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company (EGAS) and Israel.

"Once an agreement is signed, the Egyptian company EGAS will commence work to develop the Marine 1 and 2 gas fields, with the aim of starting production within two years," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

But "Israel's approval is necessary" before any work can begin, another PA official involved in the talks told AFP.

Turkish Opposition Calls New Media Law "Censorship"

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's main opposition group said on Friday it would ask the top court to throw out new media legislation that would jail people for spreading "misinformation", calling the measures unprecedented censorship.

Parliament adopted the law late on Thursday after it was proposed by President Tayyip Erdogan's ruling AK Party (AKP), which says it aims to regulate online publications, protect the country and combat disinformation.

The bill had drawn criticism from Turkey's Western allies and rights groups who said its vague reference to "false or misleading information" can be interpreted differently by courts to punish those critical of the government.

The law's Article 29 says those who spread false information about Turkey's security to "create fear and disturb public order" will face a prison sentence of one to three years. The bill still needs to be approved by the president.

"We are talking about a law that is the most oppressive in our history and the law that contains the most censorship," Burak Erbay, a member of the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), said.

He said the party would file an application to the Constitutional Court as soon as the "Law on Amending the Press Law" was published in the Official Gazette.

"We believe the biggest censorship law in history will be reversed by the Constitutional Court and this law will be annulled. It is a regulation that takes us down to the level of underdeveloped societies," Erbay told Reuters.

The AKP's nationalist allies MHP joined it in voting to approve the bill, while opposition parties opposed it.

The AKP has dismissed the criticism and says it opposes censorship, adding the law aims to protect everyone from false accusations on social media.

The pro-government Sabah newspaper said a "safe era" in social media had begun. It said the regulations would improve national safety by allowing the immediate removal of content that would endanger public peace.



Human Mini-Organs Grown In a Lab to Study Disease



PARIS (Dispatches) - Miniature, underdeveloped versions of organs including brains, bladders and pancreases are being grown in petri dishes in laboratories around the world.

It may sound like something out of Aldous Huxley's science-fiction classic Brave New World, but these groups of human cells, called organoids, are already helping scientists find new ways to better understand diseases.

The latest breakthrough came on Wednesday, when an international team of researchers revealed in the journal Nature they successfully implanted human brain organoids into the brains of young rats.

As the rats grow, so will the organoids, allowing scientists to research complex psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia and autism.

Laboratories worldwide are at different stages of research using such organoids.

At the Pasteur Institute in France, thousands of brain organoids have been grown since late 2020 at the molecular mechanisms of pathological and physiological ageing laboratory.

Inside the lab, hundreds of these tiny white balls are being stored at 37 degrees Celsius (98 Fahrenheit), as a machine ensures constant movement to circulate nutrients and prevent them from clumping together.

In nature, when eggs are fertilised with sperm, a group of stem cells form. Dubbed "pluripotent", these stem cells can become any type of cell in the human body, from brains to skin.

Around two decades ago, Japanese researcher Shinya Yamanaka found a way to take cells from adults and reprogramme them back into their earlier pluripotent state, meaning they can again become any kind of cell. These Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPS) can be produced in the lab, and are hoped to avoid some of the controversy surrounding the destruction of human embryonic stem cells.

The discovery earned Yamanaka a medicine Nobel Prize in 2012, and is hoped to mark a turning point in the study of human biology.

The laboratory at the Pasteur Institute has used iPS cells to grow brain organoids to around three to four millimetres in size in a matter of months.

The head of the lab, Miria Ricchetti, said the organoids are "much simpler than the human cerebral cortex". "These organoids are made of different types of cells which interact with each other, forming layers that position themselves correctly when compared to a normal brain," she told AFP.

This gives the organoids "a three-dimensional structure, quite similar to a developing human brain of around 20 weeks old".

This is one reason for excitement in this growing field. Most research is currently carried out on two-dimensional cells, but organoids let scientists extend into the third dimension.

"Some drugs will work on 2D cells — then we find out that they don't work on 3D cells," Ricchetti said.

Organoids are hoped to provide a new way to understand the different stages of a disease, as well as test new drugs. For example, they could be used to find out how the molecules in a drug functions — and whether it is toxic.

It could also mean that fewer such tests have to be carried out on animals.

Juergen Knoblich, a molecular biologist at Austria's Institute for Molecular Biotechnology, said that a lot of brain experiments currently carried out on mice or rats "should be done on primates," adding that however this is "very controversial".

"Organoid models from human stem cells are promising and resolve this conflict," he told the Science Media Centre.

Ricchetti's team is using its organoids to study the development of a brain with Cockayne syndrome, a rare and fatal degenerative disease.

Finland Hopes New Nuclear Reactor Eases Energy Crunch



EURAJOKI (Dispatches) - After over a decade of delays, the deafening sound of Finland's new Olkiluoto 3 nuclear reactor finally running its turbine at full power was welcomed with joy -- and relief.

The Nordic country is hoping the plant will be able to ease the coming winter's challenges as Europe battles soaring energy prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"It has taken a lot of perseverance and years of hard work to get to this point, so we feel pretty good at the moment," Johanna Aho, a spokeswoman for the plant's operator TVO, told AFP.

The almost 300-degree Celsius (572 F) steam gushing from the reactor turns the over 60-meter-long turbine up to 25 times every second, making a visit to the turbine island in protective gear feel as hot as one of Finland's ubiquitous saunas. More than 12 years behind schedule, on September 30, Olkiluoto 3 reached full power for the first time since construction began in 2005.

