

On the Occasion of Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Asked How Countries Like Germany Give Themselves the Right to Claim And Defend Human Rights

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Stayed Unchanged At **144,633** With Another **Zero** Death Day Over the Past 24 Hours

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Tehran Underlines Syria's Right to Self-Defense Against Israel

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran lays emphasis on Syria's "legitimate right" to self-defense in the face of the Israeli regime's ongoing intermittent attacks against the Arab country's soil.

Amir-Saeed Iravani, the Islamic Republic's permanent ambassador to the United Nations, made the remarks on Tuesday, addressing a meeting of the world body's Security Council.

"Security and stability in northern Syria will only come about through complete preservation of and respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

"Whatever military operation against northern Syria could [either] pose a challenge to or even worsen the humanitarian situation [there]," noted the envoy.

Syria and the Israeli regime are technically at war due to the latter's 1967-to-present occupation of the Arab country's Golan Heights. Israel maintains a significant military presence in the territory, which it uses as one of its launching pads for attacks against the Syrian territory. [See Page 7](#)

Iraq Pays Off 1.6b Euros of Its Arrears to Iran



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Oil Minister Javad Owji said that Iran has received about €1.6 billion of Iraq's arrears related to its gas export.

Speaking among reporters on the sidelines of the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Owji stated that his ministry received about €1 billion of Iraq's debt to Iran for gas import last year in 1400 (ended March 20, 2022).

Iran has also received about €1.6 billion of Iraq's arrears for its gas export to this country in the current year in 1401 (to end March 20, 2023), the oil minister added.

The Oil Ministry in the 13th government under President Raisi has so far used all its potential and capabilities in materializing most objectives of this industry, he emphasized.

In addition, the Oil Ministry in the 13th government has taken giant strides with strong energy diplomacy and managed to conclude oil sales contracts with many countries of the world including the Latin American states, the minister noted.

Turning to the export of gas to neighboring Iraq, the oil minister stressed that Iran's gas export volume to Iraq has increased by 1.5 billion cubic meters more in the current year as compared to the last year in 2021.

Meanwhile Oil Ministry opened a first independent office in Iraq amid plans between the two neighboring countries to boost their bilateral energy cooperation.

Oil Ministry's special envoy to Iraq Seyyed Abbas Beheshti said on Tuesday that the mission will help facilitate the implementation of joint energy projects between Iran and Iraq.

"This office was opened in the city of Baghdad for the purpose of promoting cooperation and synergy, especially in the implementation of joint oil, gas and energy projects between the two brotherly countries," said Beheshti.

He said that two other Iranian Oil Ministry missions will open in oil-rich regions of Basra in the south and in the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq.

The announcement came on the day Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani paid a first official visit to Tehran to hold high-level talks with senior Iranian government officials.

President Ebrahim Raisi said after a meeting with Sudani on Tuesday that the two countries will expand their energy cooperation in the near future.

Iran is a major supplier of natural gas to Iraqi power plants while it also provides electricity to the Arab country to help it meet its growing demand for power.

Iraq has secured waivers from US sanctions on Iran to be able to import energy from its eastern neighbor.

Iran Signs \$4b Services Deal With Iraq

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has concluded a \$4 billion contract in the field of exporting technical and engineering services with Iraq, board director of the Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters' Association (OPEX) has said.

The contract is on course to offset part of the shortfall which has arisen in Iran's exports to Iraq in the field of technical and engineering services, futures, production and medical treatment over the past year.

"In the eight months of this year [beginning on March 20], exports to Iraq, except for electricity, totaled \$4.7 billion, down by \$1.4 billion compared to the same period last year," Hamid Hosseini said.

The official touched on shocks to the Iraqi market and uncertainty over the formation of government in the Arab country last year, saying he expected Iraqi imports to increase in the next four months.

It is expected that Iran exports to Iraq will reach \$8-9 billion, Hosseini said.

Iraq's new Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani paid a day-long visit to Iran on Tuesday and was received by President Ebrahim Raisi who expressed hopes of bolstering ties. [See Page 7](#)

President Emphasizes Importance of Healthy Administrative System

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Emphasizing the importance of protecting the health of the administrative system, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi considered continuous monitoring of the functioning of the devices, unannounced visit in the offices and direct communication with the client as among the solutions to ensure the administrative health that will lead to public satisfaction.

Speaking in the meeting of the cabinet on Wednesday, Raisi described the protection of the health of the administrative system as one of the important duties of managers, and emphasized, "Resisting against wrong demands" and "Monitoring the behavior of human resources in order to protect the health of the administrative system" are necessary for the government officials and they should have the spirit of standing up against unfair demands and not allow corruption or violations to take place in the group under their command".

The President considered the continuous monitoring of the functioning of the devices and unannounced visit in the offices and direct communication with the client as among the solutions to ensure the administrative health that will lead to public satisfaction. [See Page 7](#)

12m Tons of Russian Goods to Transit Via Iran to India

TEHRAN (MNA) – Following India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Moscow in November, Russia and Iran have agreed to allow the passage of 12 million tons of Russian goods via Tehran.

The goods will be transported through the International North-South Transportation Corridor. The decision has come as a result of the efforts of Russia and India to increase goods trade and boost economic partnership, especially amid the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, Asian News International reported on Tuesday.

An agreement was reportedly signed by Iran's Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister for Transportation Affairs Shahriar Afandizadeh and Russia's Deputy Minister of Transportation Dmitry Zverev.

After the agreement was signed, the first freight train arrived at Iran's Sarakhs in Khorasan Razavi Province near the border of Turkmenistan and this marked the official launch of the eastern section of INSTC. [See Page 7](#)

No Evidence That Iran Wants to Develop Nuclear Weapons

TEHRAN (MNA) – There is no evidence that Iran intends to develop nuclear weapons, reviewing its participation in the NPT, Vladimir Yermakov, director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Department said.

"Iran has been and remains a conscientious participant in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The conclusion of the JCPOA in 2015 helped to finally and irrevocably remove all the questions that the [International Atomic Energy Agency] had to Tehran at that time," he told Sputnik.

"After that, for several years Iran remained the most verified state among agency members. No deviations from its obligations were identified," Yermakov said. "There is no evidence that would indicate Tehran's intention to ever reconsider its participation in the NPT and start developing a nuclear explosive device."

Although the International Atomic Energy Agency has shown in numerous reports that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful, the American and Zionist leaders claim that Iran's nuclear program is moving towards the production of nuclear weapons.

Tehran stresses that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes and there is a Fatwa by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran which bans any possession and use of weapons of mass destruction.

Israel Desperately Urges Allies to Help Stop Palestine's ICJ Bid at UN

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israel has turned to its global allies in desperation, urging them to help stop a Palestinian bid at the United Nations for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the Tel Aviv regime's occupation of Palestinian territories.

In a letter on Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister, Yair Lapid, urged 50 heads of state, including those of the UK and France, to pressure the Palestinian Authority and prevent it from promoting a relevant resolution passed at the General Assembly in November, according to a report by Reuters.

The resolution, approved by a UN committee, asks the ICJ to "urgently" weigh in on Israel's "prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of the Palestinian territory," which it said were violating the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

In his letter, Lapid voiced concerns that the resolution could "discredit" the regime's "security concerns" and "delegitimize" its "very existence."

He added that the disputed territory status should be subject to direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine, and that bringing the matter before the ICJ "will only play into the hands of extremists."

Meanwhile, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said Lapid's struggles were "doomed to fail."

Nabil Abu Rudeineh added, "We are confident world leaders who always stood by our just cause will not retreat from their positions."

In a similar development on Monday, 198 Palestinian and international organizations called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate increasing Israeli crimes against Palestinians.

Moreover, the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates urged the UN to adopt measures to protect the population of the occupied territories from the increase of Israeli attacks. [See Page 7](#)

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Zionist Regime Hated by Nations

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani in a Twitter message on Wednesday stressed that the Zionist regime is hated by the world nations.

Normalization with certain Arab governments has never removed the hatred of the Arab nations towards the Zionist regime, Kanaani wrote on his Twitter account.

The 2022 World Cup in Qatar has become an exhibition of public opinion's disgust for the apartheid Zionist regime and the announcement of solidarity of nations with the cause of Palestine, he added. The occupying regime of Israel is hated by the nations, he noted.