With a power level of 1,600 megawatts, the reactor, located on Finland's southwestern coast, is now the most powerful in Europe and the third most powerful in the world.

Around 10 full power tests remain for the unit -- during which it will periodically stop producing electricity for several days or even weeks -- before normal operation starts in December.

When the new unit reached full power on September 30, TVO said the Olkiluoto plant accounted for around 40 percent of Finland's electricity production, with the Olkiluoto 1 and 2 reactors together producing approximately 21 percent and the new OL3 alone around 19 percent.

"That's a lot of electricity and it's the kind of steady, predictable and stable electricity production that nuclear power provides," Aho said.

In recent years, support for nuclear energy has grown in Finland, spurred by concern over climate change.

A May poll by trade association Finnish Energy showed 60 percent of Finns supported nuclear power, a record high.

But after Finnish group Fennovoima in May terminated a nuclear power project with Russia's Rosatom, citing risks linked to the war in Ukraine, there are no other nuclear reactor projects in the pipeline.

Finland gets around 50 to 60 percent of its electricity from hydro, wind, solar and biomass, with fossil fuels and peat comprising roughly 10 percent.

Olkiluoto 3 was meant to be up and running already in 2009, six years after TVO announced a deal with France's Areva and Germany's Siemens for the reactor's construction.

But the project quickly ran into issues.

In 2006, TVO announced that "delays in the construction work and in manufacturing of the main coolant lines" had pushed the reactor's starting date back to 2010-2011.

And when the Finnish nuclear safety agency STUK by 2009 required hundreds of improvements to be made due to "problems with the construction", the partners started casting blame.

TVO demanded 2.4 billion euros in compensation from Siemens and Areva for the setbacks. The two in turn demanded 1.0 billion euros from TVO, arguing that the project had encountered "more rigorous security requirements" than initially foreseen.

Areva meanwhile accused STUK of being slow to approve documents, to which STUK responded by saying the consortium had been "unprepared".

"The French did not understand at first the Finnish system, that no important device can be built before the plan is approved," Jukka Laaksonen from STUK told AFP at the time.



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One in 5 Britons Heading for Mortgage Pain

LONDON (Dispatches) - One in five families in Britain will take a financial hit from having to pay more for their mortgages between now and 2024 with about a quarter of the increase caused by the recent market turmoil, a think-tank said.

The Resolution Foundation, which focuses on issues facing lower-income households, said more than 5 million families will see their annual mortgage payments rise by an average of 5,100 pounds (\$5,700.27) over the next two years. Of that, 1,200 pounds reflected the expectations of higher interest rate rises since the Sept. 23 "mini-budget" that prompted a surge in borrowing costs with its unfunded tax cuts.



Global Finance Leaders Single Out China As Barrier to Faster Debt Relief

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Western countries this week ratcheted up their criticism of China, the world's largest bilateral creditor, as the main obstacle to moving ahead with debt restructuring agreements for the growing number of countries unable to service their debts.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said that high inflation, tightening monetary policies, currency pressures and capital outflows were increasing debt burdens in many developing countries, and more progress was urgently needed.

She said she discussed those issues during a dinner with African finance ministers and in many other sessions. The Group of Seven rich nations also met African finance ministers, who worry that the focus on the war in Ukraine is draining resources and attention from their pressing concerns.

"Everyone agrees Russia should stop its war on Ukraine, and that would address the most significant problems that Africa faces," Yellen told reporters at the International Monetary Fund and World Bank annual meetings in Washington.

But she said a more effective debt restructuring process was also needed, and China had a big role to play.

"Really, the barrier to making greater progress is one important creditor country, namely China," she said. "So there has been much discussion of what we can do to bring China to the table and to foster a more effective solution."

As China is the missing piece in the puzzle of a number of debt talks under way in developing markets, the Group of 20 launched in 2020 a Common Framework to bring creditors such as China and India to the negotiation table along with the IMF, Paris Club and private creditors.

Zambia, Chad and Ethiopia have applied to restructure under this new, yet-to-be tested mechanism. Sri Lanka is set to start talks with bilateral creditors including China after a \$2.9 billion staff level agreement with the IMF under a similar platform. The Paris Club creditor nations last month reached out to China and India seeking to coordinate closely on Sri Lanka's debt talks, but are still awaiting a reply.

The world's poorest countries face \$35 billion in debt-service payments to official and private-sector creditors in 2022, with more than 40% of the total due to China, according to the World Bank.

Spanish Finance Minister Nadia Calvino, who chairs the IMF's steering committee, told Reuters in an interview on Thursday that there was increasing concern about China not participating fully in debt relief efforts, noting that China had not sent officials to participate in person at this week's IMF and World Bank meetings.

"China is a necessary partner. It's indispensable that we have them in the room and in the discussions when it comes to debt relief," Calvino said, adding that many heavily indebted countries were also being hit hard by inflation and climate shocks.

German Finance Minister Christian Lindner also joined the growing criticism of China's lack of timely participation in debt restructuring for lower-income countries. China has argued it would not take part in some cases unless the IMF and World Bank also took a haircut.

Lindner told reporters he regretted that China had not accepted his invitation to participate in the G7 roundtable with African countries.