Leader Urges Iraq to Exercise Greater Sovereignty On Kurdish Region

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says anything that may disrupt Iran's security will inevitably impinge on Iraq as well, calling on the Baghdad government to exercise greater sovereignty over areas in the country's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani and his accompanying delegation in the Iranian capital city of Tehran on Tuesday evening.

The Leader then pointed to earlier statements by senior Iraqi officials that the Baghdad government will not allow the Arab country's soil to be used as a staging ground to launch attacks on neighboring states in accordance with the Iraqi constitution.

"Unfortunately, this menace is cropping up in some areas of Iraq. The only solution is for the central Iraqi government to exercise greater sovereignty over those areas," he said.

The Leader noted that Iran believes that the security of neighboring Iraq is equivalent to the Islamic Republic's own security, emphasizing that Tehran will confront any party intending to disrupt the security of the Arab nation.

Ayatollah Khamenei also congratulated Sudani on his election, and wished him success in elevating Iraq's standing to a level worthy of the Arab country's civilization and history.

He stated that Iraq's progress and its higher position at the global stage is in the best interests of Iran.

Ayatollah Khamenei described Iraq as the best Arab country in the West Asia region in terms of natural and human resources as well as cultural, historical and civilization background.

"In spite of such a background, Iraq has not yet been able to attain its high and true position," he said, stressing the need for cohesion and unity among various Iraqi



political groups plus maximum utilization of the young Iraqi generation in order to achieve the desirable goal.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Iraq's development would of course draw the fury of certain parties who may not want to exhibit it openly, calling on Baghdad to rely on the Iraqi nation in the face of enemies' plots.

The Leader also underlined the necessity of implementing the agreements signed between the two countries, particularly those in the field of trade cooperation, transit of commodities and railroad transport.

Sudani, for his part, hailed the strategic and historical relations between Iran and Iraq, pointing to the joint campaign against the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group as a prominent example of such a fact.

He also paid tribute to Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), referring to the two fallen anti-terror commanders as another illustration of amity between the Iraqi and Iranian nations.

Sudani stressed the new Iraqi administration is determined to bring into force the agreements already signed between Tehran and Baghdad, and further expand bilateral relations, especially in the field of trade transactions.

"The security of Iraq and that of Iran are interconnected. Under the [Iraqi] constitution, we will not allow any party to use the Iraqi soil as a ground for undermining the security of others," the Iraqi prime minister said.

Iran's TMU, Russia's SPBU Ink MoU On Academic Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Tarbiat Modares University (TMU) inked a Memorandum of Understanding with Russia's Saint Petersburg State University (SPBU) on academic cooperation.

In order to transfer both educational and research experiences at the international level, the two universities of Tarbiat Modares and Saint Petersburg signed a 5-year MoU.

The MoU was concluded with the efforts of the director of international scientific relations of the Tarbiat Modares University.

St Petersburg University keeps its position in the 301-400 group in the Shanghai ranking of the world's top universities.

Iran-Iraq Cooperation to Boost Trade And Regional Security

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker said Iran and Iraq, two very major and unique regional countries, and their cooperation can in addition to boosting trade, lead to improvement of regional security as well.

Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf in a meeting with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Shia' Sabbar al-Sudani and his accompanying delegation congratulating his appointment at that post, hoped that the new Iraqi government and its head's visit to Iran will lead to broadening bilateral ties.

The parliament speaker said that the Iranian nation and government wish to support a strong and advanced Iraq, which will be a pride for Iran, adding, "Iran and Iraq are two neighboring countries with deep religious, economic and cultural commonalities, and such meetings bring closer the Iranian and Iraqi nation."

Qalibaf said that beyond doubt Iran and Iraq can among the Arabic and Islamic countries be the best model for broad and deep cooperation, but of course, the Zionist regime and the United States are both opposed to such broad bilateral cooperation.

Shia' Sabbar al-Sudani, the new Iraqi prime minister, too, in the meeting appreciated Qalibaf for his war congratulation on his appointment, saying, "I and my accompanying delegation were both wishing to have a meeting with your good self."

He said that their visit which is on an invitation by the Iranian president, is a great opportunity, as Tehran and Baghdad have very deep and strong relations with historical roots, and it is our duty to further expand those relations and open new horizons for them.

Iran Mulling Ways to Render Consular Services to Nationals Residing in Canada

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of the Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Iranian Expatriates' Affairs said on Tuesday that the secretariat is considering all the possible ways for rendering widespread consular services to Iranian nationals living in Canada.

Reza Ameri made the remarks in reference to the restrictions imposed by the Canadian government for Iranian nationals in the country for having access to direct consular services.

Noting that most of the Iranians living in Canada are highly educated people, Ameri said that some of them have offered ways to get out of this deadlock which are being under study.

He rejected any rumor about Iran limiting the entry of nationals living abroad, including those residing in Canada, noting that more Iranians are visiting Iranian missions abroad for receiving consular services this year when compared to the preceding year.

Security Situation in Iran's West Border Cities Calm

TEHRAN (IFP) - Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi says the security situation in Iran's western border cities is calm, following a wave of deadly riots and unrest there.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Vahidi warned, however, that despite the calm prevailing in the cities bordering Iraq, terrorist and separatist groups on the other side of the borders seek to incite turmoil in those regions, urging officials to stay on alert.

The security concerns, he added, was raised during talks with new Iraqi Prime Minister Shia al-Sudani, who visited the Iranian capital on Tuesday.

Vahidi also said a fact-finding committee has been formed to investigate the scale of damage caused and the losses of innocent lives during the recent protests and deadly riots.

The interior minister also said many of those arrested were from different foreign countries.

Several Iranian cities, especially those in border regions, have witnessed a series of terror activities amid on-and-off protests and deadly riots in the country.

The unrest and ugly riots erupted in mid-September as many were protesting the death of an Iranian woman in police custody.

Excellent Tehran-Baghdad Ties Manifest Common Strategic View



TEHRAN (MNA) - In a meeting with the Iraqi Prime Minister, the Iranian Foreign Minister said that excellent relations between Tehran and Baghdad show a common strategic view between the two countries.

"Today, I met with Mr. Al-Sudani, the honorable Prime Minister of Iraq, in Tehran. We respect him as a representative of the great Iraqi government and nation," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian wrote in a tweet after his meeting with Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani on Wednesday.

"Iran emphasizes deepening relations with Iraq and welcomes the country's constructive role in regional equations," the Iranian top diplomat said.

These excellent relations show a common strategic view between the two countries, he added. Heading a high-ranking delegation, the Prime Minister of Iraq traveled to Tehran on Tuesday morning.

During his trip, he met with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian president, the parliament speaker, and the first vice president.

Tehran Ready to Offer Initiatives to Ease Tensions Between Turkey and Syria

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says the Islamic Republic understands Turkey's security concerns along the Syrian border, noting that Tehran is ready to use its capacities to help solve the differences between the two neighboring countries.

"We understand Turkey's security concerns and stress the need to address them. The key to the problem, however, requires continuation of security talks between the two countries and not ground military operations. These steps will not help resolution of existing problems; but would cause losses and complicate the situation," Amirabdollahian said in a telephone conversation with his Turkish counterpart, Mevlut Cavusoglu, on Tuesday evening.

The Iranian foreign minister went on to note that Iran is prepared to help facilitate the political solution of lingering issues between Ankara and Damascus.

Cavusoglu, for his part, briefed the top Iranian diplomat on his country's positions on the situation in Syria, and appreciated the constructive role of Iran and said that such consultations must continue.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



Turkish presidential spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, said Tuesday.

He added that Ankara coordinated its actions with Moscow during the air operation in the region.

"These issues are being discussed regarding our plans for air force operations. How did we enter the airspace in Tell Rifaat? We discussed this (with Russia), coordinated our actions. We plan, discuss, coordinate, act," Kalin said.

The spokesman also stressed that his country continues to maintain dialogue with Damascus.

Ankara has blamed the November 13 bomb attack at a bustling avenue in the heart of Istanbul on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militant group and its Syrian affiliate of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militant group, which is the backbone of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Kurdish forces have denied involvement.

Iran Seeking to Increase Activity in Key Northern Port

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian authorities are planning to increase activity in a major northern port on the Caspian Sea coast amid efforts to boost trade ties with Russia through the INSTC, an international corridor that passes through Iran.

The Amirabad Port, located to the east of the Caspian Sea in Iran's province of Mazandaran, is currently working with only 30% of its operating capacity.

The report indicated that plans are in place to expand the infrastructure in Amirabad to enable the port to process some 10 million metric tons (mt) of cargo per year.

The port's current capacity is around 7.5 million mt of which nearly 2 million mt is being operated mainly because of foreign sanctions on Iran and also the lack of modern equipment and facilities in the port.

In a recent visit to the port, Iranian president's deputy for economic affairs Mohsen Rezaei said the government will execute projects in Amirabad to improve the use of technology in the area.

Rezaei said administrative formalities of transport through Amirabad will also simplify to help boost cargo traffic from Russia and other countries via Iran.

Iran has seen an increase in cargo transit through its territory following a war in Ukraine which led to Western sanctions on Russia and caused Moscow to ship increased volumes of goods to Asian countries.

AUCTION
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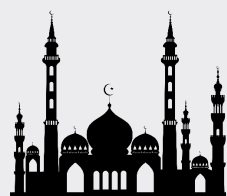
SIRJAN JAHAN STEEL COMPLEX intends to sell 15,000 tons of steel billet through a tender in accordance with the terms and conditions attached herewith. Should you wish to make a proposal, please submit your price offer by taking into account the relevant terms and conditions set out below and have all of the required documents attached thereto. Please be advised that any bid submitted after the specified date will not be considered and the decision in respect of the bid, which is exclusively reserved for SIRJAN JAHAN STEEL COMPLEX, will be announced in writing.

Deadline for sending envelopes is 12:00 on Tuesday (06/12/2022) local time in Iran

The opening time of the envelope is 13:00 on Tuesday (06/12/2022) local time in Iran

The opening of the auction envelope is done once and does not include extension of time and announcement of new price.

Sirjan Jahan Steel Complex



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:53
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:27
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:56

50. He said: "Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance."

51. (Pharaoh) said: "What then is the condition of previous generations?"

Surah 20. Ta-ha (50 - 51)

25% Rise in Iran-Afghanistan Trade Exchange

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Mashhad Office of Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce says the trade exchange between Iran and Afghanistan has increased by 25% and admitted that Afghan Government does not give concession easily.

Speaking to ILNA, Mr. Hadi Nabizadeh said that the trade between Iran and Afghanistan was facing downward trend in the first quarter of the year, adding that the trade got momentum from August and is getting better and since August, the bilateral trade with Afghanistan has grown by 25 to 30 percent but it has not repeated the last year's volume yet.

He went on to say that the trade between Iran and Afghanistan declined about 30% two years ago and the decline continued last year and fell to 35% but since the beginning of this year, the trade has witnessed 20 to 25% growth because the rise in the dollar rate for exports made the trade justifiable.

Nabizadeh then pointed to the reasons behind the decline in the trade between Iran and Afghanistan and stated that problems in the fields of border transportation and transfer of money are the major reasons behind this decline. He added that transfer of dollar is done via the forex shops or middlemen because the transfer of dollar in Afghanistan is not allowed.

He reiterated that the current Afghan government has made real the export tariffs, stipulating that unfortunately Iran's government has not talked with Taliban for



adjusting the trade tariffs while Pakistan government has talked and almost zeroed Afghanistan's export tariffs but Iran has not reached such an agreement with the Taliban. Nabizadeh also pointed to the costs of transportation which has increased after restriction over the arrival of Afghanistan trucks in Iran.

He added that Iran government sometimes gives considerable advantages to its Afghan counterpart but the Afghan government does not give advantages to Iran easily, adding that Turkey and its traders have long term plans in Afghanistan and for this reason Turkey has obtained major part of Afghanistan's market.

He reiterated that exploitation from some Afghan mines has been handed over to Iran and if it happens, it will help a great deal to the trade growth between the two states.

Nabizadeh noted that Iran's national currency rial is a currency which has been used for trade between Iran and Afghanistan for years, adding that trade in dollar increases the value of exporting goods by 10 to 15% and if the trade between the two states continues in rial, Iran's government can zero the chance of money laundering through its security system.

He concluded that industrial products, ironware and plant production are of the major exports of Iran to Afghanistan and in return it can import dried fruits sesame seed but due to the quarantine restrictions, Iran hardly import agro products from Afghanistan.

Energy Minister in Turkmenistan For Interaction, Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) – Energy Minister arrived in the Turkmen capital on Wednesday to hold talks on resumption of energy cooperation.

Upon arrival in Ashgabat International Airport, Ali-Akbar Mehrabian was welcomed by Turkmen officials.

During his visit, Mehrabian is to meet with Turkmen President Serdar Berdimukhamedov and other senior officials in that country.

Resumption of cooperation in exchange of energy, transit of electricity and provision of an agreement between Iran, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan on Hari River are among the issues which will be discussed during the Ashgabat visit.

Aluminum Ingot Output Up 21%

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

The IMIDRO's data put the production of aluminum ingot at 367,274 tons in the seven-month period of this year, while the figure was 303,829 tons in the same time span of the previous year.

Among the country's four major producers, South Aluminum Corporation (SALCO) had the best performance in the first seven months of the present year, producing 157,311 tons of aluminum ingots, followed by Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) producing 102,441 tons, Almahdi Aluminum Company producing 86,330 tons, and Iran Alumina Company producing 21,192 tons of the product.

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

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

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

South Aluminum Corporation (SALCO) produced 173,594 tons, production by Almahdi Aluminum Company stood at 150,738 tons, and Iran Alumina Company produced 37,243 tons of aluminum ingots in the Iranian calendar year 1400, the IMIDRO's data indicated.

Annual production of aluminum ingot in the country had been planned to increase by 63 percent in the past year.

Over 3m Lost Jobs or Left Iranian Labor Market in One Year

TEHRAN (IFP) - Figures show more than three million people in Iran have either lost their employment or left the labor market in the country over the past year.

According to the statistics reported by Eghtesad News, the total working population was 23,404,000 people in the summer of last year, but not all of those individuals remain employed this summer and their employment status appeared to have changed.

The data shows 2.9 percent of the working people, equaling 678,000 people, became unemployed this summer, while 2.6 million people who had a job in the summer of last year have left the job market and are no longer applying for any employment.

The Iranian economy has been suffering from a crisis attributed to the US sanctions on Iran and mismanagement.

The crisis has been complicated by other factors such as the Covid-19 outbreak, which has entailed smart social distancing plans, having taken a heavy toll on the job market.

To offset the impact of the sanctions, the administration of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has adopted a 'look-to-the-East' policy over the past year, making great achievements in improving economic ties with regional and neighboring states.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has, in its latest report, introduced Iran as the 21st largest economic power in the world.

No Ease on Home Appliances Imports

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's finance ministry (MEAF) has denied it has eased a ban enacted in 2018 on imports of home appliance into the country.

The ministry issued a statement on Tuesday saying that it had registered no new orders for imports of home appliances into Iran as claimed by a local newspaper.

The statement said, though, that people living in border regions of Iran are allowed to import limited shipments of home appliances to help their local economies.

The waiver still excludes home appliances manufactured in South Korea, it added.

Iran imposed a ban on imports of home appliances in 2018 after a boom in local manufacturing led officials to introduce measures to support domestic brands.

The ban was later tightened to block any imports of home appliances from South Korea, a country where Iranian funds had been blocked because of American sanctions.

MEAF's Tuesday statement came in response to a report in the local daily Ta'adöl which claimed that the government had eased the ban on home appliance imports to allow certain Japanese brands to resume activity in the Iranian market.

The statement said authorities will investigate any claims about illegal imports of home appliances into Iran.

Banking Obstacles in Way of Iran-Iraq Trade Must Be Removed

TEHRAN (IRNA) - First Vice-President Mohammad Mokhber has said that the banking obstacles in the way of Iran-Iraq trade, especially in the energy field need to be removed.