Argentina Inflation Undershoots, Easing Pressure to Hike Rates

Buenos Aires (Dispatches) - Argentina's monthly inflation rate came in lower than expected in September, a rare reprieve for the embattled economy and struggling residents, which may allow the central bank to pause its aggressive rate hiking cycle for the time being.

The government's INDEC statistics agency reported on Friday the monthly inflation was 6.2% last month, slower than in August and undershooting analyst forecasts of a 6.7% increase.

Reuters reported earlier on Friday, citing sources, that the central bank was minded to hold off on a new interest rate hike due to optimism that inflation was on a downward path, which would break a string of successive raises this year that have seen the benchmark rate climb to 75% from 38%.

Still, annual inflation is predicted to top a whopping 100% by the end of the year, one of the highest rates around the globe, as the grains-producing South American nation faces a wide array of economic crises and an embattled peso currency.

Inflation in the 12 months through September hit 83%, as President Alberto Fernandez's government fights to rein in surging prices that are sapping people's wages and savings. Prices were up 66.1% in the first nine months of the year.



OPEC's Production Cut Could Be the Tipping Point for a Recession

LONDON (Dispatches) - In a strongly-worded warning published, the International Energy Agency cautioned that the OPEC+ decision to cut oil production quotas could have a destabilizing effect on the world economy. Brent prices have risen by \$14 per barrel since the announcement, reaching about \$98.

"With unrelenting inflationary pressures and interest rate hikes taking their toll, higher oil prices may prove the tipping point for a global economy already on the brink of recession," warned IEA. The announced cut is in the range of two million barrels per day across all OPEC+ members, but many analysts - including IEA - expect the actual reduction to be in the range of one million bpd, concentrated in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Further production cuts could be coming at the end of this year when EU restrictions on the Russian oil trade enter into force. Russia has threatened to retaliate with reduced output and a policy of refusing sales to countries participating in the planned restrictions, including a proposed international price cap on Russian crude.

The price hike for oil is leading to demand destruction as consumers reduce discretionary energy consumption. Recent data from Europe and the United States show less summertime fuel demand, reflecting less long-distance vacation trips and less carbon emissions.

"Even taking into account lower demand expectations, [the OPEC+ cut] will sharply reduce a much needed build in oil stocks through the rest of this year and into the first half of 2023," warned IEA. "Commercial and residential consumers are taking measures to reduce their energy bills and those effort could well have a lasting impact on oil markets."

Pakistan Seeks Rescheduling of \$27b Bilateral Debt

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Pakistan's new finance minister, Ishaq Dar, told Reuters that he will seek rescheduling of some \$27 billion worth of non-Paris Club debt largely owed to China, but will not pursue haircuts as part of any restructuring.

In an interview, Dar ruled out the possibility of a default on Pakistan's debt, an extension of the maturity date on bonds due in December or a renegotiation of Pakistan's current International Monetary Fund program.

The veteran finance minister said multilateral development banks and international donors have been "quite flexible" with ways to meet Pakistan's external financing needs estimated

at about \$32 billion after devastating floods. Some of this may come from reallocating funds from previously approved, slower-disbursing development loans, he added.

Dar, who is participating in the IMF and World Bank annual meetings just over two weeks after taking office, said that Pakistan will seek restructuring on equal terms for all bilateral creditors.

He declined to comment when asked whether he thought it would be difficult to persuade China, creditor for about \$23 billion of the debt, to participate.

But asked whether Pakistan would seek to reduce debt principal, he said "rescheduling is fine, but we are not seeking a haircut. That's not fair."

Dar, who served as Pakistan's finance minister three previous times -- most recently from 2013 to 2017 -- is known as a staunch defender of the rupee. He said Pakistan has not engaged in physical intervention in the currency, which has been battered this year by a strong U.S. dollar, but which has rallied some 10% since his appointment.

Dar said that he views the "true value" of the rupee at a level under 200 to the dollar. It last traded at 219.

"I am for a stable currency, I am for a realistic rate. I am for market-based, but not subject to a currency being taken hostage" and making speculators billions of dollars.

Asked whether he discussed with IMF officials the possibility of borrowing from the Fund's new Resilience and Sustainability Trust for middle-income countries, Dar said "We have discussed all options."

The Pakistan finance minister added that the IMF's new emergency "food shock" borrowing window may also be a good fit for the country, which has lost crops due to devastating floods and may need to import up to half million of tons of wheat in the next year.

"In this scenario, we have the possibility of approaching and accessing this facility," he said.

Latin America Faces a Third Shock as Global Financial Conditions Tighten



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - As Latin American countries continue to grapple with the effects of two previous shocks, the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, they face a third shock: the tightening of global financial conditions.

Growth momentum is currently positive, reflecting the return of service sectors and employment to pre-pandemic levels, and the overall support of favorable external conditions—high commodity prices, strong external demand and remittances, and rebounding tourism. This has led to several upward revisions to growth this year.

But financing is becoming scarcer and costlier as major central banks raise interest rates to tame inflation. Capital inflows to emerging markets are slowing and external borrowing costs are increasing. Domestic interest rates in emerging markets are also rising as their central banks are hiking rates to battle inflation as well, but also because of reduced investors' appetite for riskier assets.

For Latin America, these factors result in a deceleration in activity as higher borrowing costs weight on domestic credit, private consumption, and investment.

Earlier this year, surging commodity prices and solid growth momentum helped offset the effects of tighter global financial conditions, as investors were attracted by a region that hosts major commodity exporters amid global needs for food and energy supplies. But higher interest rates are pushing commodity prices down as the global economy decelerates, reducing their cushioning effect. The slowdown may also reduce exports, remittances, and tourism to the region.

Uncertainty about global interest rates and whether inflation can be brought back under control smoothly—a so called "soft landing"—means spikes in volatility and investor risk aversion are also possible. In other words, the transition to higher global interest rates may be bumpy.

Amid positive surprises in activity, we have upgraded our growth projection for Latin America and the Caribbean this year to 3.5 percent from 3 percent in July. But with the changing winds ahead, growth next year is poised to decelerate more rapidly than we projected in July, slowing to 1.7 percent.

Commodity exporters—South American countries, Mexico and some Caribbean economies—are likely to see their growth rates halved next year, as lower commodity prices amplify the impact of rising interest rates.

Turkish Central Bank To Cut Rates to 11%



ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's central bank is expected to cut its policy rate by 100 basis points to 11% next week, a Reuters poll showed, after President Tayyip Erdogan called for more easing each month and said rates should be single digits by year-end.

The central bank has shocked the markets twice in the past two months by cutting its policy rate by 100 basis points each time, lowering it to 12%, despite inflation soaring above 83% in September.

Monetary easing is part of Erdogan's unorthodox economic programme that seeks to boost growth, investments, employment and exports by lowering borrowing costs, especially for exporters and small and medium-sized companies.

The president, who has great influence over the central bank, gave even more explicit policy direction earlier this month when he said the bank would continue cuts every month "as long as I am in power".

Thirteen out of 20 economists that participated in the Reuters poll predicted the bank would lower its policy rate to 11% at its meeting on Oct. 20. Six predicted it would hold steady at 12%, while one forecast a cut to 11.50%.

Turkey's recent monetary policy decisions have not been based on "conventional economic principles", said Credit Suisse.

"The authorities will probably continue to implement ad hoc measures as long as they can in order to sustain what we view as this ultimately unsustainable policy stance," it said in a note.

"The timing of a conventional policy adjustment will also crucially hinge, in our view, on political considerations, in particular the presidential/parliamentary elections that will be held no later than in mid-2023," it added.

FM Meets With Iraqi National Security Adviser

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian held a meeting with the visiting Iraqi National Security Adviser Qasim al-Araji in Tehran on Saturday.

Qasim al-Araji also plans to hold other meetings with the other Iranian officials during the trip. The Iraqi Foreign Minister had announced last Tuesday in the meeting of Iraqi parliament members that a delegation from that country headed by the National Security Advisor would travel to Iran and discuss Iran's recent attacks on terrorist positions in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.



Why Semiconductors Are Central to World Economy, Geopolitics

BELJING (Dispatches) - The Chinese Communist Party Congress opens in Beijing on October 16, a week after Washington imposed tight restrictions on exports of invaluable semiconductor technology to China in a bid to stop it from surpassing the US economically and militarily. As semiconductors emerge as a key battleground, FRANCE 24 spoke to the author of a new bestseller on these all-important pieces of silicon.

For years, semiconductors have been crucial to everything from refrigerators to ballistic missiles. But only recently have they captured public attention.

Washington demonstrated the US semiconductor industry's almighty power in 2018 when Donald Trump's Commerce Department banned Chinese telecoms firm ZTE from buying chips designed in the US. These measures nearly drove the company to collapse before the erratic then-president reversed the measure.

But semiconductors only came to dominate the headlines in early 2021. A constellation of factors – notably Covid lockdowns warping consumer demand – sparked a chip shortage crisis, which pushed up inflation and caused shortages of goods from cars to mobile phones.

Now the spotlight is on semiconductors once more ahead of the Chinese Communist Party Congress, after President Joe Biden's Commerce Department unveiled on October 7 sweeping new measures curtailing US exports of semiconductor technology to China. This was part of Biden's response to President Xi Jinping's plans to wean China off US-designed chips and make it a world leader in the sector.

To look more closely at how semiconductors rose to the forefront of international economics and politics, FRANCE 24 spoke to Chris Miller, author of the recently published bestseller "Chip War" and associate professor of international history at Tufts University, visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and Eurasia Director at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

What are semiconductor chips and how did they become so central to the world economy and daily life?

Semiconductors are small pieces of silicon with millions and billions of tiny circuits carved into them. These circuits provide the computing power inside almost any device with an on-off switch: smartphones, computers, datacentres, automobiles and dishwashers.

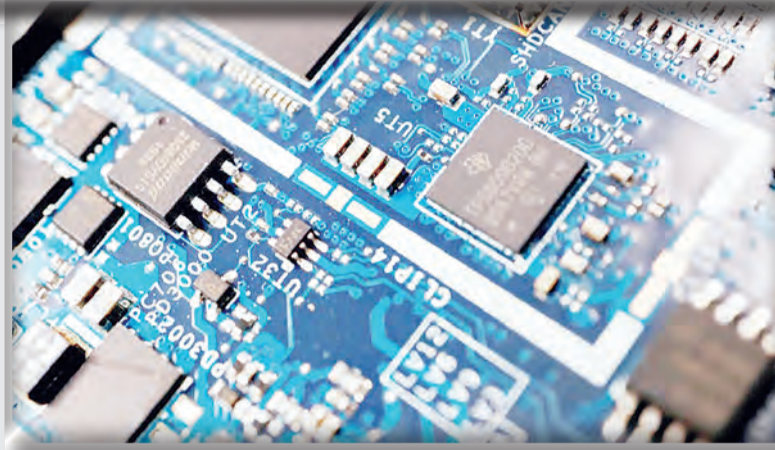
The typical person will interact with dozens if not hundreds of semiconductors each day, though we almost never see them.