Mohammad Mokhber in his Tuesday evening meeting with Iraq Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Sabbar al-Sudani expressed delight and congratulated the establishment of the new Iraqi government, saying, "Contributing to the strengthening of the Iraqi government and advancement of Iraq is among Iran's strategic objectives, also emphasized by the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The official said that the Tehran-Baghdad relations are intimate and strong, adding, "To further expand and ensure the sustainability of our bilateral ties more than ever before, we need to boost our bilateral trade and increase our bilateral cooperation in various fields."

Mokhber said that the security of Iran and Iraq are inseparable from each other, arguing that close supervision over joint borders is both important and necessary, and Iran expects the Iraqi government not to let security threats pose trouble for Iran's national security.

"Iran has achieved broad progress and has capabilities in miscellaneous fields, including knowledge-based activities, and if the ground is paved for the activities of the Iranian merchants and knowledge-based companies in Iraq, they can be of effective assistance in answering the Iraqi nation's needs," he added.

Mokhber also emphasized that the judiciary process for the punishment of the criminals in the case of Major General Qassem Soleimani needs to be expedited by the Iraqi government, and appreciated the Iraqi government and people for their hosting of the Iranian pilgrims of Imam Hussain during the Arabain mourning rituals.

The Iraqi prime minister, too, in the meeting that his visit to Tehran is aimed at further strengthening the two countries' important and strategic relations, expressing hope that the meetings and negotiations during this visit will lead to materializing the perspective of bilateral cooperation and implementation of the reached agreements.

Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Sabbar al-Sudani said that the two countries cooperation in energy, industrial, and agricultural fields needs to be strengthened among a number of other fields, asking for the establishment of joint border industrial townships and using Iran's experience in the industrial field.

He said he agreed with Vice President Mokhber on the point that the two countries security is an insuperable issue, emphasizing that more high-level meetings and harmonizing in the field are needed to resolve the security problems.

"The Iraqi government's serious concern is the preservation of the security of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and not letting any threat be posed against Iran by some parties," added al-Sudani.

He ensured the Iranian vice president that the Iraqi people will never forget the martyrdom of Haj Qassem Soleimani and Martyr Abu Mahdi, which was a move against both nations, stressing that the judiciary procedure about their martyrdom is seriously pursued.

Referring to the agreements reached on Tuesday's meetings, he said, "In those meetings it was agreed that the sessions of the Joint Cooperation Commission will soon be resumed, and I hope that commission will be upgraded to the Supreme Bilateral Cooperation Commission, to include the entire issues of mutual interest."

IMIDRO's Annual Exports Top \$13b

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) managed to export \$13.3 billion worth of products in the previous Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), according to the head of the organization.

Speaking at the signing ceremony of a memorandum of understanding between IMIDRO and Armed Forces Geographical Organization on Tuesday, IMIDRO Head Vajihollah Jafari said: "Since its establishment, this organization has invested more than 23 billion dollars in mining and mineral industries, which has led to the creation and development of various mining units and industries."

As recently reported, the subsidiaries of the IMIDRO are currently conducting mining development projects worth over \$2 billion across the country.

According to IMIDRO, the organization is implementing and completing 25 major development projects across the country which will create job opportunities for 5,500 people when completed.

Equipping mines and establishing lead and zinc factories, developing steel production units, building a gold processing plant, and a number of development projects by the National Iranian Copper Industry Company (NICICO) are among the key projects which are going to go operational by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2023), according to IMIDRO.

Back in July, IMIDRO head had said his organization was going to complete 12 semi-finished mining industry projects by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

Jafari noted that the mentioned projects were in various fields including copper, steel, lead, zinc, ferrochrome, coal, hydrated lime, and phosphate.

Tehran Hosting Int'l Metallurgy Expo

TEHRAN (MNA) - Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds is hosting the 19th edition of Iran's international exhibition of metallurgy, dubbed IRAN METAFO, during November 30-December 3, IRIB reported.

As reported, over 500 domestic companies along with 50 foreign exhibitors active in the fields of metallurgy, steel, mining industries, non-ferrous metals, casting, industrial furnaces, heat treatment and related industries, are presenting their latest products and achievements in this exhibition.

The main focus of the exhibition is on the minerals and mining industry, iron and steel technology and products, casting, molding, forging, and machine works, non-ferrous metals (aluminum, copper, zinc, lead, and precious metals), and industrial ceramics as well as furnaces and measurement systems.

Ecuador's Ex-VP Freed From Jail After Graft Sentence

QUITO (Dispatches) - Ecuador's former vice president Jorge Glas has been released from prison after serving time for corruption in a vast scandal involving the Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht.

Glas was jailed in 2017 for receiving millions of dollars in kickbacks from Odebrecht in a graft scandal that has seen several former Latin American presidents implicated or dragged into court.

Glas, 53, left the Pichincha N°2 prison in the north of the capital Quito after a judge issued an injunction in his favor, said prison administration body SNAI. The judge's decision comes after a court earlier this month annulled a separate conviction in which Glas was sentenced in 2021 to eight years for misuse of public funds.



Pakistan FM Meets Afghan Taliban Amid Border

KABUL (Dispatches) - Pakistan's minister of state for foreign affairs met Afghanistan's acting foreign minister in Kabul, the latest international minister to visit the country whose Taliban rulers are not formally recognized by foreign governments.

The visit comes at a time of heightened security concerns in areas bordering Afghanistan after the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) said on Monday it would no longer abide by a months-long ceasefire with the Pakistani government. The Afghan Taliban have been facilitating peace talks between local militants and Pakistan authorities since late last year.



India Asked by Russia for Parts for Key Sectors



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Moscow has sent India a list of more than 500 products for potential delivery including parts for cars, aircraft and trains, four sources familiar with the matter said, as sanctions squeeze Russia's ability to keep vital industries running.

The list, a version of which has been seen by Reuters in New Delhi, is provisional and it is unclear how many of the items will eventually be exported and in what quantity, but an Indian government source said the request was unusual in its scope.

India is keen to boost trade in this way, said the source, as it tries to narrow a ballooning trade deficit with Russia. Some companies have expressed concern, however, about potentially falling foul of Western sanctions.

An industry source in Moscow, who declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue, said Russia's Ministry of Industry and Trade asked large companies to supply lists of raw materials and equipment they needed.

The source added that further discussion would be needed to agree specifications and volumes and that the outreach was not limited to India.

Russia's Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Indian foreign and commerce ministries and the prime minister's office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Russia's requests were made weeks ahead of Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar's visit to Moscow starting Nov. 7, two of the Indian sources said. It was not immediately clear what was conveyed by New Delhi to Russia during the visit.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has not joined Western countries in openly criticising Moscow for the war in Ukraine, and has sharply increased purchases of Russian oil that have cushioned it from some of the impact of sanctions.

During the Moscow visit, Jaishankar said India needed to boost exports to Russia to balance bilateral trade that is now tilted towards Russia.

He was accompanied on the visit by senior officials in charge of agriculture, petroleum and natural gas, ports and shipping, finance, chemicals and fertiliser, and trade - which he said showed the importance of ties with Russia.

Airlines are experiencing an acute shortage of parts because almost all planes are foreign-made. Car parts are also in demand, with global automakers having left the market.

A source in Russia's car sales industry said the trade ministry had sent a list of car parts needed to corresponding ministries and state agencies in other countries, including India.

The list of items from Russia, which runs to nearly 14 pages, includes car engine parts like pistons, oil pumps and ignition coils. There is also demand for bumpers, seatbelts and infotainment systems.

For aircraft and helicopters, Russia requested 41 items including landing gear components, fuel systems, communication systems and fire extinguishing systems, life jackets and aviation tyres.

Air Raid Sirens Blare in Ukraine as NATO Meets

KYIV (Dispatches) - The United States and NATO allies promised more arms for Kyiv and equipment to help restore Ukrainian power and heat knocked out by Russian missile and drone strikes, as air raid sirens blared across Ukraine for the first time this week.

Ukrainians fled the streets for bomb shelters, although the all-clear later sounded across the country apart from the front-line eastern province of Luhansk.

Officials remained vigilant: "Last time, the Russians also disguised the strike as a training flight...Let's see," said Vitaliy Kim, governor of southern Ukraine's Mykolaiv region.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other foreign ministers from the NATO alliance began a two-day meeting in Bucharest, seeking ways both to keep Ukrainians safe and warm and to sustain Kyiv's military through a coming winter campaign.