How important was the US's advantage in semiconductors to its victory in the Cold War? The US advantage in computing was crucial. From the earliest days of the missile race, the Pentagon was fixated on applying computing power to defence systems. The first major application of chips was in missile guidance systems, but today they are used in everything from communications to sensors to electronic warfare.

Just as the typical person will interact with dozens of chips each day, militaries are crucially reliant on chips' processing power and signals processing capability. What's more, as militaries begin to experiment with increasingly autonomous systems, they'll be even more reliant on advanced chips.

How did Taiwan – specifically the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) – come to nearly dominate chip manufacturing? And what would happen to the world economy if TSMC's facilities in Taiwan are damaged in war?

TSMC is the world's most advanced maker of processor chips, thanks to its enormous scale and extraordinary manufacturing precision. Today, TSMC produces 90 percent of the most advanced processor chips, which go into everything from smartphones to PCs to datacentres.



If a war were to knock their production offline, the cost to the global economy would be measured in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

In Europe there's this perception that we are behind when it comes to high-tech industries, but Dutch company ASML is the big exception to this. How did it come to play an invaluable role in chip manufacturing?

ASML produces the machines without which advanced chips can't be made.

ASML's specialisation is in lithography, and it has 100 percent market share in the production of the most advanced lithography machines. It has honed these capabilities over many years and today is a critical supplier to companies like Samsung, TSMC and Intel.

For several years now, Washington has been worried about the national security implications of China catching up in the semiconductor business, especially in light of Xi Jinping's Made in China 2025 initiative making chips a top priority.

Do you think China has what it takes to match or supersede the US when it comes to semiconductors?

China has been investing many tens of billions of dollars into government chip-development programs. These programmes have delivered substantial progress in some spheres, notably chip design.

However, across the board, China remains far behind capabilities in the US, South Korea or Taiwan in terms of fabricating chips. In addition, all chip fabrication in China today relies on machine tools imported from abroad, largely from the US, the Netherlands and Japan.

Do you think President Joe Biden's plans to bring more chip production back to the US are a good idea, given the security implications of the overwhelming majority of manufacturing of advanced processor chips being based in Taiwan?

Today 90 percent of the world's most advanced processor chips are produced in Taiwan. Given China's growing military might and Xi Jinping's aggressive nationalism, this is a risk to the global economy that has grown too large.

Efforts to diversify the geography of advanced chipmaking are a smart move from this perspective. This explains why the US, Japan and Europe are all trying to bolster their countries' position in the semiconductor supply chain.

Islamic Republic the...

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Further expanding on unity, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that differences in religious schools of thought, i.e. Sunni or Shia, should not lead to strife or discord among people, noting that American and British politicians, who are anti-Islam and are neither good towards Shias nor towards Sunnis "have brought the 'Shia-Sunni' debates into their circles, and this matter is really dangerous."



Enemies of the Muslim nations always try to sow the seed of rift and hatred among the Muslims and this is what the Muslims should avoid if they want to witness progress and prosperity otherwise the enemies will succeed in spreading poverty and ignorance among the Muslim nations to loot their wealth.

Elsewhere in his address, Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to the Palestinian issue and normalization of ties between some Arab countries and the Israeli regime.

Enemies planted the "rotten seed of a cancerous cell in the region, namely the Zionist regime" to act as a base for Islam's enemies.

Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the leader said, "They needed to have a base in the region so as to be able to constantly engage in occupation and not allow the realization of lofty goals."

He also pointed to the ongoing efforts to press ahead with the infamous normalization deals, saying, "Now they are working to remove the title of the enemy from this detrimental body and grown cancerous cell so that it can sow more division among regional countries ... these normalizations are among the biggest betrayals that are being made against Islam and Muslims."

So the Muslim nations are recommended to use the Islamic Republic as their role model for progress and achievement and above all the power of their countries otherwise enemies will continue their dictation on them for looting them.

Iran Calls for...

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While in Russia, in an interview with Sputnik, the deputy oil minister announced negotiations with some Russian private companies to cooperate for the production of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in Iran in low volumes.

"We are also very interested in working in the field of LNG," he said, adding "We provide facilities, land, and cheap feed to investors in the LNG sector so that they can produce this product according to the conditions of the global market; this is a unique opportunity, and Iran declares its readiness to provide the necessary facilities to Russian investors in this field." The official also told Sputnik that the Islamic Republic is ready and able to deliver Russia's gas to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iraq, and other countries as part of the swap deal.

"Negotiations have taken place, the parties have exchanged agreements, there are only some problems related to the implementation, which will soon be resolved, and, I hope, we will be able to receive gas from Russia through the northern part of our country. Then this gas can be sent in swap supplies to other countries in the region, for example, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, and Iraq, and can also go to the south of Iran for export to the Persian Gulf countries that need gas, and to the east of the country, to countries such as Pakistan and others," Asadzadeh said.