"NATO will continue to stand for Ukraine as long as it takes. We will not back down," alliance General-Secretary Jens Stoltenberg said in a speech in Bucharest.

He told reporters Russian President Vladimir Putin was "trying to use winter as a weapon of war" as Moscow's forces lose on the battlefield, and that Western allies would step in to help. British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly accused Putin of trying to "freeze the Ukrainians into submission".

U.S. and European officials said the ministers would focus on military aid such as air defense systems and ammunition, as well as non-lethal aid including fuel, medical supplies, winter equipment and drone jammers, delivered through NATO.

"I hope we will agree on a quite significant package of non-lethal help," Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky said.

Russia has been carrying out huge attacks on Ukraine's electricity transmission and heating infrastructure roughly weekly since October, in what Kyiv and its allies say is a deliberate campaign to harm civilians, a war crime.

The U.S. official said Washington did not see an invasion of Taiwan as imminent.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping signaled during a Communist Party Congress in October that China would strengthen its strategic deterrent, a term often used to describe nuclear weapons. The report reiterated concern about increasing pressure by Beijing on self-ruled Taiwan, an island China sees as a breakaway province.

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S. Korean President Warns of Unprecedented Response to North Korea Nuclear Test

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol warned of an unprecedented joint response with allies if North Korea goes ahead with a nuclear test, and urged China to help dissuade the North from pursuing banned development of nuclear weapons and missiles.

In a wide-ranging interview with Reuters, Yoon called on China, North Korea's closest ally, to fulfil its responsibilities as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. He said not doing so would lead to an influx of military assets to the region.

"What is sure is that China has the capability to influence North Korea, and China has the responsibility to engage in the process," Yoon said in his office. It was up to Beijing to decide whether it would exert that influence for peace and stability, he added.

North Korea's actions were leading to increased defense spending in countries around the region, including Japan, and more deployment of U.S. warplanes and ships, Yoon noted.

It is in China's interest to make its "best efforts" to induce North Korea to denuclearize, he said.

When asked what South Korea and its allies, the United States and Japan, would do if North Korea conducts a new nuclear test, Yoon said the response "will be something that has not been seen before", but declined to elaborate what that would entail.

"It would be extremely unwise for North Korea to conduct a seventh nuclear test," he told Reuters.

Amid a record year for missile tests, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said this week his country intends to have the world's most powerful nuclear force. South Korean and U.S. officials say Pyongyang may be preparing to resume testing nuclear weapons for the first time since 2017.

North Korea's tests overshadowed multiple gatherings this month of international leaders, including the Group of 20 conference in Bali, where Yoon pressed Chinese President Xi Jinping to do more to rein in North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations. Xi urged Seoul to improve relations with Pyongyang.

Ahead of the G20, U.S. President Joe Biden told Xi that Beijing had an obligation to attempt to talk North Korea out of a nuclear test, although he said it was unclear whether China could do so. Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said before the meeting that Biden would warn Xi that North Korea's continued weapons development would lead to an enhanced U.S. military presence in the region, something Beijing is not eager to see.

South Korea and the United States have agreed to deploy more U.S. "strategic assets" such as aircraft carriers and long-range bombers to the area, but Yoon said he did not expect changes to the 28,500 American ground forces stationed in South Korea.



Sunak Says UK's Golden Era With China Is Over

LONDON (Dispatches) - British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that the so-called "golden era" of relations with China was over, saying Beijing's systemic challenge to Britain's interests and values was growing more acute.

In his first major foreign policy speech, Sunak said Britain's approach to China needed to evolve and Beijing was "consciously competing for global influence using all the levers of state power".

"Let's be clear, the so-called 'golden era' is over, along with the naive idea that trade would lead to social and political reform," Sunak said in London's financial district, a reference to former finance minister George Osborne's description of Sino-British ties in 2015.

Some in Sunak's Conservative Party have been critical of Sunak, regarding him as less hawkish on China than his predecessor Liz Truss. Last year when he was finance minister, he called for a nuanced strategy on China to balance human rights concerns while expanding economic ties.

However, a planned meeting between Sunak and China's President Xi Jinping at this month's G20 summit in Bali fell through and last week London banned Chinese-made security cameras from sensitive government buildings.

"We recognize China poses a systemic challenge to our values and interests, a challenge that grows more acute as it moves towards even greater authoritarianism," he said, referring to the BBC statement that one of its journalists had been assaulted by Chinese police.

"Of course, we cannot simply ignore China's significance in world affairs - to global economic stability or issues like climate change. The U.S., Canada, Australia, Japan and many others understand this too."

Sunak said under his leadership Britain would not choose the "status quo" and would confront international competitors "not with grand rhetoric but with robust pragmatism".

On Ukraine, he said the government would maintain military aid to Kyiv next year, maintaining the strong support offered by former prime ministers Boris Johnson and Truss. "So be in no doubt, we will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes. We will maintain or increase our military aid next year. And we will provide new support for air defense," he said.



Tesla Readies Revamped Model 3 With Project "Highland"



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Tesla is developing a revamped version of Model 3, according to four people with knowledge of the effort, as the top EV maker aims to cut production costs and boost the appeal of the five-year-old electric sedan.

One focus of the redesign codenamed "Highland" is to reduce the number of components and complexity in the interior of the Model 3 while focusing on features that Tesla buyers value, including the display, according to the people, who asked not to be named because the revamp has not been announced.

The previously unreported redesign comes as the electric sedan faces increased competition from models from the likes of China's BYD, Hyundai and coming releases from other major automakers.

The revamp of the battery-powered sedan, which could also include some changes to the Model 3's exterior and powertrain performance, will go into production at Tesla's factory in Shanghai and the company's Fremont, California plant, two of the people said. Tesla's Shanghai Gigafactory will put the redesigned Model 3 into production in the third quarter of 2023, they said.

It was not clear when production would start at the Fremont plant or how large a cost savings Tesla would achieve from the redesign as it works with suppliers.

The effort spotlights an approach to vehicle development pioneered by Tesla and now being copied by other automakers, including Toyota Motor, that removes complexity - and cost - in production.

It is also an example of a key project at Tesla that has rolled ahead even as Chief Executive Elon Musk has focused on his troubled acquisition of Twitter in recent months, an area of concern for Tesla. Tesla did not respond to a written request for comment from Reuters.

The redesign for the Model 3 builds on the revamp of the Model S -- Tesla's premium EV sedan -- that was released last year. That redesign added an airplane-style yoke in place of a traditional steering wheel and removed buttons and traditional air vents as part of a minimalist interior where the centerpiece is a 17-inch electronic display.

The Model 3, Tesla's cheapest EV starting at just under \$47,000 in the United States, had been the automaker's best-seller but is being overtaken by the Model Y crossover. With only four models in production, styling changes to any part of Tesla's lineup carry an outsized importance compared to established automakers.

Ed Kim, president of AutoPacific Group, which tracks market trends and production, said the current Model 3 has already been updated from the version that first went on sale in 2017 because of the way Tesla updates battery performance, information and entertainment options through software, even if it still looks the same.

"Having said that, consumers still tend to equate visual changes with newness," he said. "Tesla knows visually tangible changes are in order."

"The upcoming changes that potential customers can see and feel will be very important in ensuring that EV customers still have Tesla at the top of their minds as truly excellent alternatives to Tesla are starting to flood the market," he said.

Musk has pushed a simplified approach to design and production at Tesla that the Highland project extends, said the people with knowledge of the development.

Tesla has pioneered the use of massive casting machines known as Giga Press and built by IDRA Group in Italy to make single, larger pieces of a vehicle in assembly, reducing cost and speeding production. It has also designed a structural battery pack that does away with more expensive modules.

Musk has said Tesla is looking to drive costs down through simplification and working on a small-car platform that would be half the cost of the Model 3.

Chinese EVs Drive Stellantis' Jeep off The Road



LONDON (Dispatches) - The bankruptcy of Stellantis' Jeep joint venture in China could spell trouble for other global automakers whose output has plunged over the last five years in the world's largest car market, as domestic players rapidly overtake.

The first joint venture failure by a foreign brand in the electric vehicle (EV) era, the Oct. 31 bankruptcy filing marks a turning point in that Chinese carmakers are beginning to surpass the long-dominant international brands in giving consumers what they want.

"I do not expect Stellantis to be an isolated case," said Marco Santino, a partner at management consultants Oliver Wyman. "Probably almost all of the western carmakers will have to review the industrial logic of their presence in China."

A spokesman for Stellantis said Jeep would operate through an "asset light" strategy in China, importing vehicles via a distribution model that is profitable for its Maserati and Alfa Romeo brands.

"Jeep remains fully committed to its existing and future customers in China," the spokesman said, adding Stellantis' dealer network in China remains fully operational.

Some elements of the Jeep joint venture's failure are particular to Stellantis - and the former car groups that feature among its 14 brands. But data compiled for Reuters by consultancy LMC Automotive expose a problem shared by a number of other global carmakers: plummeting Chinese plant usage.

The fewer cars a plant produces, the more likely it is to be loss-making.

The Jeep failure in China happened less than two years after Stellantis was formed by the merger of PSA and Fiat Chrysler.

In the run-up to the deal, Chief Executive Carlos Tavares had said no carmaker could afford not to be in China and the expectation was the two companies would together be better equipped to make headway there.

But Stellantis earlier this year said it would end its venture with local partner Guangzhou Automobile Group, just months after saying it would raise its stake to 75% from 50%.

The U-turn leaves the world's No. 3 carmaker by sales with only limited Peugeot and Citroen production in China, which it has said could also be shut down, although it has yet to decide on that.

Tavares, the carmaker's outspoken Portuguese CEO, has complained "political influence is growing by the day" in China and has accused Stellantis' joint-venture partner GAC of not acting in good faith.

GAC has said it was "deeply shocked" by critical comments from Stellantis.

According to LMC data, Stellantis' estimated full-year capacity utilisation at its Chinese assembly plants will fall to 13% in 2022 from 43% in 2017.

Other mainstream brands, including Volkswagen, General Motors, Ford, Mitsubishi and Hyundai, have also seen plant usage fall by anything from over 30 to more than 50 percentage points in the last five years.

Some - especially premium brands Mercedes and BMW - have seen far smaller declines.

At the same time, global carmakers' sales in China have dropped as local rivals have taken off because the Chinese automakers embraced EVs and consumer-centric in-car software far more quickly.

"The last five years, (China's) market has decidedly changed from foreign companies having a right to win because of their foreign-ness to where there is a far more level playing field," said Bill Russo, head of consultancy Automobility Ltd in Shanghai and a former Chrysler executive.



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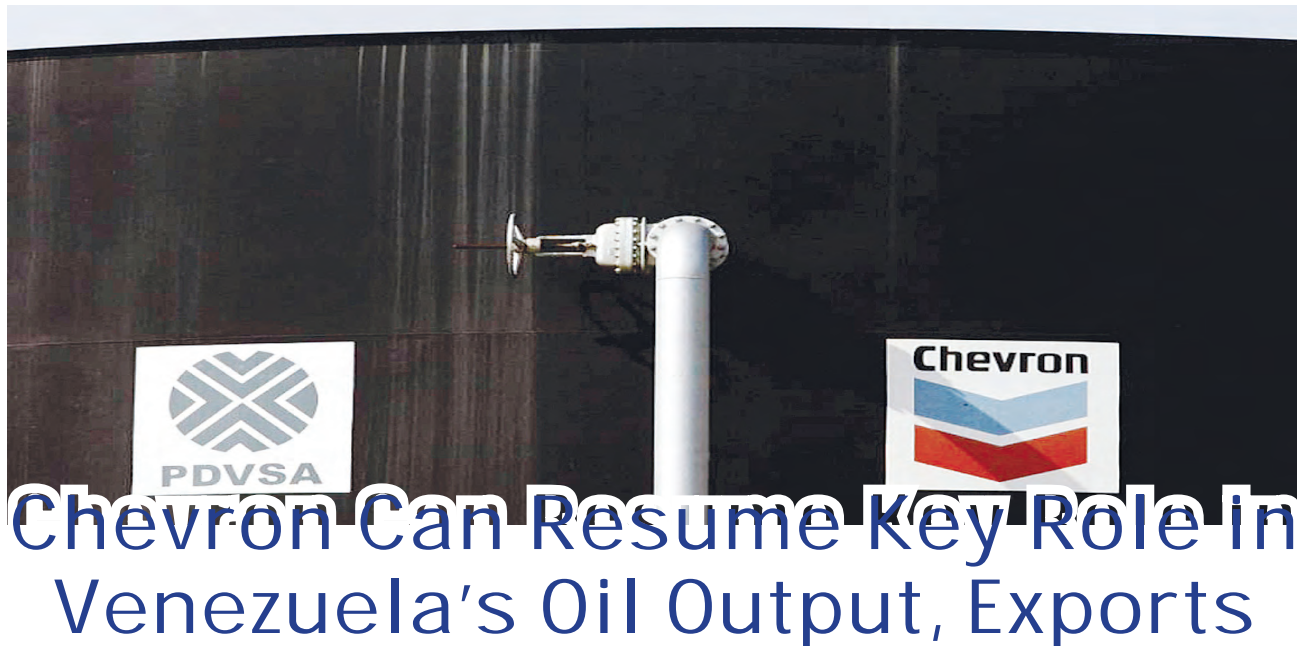
Italy Would Ideally Need 4 New LNG Terminals

MILAN (Dispatches) - Italy needs to significantly increase its liquefied natural gas (LNG) import capacity, the chief executive of Eni said, adding that the country would ideally need four new LNG terminals.

The country currently has three terminals, which have a capacity of around 17 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas, currently near to saturation. The government has planned to set up two other floating storage

and regasification units (FSRU) to increase the capacity to 27 bcm, but a bigger effort is needed to help Rome replace Russian supplies with gas coming a range of African suppliers through ships.

"We have moved from Russian gas coming from pipelines to gas coming on ships. We currently don't have enough LNG terminals... we would need four additional terminals," Eni Chief Executive Claudio Descalzi said, speaking at a business event in Milan.



Chevron Can Resume Key Role In Venezuela's Oil Output, Exports

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Chevron Corp yesterday received a U.S. license allowing the second-largest U.S. oil company to expand its production in Venezuela and bring the South American country's crude oil to the United States.

The decision grants broader rights for the last big U.S. oil company still operating in U.S.-sanctioned Venezuela. However, it restricts any cash payments to Venezuela, which could reduce the oil available to export.

License terms are designed to prevent state-run oil firm Petróleos de Venezuela, known as PDVSA, from receiving proceeds from Chevron's petroleum sales, U.S. officials said. The license lasts for six months and will be automatically renewed monthly thereafter, the U.S. Treasury said.

The U.S. authorization "brings added transparency to the Venezuelan oil sector" and allows Chevron to benefit from sales of "oil that is currently being produced" by its joint ventures with PDVSA, the California-based company said in a statement.

Following oil sanctions on Venezuela in 2019, Chevron received an exemption to trade its Venezuelan crude to recoup pending debts. But those privileges were suspended a year later. Chevron's four PDVSA joint ventures produced about 200,000 barrels per day of crude oil and exported the crude around the world prior to the sanctions.

The United States issued the license on the same day that Venezuela and opposition leaders began a political dialogue in Mexico City by agreeing to ask the United Nations to oversee a fund providing food, healthcare and infrastructure to Venezuelans.

Terms bar Chevron from helping the OPEC member develop new oilfields but provides a way for the company to recoup some of the billions of dollars owed by PDVSA through the oil sales. It also allows the U.S. company to import supplies to help process the country's crude oil into exportable grades.

Oilfield service firms Baker Hughes, Halliburton, Schlumberger and Weatherford International had their U.S. licenses renewed but not expanded. That limits any wider expansion of Venezuelan oil production.

Spokespeople for the four, only two of which still have equipment in the country, did not immediately respond to requests for comment, or had no immediate comment. The United States, which first levied sanctions on PDVSA in 2017, said it reserved the right to rescind or revoke the license at any time. A spokesperson insisted the authorization was not a response to this year's sharp rise in energy prices.