According to Moscow, the swap supplies deal with Iran can cover five million tons of oil and up to 10 billion cubic meters of gas per year. Tehran expects that Moscow will reach an agreement with Turkmenistan to transit gas to Iran in swap supply, in which case the swap deliveries will start by the end of 2022, according to Asadzadeh. In July, Russian energy giant Gazprom and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed a memorandum of understanding on strategic cooperation worth \$40 billion. The accord suggested the possibility of interaction on the development of Iranian fields, the implementation of LNG projects, and the construction of gas pipelines.

Iran Slams Macron's...

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French officials warned on Tuesday that they would be forced to intervene if the country's energy sector workers did not immediately end their strike. Having previously threatened to use emergency powers to order essential workers back to the job on pain of fines or jail time, the government announced Wednesday it was putting them into action.

The industrial action to demand pay hikes has paralyzed six out of the seven fuel refineries in France, leading to shortages of petrol and diesel aggravated by panic-buying from drivers. Workers at a fuel depot at a refinery in northwest France, owned by US giant Esso-ExxonMobil, will be the first to be targeted, an energy ministry official told AFP. The strikes have added pressure on French President Emmanuel Macron whose government is already facing discontent among the public over inflation and higher cost of living.

Iran Not Land for...

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Furthermore, touching on some Western authorities' dual standards, Amirabdollahian asked, "What has the West done regarding hundreds of cases of intentional murder of women and children in Canada and the US, especially by the police? One cannot say that the most violent shapes of confrontation in face of rioters in Europe can be considered as a good and acceptable act; however the same act is considered as repression in Iran even when it is within a legal framework."

"Peaceful demands are different from riots, murders, arson, and terrorist operations," he pointed out.

On the same topic, the Iranian FM also questioned "Who would believe that the death of a girl is so important to Westerners? If so, what did they do to the hundreds of thousands of martyrs and dead in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Lebanon? They wanted to start a sectarian war in Iran."

At the International Conference on Islamic Unity, Amirabdollahian further elaborated, "In recent weeks, foreign parties have tried to intervene in our country by abusing an internal issue. This is while the president of our country called Mahsa Amini's father in the early hours after her death and consoled him and ordered an immediate investigation to clarify the issue."

He stressed that some of the peaceful demands have been met and will be answered, noting "but we are witnessing the introduction of firearms into some of the demonstrations, and these weapons have been imported from abroad; we do not have such weapons in Iran."

The Iranian FM said that for instance, in Zahedan, "there was no slogan or photo of Mahsa, and a known terrorist group tried to start a conflict between Shias and Sunnis, and they claimed responsibility for it. (The terrorist groups) did the same in part of Kurdistan, but the insight of Sunni scholars and people foiled their attempts."

Amirabdollahian gave a concrete example of the enemy's movements to create division between Shias and Sunnis during the years of the American occupation of Iraq.

"During the years of occupation of Iraq after 2003 by the US, strange and unprecedented events were observed to create division between Shias and Sunnis in Iraq."

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran also noted, "In Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon, etc., we have witnessed many cases of the enemy trying to create division among the Muslim nations," referring to the interventionist nature of some Western countries.

President...

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Raisi added, "In the path of realizing this reconstruction of cultural structures, it is not necessary to redo all the work, including in the field of research, because many research and pathological works have been done in many cultural centers, which should be taken into consideration and the same work should continue".

The President stated, "In this path, we have a huge system of cultural views of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution at our disposal, which we must use to draw the current situation and the desired situation and take advantage of the solutions to close the gap between these two".

Raisi stated, "It is very important to be able to eliminate inconsistencies and interferences and, although to a small extent, and sometimes reduce conflicts as much as possible".

The President stated that today and in the era of virtual space, new requirements must be carefully considered and taken into account, and pointed out, "The inclusion of new requirements in cultural reconstruction must happen with the participation of people, especially the young".

He added, "Progressing things in the field of culture cannot be done only with directives and instructions, and it requires persuasion and removal of possible doubts, because when people are persuaded in this field, the decisions will be institutionalized and their implementation will be guaranteed in some way".

Ayatollah Raisi emphasised the need for cultural decisions to have persuasive, media and cultural attachments and added, "Even when decisions are made in the cultural field, their implementation needs cultural attachments because these attachments will guarantee a deeper impact of these decisions".

Raisi stated, "Another necessity for success in the reconstruction of the cultural structure is to determine precise and clear ratios between official and unofficial institutions in the field of culture and education".

The President also emphasized the necessity of revising the existing laws in accordance with the evolution of the structures and added, "This importance, which was also emphasized by the Supreme Leader of the Revolution in the field of revising the laws, should be taken into consideration".

Ayatollah Raisi noted, "Development of media literacy and, more precisely, virtual literacy for all people and pillars of society is another necessity that should be taken into consideration".

The President said, "The Supreme Leader of the Revolution has always emphasised on the great capacity of women to play a social role. It is also necessary to become more active in radio and television, which has a great responsibility in this field".

He added that the organization of cultural interaction patterns is another important necessity in the field of realizing the transformation of the country's cultural structure and added, "Just as in the field of diplomacy we emphasize on expanding relations with friendly countries and standing against hostile countries, in the cultural field we must also interact with the cultures of other countries".

The President stated, "In the current storm in the field of cyber and cognitive warfare today, a country that relies on rich cultural foundations has no worries and is not harmed. If we rely on our rich cultural foundations, we will not be afraid of machine development and technological progress".