"This action reflects longstanding U.S. policy to provide targeted sanctions relief based on concrete steps that alleviate the suffering of the Venezuelan people and support the restoration of democracy," the US Treasury Department said in a statement.

The United States over the years has increased sanctions on Venezuela, seeking to oust socialist President Nicolas Maduro over his 2018 reelection, which was not recognised by the west. Maduro has clung to power with the help of PDVSA, Russia and Iran.

Sri Lanka Aims at 7% Economic Growth Soon

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka will not have a domestic debt haircut, assured State Minister of Finance Shehan Semasinghe at the NextGen SL and German Embassy organized budget seminar.

He said that the government has made steady progress with the IMF negotiations and they have also received positive feedback on debt restructuring talks held specially with two major creditors to Sri Lanka India and China and also the Paris Club.

"They have all indicated that they will not STOP supporting the Sri Lankan debt restructuring process. The government has never spoken about non-payment of domestic debt. Hence we are not and will not look at restructuring/phasing out local debt repayments," he stressed.

The Minister said that several prudent economic fundamentals are being deployed towards economic stabilization and then to raise the economic growth rate to around 7 to 8% in the next two years.

He said that though some of the tax proposals may not be praiseworthy they had to be taken since it was urgently needed to increase government revenue. "I am pleased to say that our revenue target for 2022 is 95% on target. In 2021 government revenue was Rs. 1,155 billion and up to October 2022 we have achieved Rs. 1586 billion."

The Minister also said that two special Acts the new Public Finance Act and Anti-Corruption bill would be introduced next year which will help to safeguard against acts of corruption and malpractice in the future. As the Government, is keen to push through the reforms and make the hard decisions.

Former Energy Minister and present MP, Patali Champika Ranawaka said that he does not approve the large budget allocation of Rs. 94 billion or road development and said that it should be shifted towards improvement and digitalization of public transport and buses and railway sectors.

Government must reduce the construction of additional highways and utilize part of that money to improve railway road network. Tri Forces support too should be sought in this regard.

He said that today public buses that ply on the road have reduced from 28,000 to 23,000 while private School van too have reduced from 48,000 to 43,000.

He identified lack of spare parts as one of the main issues for this. Today use of public transport is 52% and this should be increased to 70%. A common smart card should be introduced to travel not only in buses and rail but also in three wheelers."



Euro Eases as Lagarde Threatens to Hike Into Restrictive Territory

LONDON (Dispatches) - The euro eased as European Central Bank Christine Lagarde warned that inflation hasn't peaked yet and left open the possibility of further aggressive interest rate increases - even as the Eurozone economy goes into reverse.

"We do not see the components or the direction that would lead me to believe that we've reached peak inflation and that it's going to decline in short order," Lagarde said in her regular testimony to the European parliament. She added that "Whenever I ask my top-notch economists at the ECB... about the risk, the answer that I get at the moment is (that) risk is to the upside, without qualifying the upside."

Various ECB officials - including the hawkish Deutsche Bundesbank head Joachim Nagel, have indicated that the ECB's next rate hike may be smaller than the last two moves of 75 basis points each. The obvious slowdown in the Eurozone economy has raised the risk that the central bank could tip it into a recession by tightening policy too far. However, the ECB still has some of the lowest interest rates in the world, despite inflation hitting a euro-era high of 10.6% in October.

Data released earlier on Monday by the ECB showed new lending to households and businesses fell in October, while household deposits in the financial system also rose at their slowest rate since the start of the pandemic, suggesting that consumers are able to save less due to the effects of inflation.

Responding to other questions, Lagarde said that the bank may need to raise interest rates to a level that would actively slow the economy, citing pressures from pent-up demand that have percolated through the economy this year as COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

She also pointed to the bank's intention to decide on the key principles for reducing its balance sheet, when its governing council next meets in December.

In addition, Lagarde appeared to take a more hawkish view of current wage developments than the bank's chief economist Philip Lane, who styled a spate of stronger collective wage settlements across the Eurozone this year as essentially a one-off 'catching-up' with inflation rather than a driver of a longer-lasting wage-price spiral.

"Strong labor markets...are likely to support higher wages," Lagarde said, adding that "Incoming data suggest that wages are picking up, and we will continue to assess their implications."

Lagarde also warned governments against being too generous in their efforts to support the economy through what is likely to be a difficult winter, with sky-high energy prices and rising unemployment.

Italy Has a \$127b Debt Problem It Can't Easily Resolve

ROME (Dispatches) -

While much of Europe Inc. is shrinking state-backed loans from the pandemic, Italian companies are still sitting on mountains of such borrowings, complicating government efforts to help them surmount the latest crisis: soaring energy costs.

Italian companies had a record €123.2 billion (\$127 billion) of Covid-era state-backed credit lines outstanding as of June 30, up from €118 billion in the previous quarter, according to a European Banking Authority report published last month. The country has the most government-guaranteed debt yet to be repaid in the euro zone, even though it's not the region's largest economy.

That's putting the newly formed government of Giorgia Meloni in a quandary: how and to what extent can it keep supporting companies now grappling with higher costs, especially energy bills, in a rapidly slowing economic environment? The government is implementing an aid package allowing companies to spread out their energy bills over as many as two years, and providing gas and electricity suppliers a 90% state-backed guarantee on their exposure to the rescheduled bills.

Any additional support for companies in the form of debt just postpones the pain, leaving them with heavily indebted corporate structures that could become unsustainable if revenue and profits are hit in a recessionary environment, warns Stefano Caselli, the dean of SDA Bocconi School of Management in Milan.

"We are on very thin ice," he said. "If the system enters a recession and tensions on energy prices stay high, the debt of companies will become a problem."

The International Monetary Fund forecasts that the Italian economy will contract 0.2% in 2023.

The state-guaranteed pandemic loans were granted in 2020 as the coronavirus brought sudden and widespread disruption to businesses worldwide and corporates urgently needed inexpensive sources of liquidity. But now, in an era of higher interest rates and slowing growth, many Italian companies are finding that the borrowings are hard to replace or pay back. Some are even failing to meet the conditions attached to their loans.

India's Economy Likely Slowed to Annual 6.2% in July-Sept

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - The Indian economy likely returned to a more normal 6.2% annual growth rate in July-September after double-digit expansion in the previous quarter, but weaker exports and investment will curb future activity, a Reuters poll showed.

In April-June, Asia's third-largest economy showed explosive growth of 13.5% from a year earlier thanks mainly to the corresponding period in 2021 having been depressed by pandemic-control restrictions.

But with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) now raising interest rates to tamp inflation running above its target range of 2% to 6% target, the economy is set to slow further.

The 6.2% annual growth forecast for latest quarter in a Nov. 22-28 Reuters poll of 43 economists was a tad lower than the RBI's 6.3% view. Forecasts ranged between 3.7% and 6.5%.

"The exceptionally favourable base of the April-June '22 quarter is behind us, which will result in a normalization of the year-on-year real GDP growth rate from July-Sept '22 onward and also make it easier to gauge the true underlying economic momentum," said Kaushik Das, India and South Asia chief economist at Deutsche Bank.

Although business surveys indicated weakening economic activity in most major economies, where central banks are responding to soaring inflation with higher interest rates, business sentiment has remained relatively strong in India.

Still, industrial production increased at an annual pace of only 1.5% on average last quarter, its weakest in two years, pointing towards a significant slowdown in manufacturing activity, a key driver of growth.

Argentina Revives Special Soy Dollar to Boost Reserves

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentinian soy farmers will be able to sell their product at a preferential exchange rate, as the country seeks to shore up its central bank reserves, according to a decree published Monday.

Argentina is one of the world's largest exporters of soybeans and soy oil. However, with year-on-year inflation of 88 percent and constant fears of currency devaluation, farmers often hoard their supplies waiting for a better rate.

The plan is to "increase reserves so that the economy reaches the end of the year with \$10 billion available," Secretary of Industry Jose de Mendiguren told Futurok radio.

The incentive kicks off Monday and will last until December 30.

Instead of selling soy products for the tightly-controlled official rate of around 166 pesos per dollar, producers will receive a much higher 230 pesos.