He noted, "The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution provided the necessary guidelines, and I, as a seminary student, tell you as the officials of different departments, that you are obliged to follow these guidelines with a sense of serious responsibility".

At the end of his speech, Ayatollah Raisi stated that periodic and regular reports on the extent of the revolutionary transformation of the country's cultural structures can keep this huge project up to date and map the future path more precisely.

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com
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Matsuyama Struggles to 71 In Soggy Defense of Title

INZAI (Dispatches) - Defending champion Hideki Matsuyama struggled to a one-over 71 in the first round of the US PGA Tour's Zozo Championship in Japan as Xander Schauffele carded a 67 to lie just three shots off the lead. Home favorite Matsuyama had thousands of fans behind him at a soggy Narashino Country Club outside Tokyo but he gave them little to cheer, finishing seven shots behind leader Brendan Steele who rattled in six back-nine birdies in his 64.

India Olympic Medallist To Stand Trial for Murder

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Two-time Indian Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar will stand trial for allegedly murdering a fellow wrestler during a stadium brawl last year, a lawyer said. Kumar and 17 others were charged by a Delhi court on Wednesday, more than a year after they were arrested over the death of 23-year-old junior grappler Sagar Dhankar following a long rivalry between two groups of wrestlers.

Murray Reaches Quarters of Gijon Open

MADRID (Dispatches) - Andy Murray battled to a three-set victory over Argentinian Pedro Cachin to reach the quarter-finals of the Gijon Open in Spain. As in his impressive first-round win against Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, Murray began slowly and this time had to fight back from a set down to clinch a 2-6 7-5 7-6 (7-3) triumph after two hours and 49 minutes. "I think I served well in the second and third sets but also I just fought very hard," said Murray, who hit 31 winners and committed 19 unforced errors. "In the first set I wasn't playing my best and Pedro was serving very well for the first set and a half and I was really struggling to break serve. "I changed a little bit the way I was returning and gave myself more opportunities to break and fought very hard to come back from a break down twice in the third set. "I haven't played against Pedro before, I haven't practised with him so I didn't know exactly how he was going to play, which makes things difficult. "I maybe didn't play quite as well as the first match but I fought hard and that's the most important thing." Murray failed to take his chances in the first set, seeing five break points go begging while Cachin, ranked 61, took two of his three opportunities. He tightened things up on serve in the second and levelled the match, breaking in the 12th game as Murray converted his first set point. It remained a battle through the decider and Murray was twice a break down after dropping serve in the first and fifth games before hitting straight back. Cachin survived some close moments to force a deciding tie-break, where Murray capitalised on his strong start to set up a last-eight clash with either American Sebastian Korda or veteran Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut.



The 35-year-old world No 46 is aiming to win his first tour-level title since he triumphed in Antwerp in 2019. Meanwhile world number one Iga Swiatek tamed China's Zheng Qinwen 6-4 4-6 6-1 to ease into the quarterfinals of the San Diego Open and close in on an eighth title this season. Swiatek, who nearly clinched an eighth trophy last week losing in the final of the Ostrava Open in the Czech Republic, brought her form back with her to the United States where she claimed the U.S. Open crown last month. It will be Swiatek's 12th quarterfinal of the year where she will take on the winner between American Coco Gauff and Canadian Bianca Andreescu. "Qinwen, she has a different game style because she's playing topspin on her forehand and the ball is flying pretty high," said Swiatek, whose seven titles include two grand slams the French and U.S. Opens. "So today I had to adjust to that. "But overall, the first matches of any tournament is about adjusting to the conditions we have here." Coming off a first round bye, Swiatek had the only break to take the opening set but then appeared to run out of energy and focus in the second allowing the 28th ranked Zheng back. With seven break chances in the second Swiatek had plenty of opportunities to bring the contest to a quick conclusion but it was big-hitting Zheng getting the timely break at 5-4 to take the second and level the match.



World Cup Attainable Goal for Dybala Despite Thigh Injury

MILAN (Dispatches) - Paulo Dybala still has a chance of going to the World Cup despite the Argentina forward picking up a thigh injury at the weekend, a source told AFP. Dybala was in tears after limping out of Roma's 2-1 Serie A win over Lecce on Sunday, when he injured his left thigh while taking the match's decisive penalty. Italian media reported that Dybala underwent scans on Wednesday and that the injury is expected to keep him out of action for at least a month. A source told AFP that the tournament, which starts on November 20, was an "attainable goal" for the 28-year-old, who has 34 caps for his country, scoring three times. Roma coach Jose Mourinho had said after the match that he wasn't expecting to have Dybala back until when Serie A restarts after the World Cup, in January. However a month-long absence would allow him to return to action for Roma's final game before football's elite decamp to Qatar, against Torino on November 13. Dybala has been an immediate hit at Roma, scoring seven times in 11 appearances in all competitions and setting up two more goals since arriving as a free agent in the summer.

Ex-Venezuela Football Chief Handed Five-Year Ban

CARACAS (Dispatches) - A former president of Venezuela's football federation (FVF) has been banned by Fifa for five years and fined more than US\$410,000 after being found guilty of financial corruption, world football's governing body said. Laureano Gonzalez, who led FVF between 2017 and 2020, was sanctioned by for misappropriation and misuse of the federation's and Fifa's funds, including through a "fictitious invoicing scheme". Gonzalez's offences were linked to his tenure on a Fifa-appointed management panel called the 'normalisation committee'. Four other members of the panel were also sanctioned. Carlos Teran, a current member of Fifa's disciplinary committee, received a two-year ban and a 10,000 Swiss francs fine for approving and accepting "undue pecuniary advantages in the form of additional monthly payments". Bernardo Anor Guillamon, Luis Eduardo Fernandez and Gilberto Velazco Ramirez were found guilty of taking monthly payments and conflicts of interest, among other charges. One-year bans for the three members were each suspended for two-year probation periods. They were also fined 10,000 Swiss francs each.

Benzema to Win If Ballon d'Or Is Not Cancelled



inception in 1956 because of the coronavirus pandemic. Lewandowski was instead given a "Striker of the Year" award at the 2021 ceremony, where Paris Saint-Germain forward Lionel Messi won his seventh Ballon d'Or.

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Robert Lewandowski hasn't forgotten the 2020 Ballon d'Or ceremony that wasn't, joking that Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema will win this year's award unless it is cancelled again. The Poland forward was the frontrunner to win the prestigious individual prize for the world's best player in 2020 but the ceremony was cancelled for the first time since its

"(Benzema) is probably one of the favourites to win the Ballon d'Or," Lewandowski told Movistar. "If they don't cancel it then he's probably going to win this Ballon d'Or." Benzema is expected to win the prize, given out by France Football magazine, at the ceremony on Monday in Paris, after helping his team win the Champions League and La Liga last season. Bayern Munich won the Bundesliga and Champions League double in the 2019-20 season, with Lewandowski netting 15 goals in Europe on the way to victory over PSG in the final. "I wanted to say to Robert that it was an honour to go up against him," said Messi at the 2021 ceremony. "He deserved to win it last year."

La Liga Win Injunction to Freeze 50m Euros of beIN Assets

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Spain's top football division, La Liga, has taken out a court injunction against the beIN Media Group to freeze 50 million euros (\$48.5 million) of their assets after non-payment for television rights. The dispute is widely seen as the latest salvo in a feud between La Liga's outspoken president Javier Tebas and beIN Group Chairman Nasser Al-Khelaifi, who is also the president of Qatari-owned Paris Saint-Germain. The two men have been at loggerheads on a range of issues over the past few years. A Spanish court placed a temporary hold on the 50 million euros pending a full hearing on the case, according to court documents issued on Monday that AFP has seen. A La Liga spokesperson confirmed the Spanish league had sought legal remedies "to guarantee the payment of the amounts owed from the contracts for international TV rights following non-payment by beIN." The media group broadcasts La Liga football across three continents and in 35 countries, including France, Hong Kong and New Zealand, paying La Liga an estimated 1.5 billion euros over the past five years. "beIN is one of the leading media groups in world sport and entertainment. Our reputation is founded on decades of significant investment, best-in-class broadcasting, long-term and trusted relationships with rights-holders, and a track record of payment," a beIN Media Group spokesperson told AFP. "We will not discuss publicly the private discussions we've been having with La Liga, or any rights-holder for that matter, regarding specific contracts. That is not how business should be conducted, certainly not by professional and dignified institutions. "If we ran our operations reacting to certain executives' comments on others within the sports industry, we wouldn't be in business."



Neymar Faces Five-Year Jail-Term Request

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Brazil forward Neymar will stand trial this week on fraud and corruption charges over his transfer to Barcelona from Santos in 2013 and the complainant, Brazilian investment firm DIS, said it was demanding a five-year jail term. Along with Neymar, the defendants in the trial being brought by Spanish prosecutors, which begins in Barcelona on Monday, are his parents, the two clubs, former Barca presidents Josep Maria Bartomeu and Sandro Rosell, and former Santos president Odilio Rodrigues. The case stems from a complaint by DIS, a Brazilian company that owned 40 per cent of the rights to Neymar when he was at Santos. It argues it lost out on its rightful cut from the transfer because the true value of the deal was understated. Neymar has denied the allegations but lost an appeal in Spain's High Court in 2017, which paved the way for the trial. Reuters has contacted representatives for Neymar and his parents for comment. Rosell has also previously denied any wrongdoing. His representatives did not respond to a request for comment. Barcelona and lawyers representing Bartomeu declined to comment on the case. Santos did not immediately respond to a request for comment and Rodrigues could not be immediately reached. DIS is also requesting jail terms for Rosell and Bartomeu, and a €149 million (RM660.6million) fine. Spanish prosecutors want a two-year prison term for Neymar and the payment of a €10 million fine and a five-year jail term for Rosell plus an €8.4 million fine for the Spanish club. DIS acquired 40 per cent of Neymar's rights when he was aged 17 in exchange for €2 million. It argues that the player's sale to Barcelona was well below his real market value.



Ginobili's Spurs Jersey Sent Into Space

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Manu Ginobili's play on the basketball court was often out of this world and the Argentine great's San Antonio Spurs jersey was just that as the NBA had it sent into space with a zero-pressure balloon. In recognition of Ginobili's induction into the Basketball Hall of Fame, an autographed, black No. 20 Ginobili jersey took off from Burgos, Spain, and reached more than 30 kilometres (18.64 miles) in height where it remained for about four hours. The voyage was done with the support of B2Space, a firm that specializes in near space testing, and footage of the tribute was used as social media content for NBA Latin America channels.