A similar preferential soy rate was applied in September, when soybean sales earned the country almost \$8 billion.

Argentina imposed a raft of exchange controls in 2019 in its constant battle to keep dollars in the country and fight low foreign exchange reserves.

These include blocking citizens from buying more than \$200 in greenbacks per month.

This has led to a multitude of dollar exchange rates. Demand for scarce dollars is so high that they are exchanged for over 300 pesos at the "Blue Dollar" rate on the streets of Buenos Aires.

The "Qatar Dollar" imposes higher taxes on those using their credit cards abroad -- such as those spending valuable dollars at the World Cup in Doha.

Meanwhile, the "Coldplay Dollar" was the name given to the higher rate applied to entrance tickets to international shows.

"Nobody wants various exchange rates, the economy must be normalized and stabilized. But it is a solution, a tool for the exceptional circumstances Argentina is experiencing," De Mendiguren said.

Argentines have so little faith in their currency that many exchange it into dollars as fast as they can and store it in safes or under their mattresses.

Under an International Monetary Fund deal to refinance debt of more than \$44 billion, Argentina must boost its international reserves and reduce its fiscal deficit.

Iran Capable of Hosting Traffic of 6 Tb/s

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) says the country's ICT infrastructure is now capable of hosting traffic of 6 terabits per second.

On the sidelines of the weekly cabinet session, Isa Zarepour told reporters about the Iranian social network platforms ad said Rubika gained 35 million active users, Eeta 15 million, and Bale and Soroush Plus 9.5.

He added that 83 percent of the Iranian state organizations were connected to the smart mechanism called 'Smart Service Window', and the rest would join it until the next month. It was planned that by the end of the current Persian year, the Iranian executive agencies offer 5 percent of their services through the mechanism.



Rising Energy Costs Risk Ruining Europe's Electric Car Ambitions

LONDON (Dispatches) - Surging energy costs will leave the European Union unable to attract battery plants in a blow to its electric car ambitions, a top Volkswagen executive has warned.

Thomas Schäfer, chief executive of Volkswagen Passenger Cars, said Germany and the EU were "rapidly losing their attractiveness and competitiveness" for so-called gigafactories as a result of sharp rises in the cost of power.

He added that EU bureaucracy and state aid rules risk hamstringing efforts to bring electricity and gas prices under control.

In a LinkedIn post, Mr Schäfer said: "Unless we manage to reduce energy prices in Germany and Europe quickly and reliably, investments in energy-intensive production or new battery cell factories in Germany and the EU will be practically unviable."

Volkswagen is planning to build six gigafactories to supply millions of batteries for its electric vehicles, and has broken ground on the first factory, GigaSalz, near Salzgitter in Germany. It hopes to start operations by 2025.

The world's biggest carmaker has committed to spend €20bn (£17bn) on battery plants that will employ 20,000 people across Europe.

However, Mr Schäfer criticised a recent deal between French and German economics ministers, Bruno Le Maire and Robert Habeck, warning it "falls short" on its priorities.

The financial chiefs of the EU's leading economies last week agreed to push for greater subsidies in the bloc to tackle US President Joe Biden's sweeping Inflation Reduction Act, which includes a \$369bn package of tax breaks and incentives for green investment from US businesses.

European leaders fear the bill will suck investment from the continent and have attacked protectionist measures buried within it, such as incentives for buying American-made electric vehicles.

Brussels has argued the bill breaks global trade rules through its benefits for American companies.



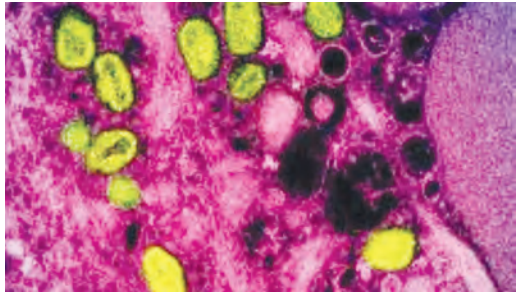
Mr Schäfer said: "With the Inflation Reduction Act, the USA offers companies highly attractive incentives to invest in new plants and production."

"The EU, on the other hand, is sticking to outdated and bureaucratic state aid rules. "The EU urgently needs new instruments to avert insidious de-industrialization and to maintain Europe's attractiveness as a location for future technologies and jobs."

Britain is also struggling to create a battery infrastructure for the switch to electric cars.

A gigafactory is being built to supply the Nissan factory in Sunderland, but another would-be major player, Britishvolt, is struggling to secure funds after narrowly avoiding administration.

Monkeypox to Be Renamed Mpox



GENEVA (Dispatches) - Monkeypox is to be renamed mpox, the World Health Organization announced Monday, in a bid to avoid stigmatisation stemming from the existing name.

Monkeypox received its name because the virus was originally identified in monkeys kept for research in Denmark in 1958, but the disease is found in a number of animals, and most frequently in rodents.

A surge in monkeypox infections has been reported since early May among men who have sex with men, outside the African countries where it has long been endemic.

"When the outbreak of monkeypox expanded earlier this year, racist and stigmatising language online, in other settings and in some communities was observed and reported to WHO," the UN health agency said

"Following a series of consultations with global experts, WHO will begin using a new preferred term 'mpox' as a synonym for monkeypox. Both names will be used simultaneously for one year while 'monkeypox' is phased out."

The disease was first discovered in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with the spread among humans since then mainly limited to certain West and Central African nations.

But in May, cases of the disease, which causes fever, muscular aches and large boil-like skin lesions, began spreading rapidly around the world.

The WHO triggered its highest level of alarm on July 24, classifying it as a public health emergency of international concern, alongside Covid-19.

Some 81,107 confirmed cases and 55 deaths have been reported to the WHO this year, from 110 countries.

Where the given dataset was known, 97 percent were men, with a median age of 34 years old; 85 percent identified as men who had sex with men, according to the WHO's case dashboard.

The 10 most affected countries globally are: the United States (29,001), Brazil (9,905), Spain (7,405), France (4,107), Colombia (3,803), Britain (3,720), Germany (3,672), Peru (3,444), Mexico (3,292), and Canada (1,449). They account for 86 percent of the global number of cases.

A total of 588 cases were reported last week. Over the past four weeks, 92 percent of cases were reported from the Americas and six percent from Europe.

Seventy-one countries have reported no new cases in the past 21 days.

It is down to the WHO to assign names to diseases, as it did with Covid-19.

Nobel Peace Laureate Calls for Weapons to Free Ukraine

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - In an unusual move for a Nobel Peace laureate, the head of one of this year's prizewinning organizations called for weapons to help Ukraine defend itself and stop the atrocities.

"When somebody asks me how to stop these long-lasting crimes in occupied territories, I can only answer: 'Provide Ukraine with weapons to liberate these territories,'" Ukrainian Oleksandra Matviichuk, a human rights lawyer who heads the Kyiv-based Center for Civil Liberties, told AFP in Stockholm.

"It's a weird situation for me, and a clear sign (that) something (is) wrong with the whole international system when a human rights lawyer asks (for) air defense systems."

But, she said, "We need to prevent new damage to critical civil infrastructure".

"We need air defense systems. We need other kinds of military facilities which would help us to protect our sky," Matviichuk said international law -- her usual weapon for defending human rights -- was no longer effective.

"Now I have no legal instrument which can stop Russian atrocities because Russia publicly ignores international law and all decisions of international organizations," the 39-year-old said.

Ukraine also needs urgent humanitarian assistance to "endure this very hard winter", she said, noting that she had just experienced more than three days without power or heat in her Kyiv home.

The Center for Civil Liberties was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize along with Belarusian human rights advocate Ales Bialiatski and the Russian human rights organization Memorial for their "outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power".

Matviichuk said her organisation, which was founded in 2007, now pursues an "ambitious goal to document each war crime" committed across Ukraine.

"Now we have a database which includes more than 24,000 episodes of war crimes," she said.

The work is taxing, she said, both in terms of the effort required to collect information in the war-ravaged country and the toll it takes on staff.

"We document human pain and it's very hard," Matviichuk explained.

She also lamented what she called an "accountability gap", with the national legal system overloaded and the International Criminal Court only investigating "select cases".

"A question which I ask myself (is) 'For whom do we document all these war crimes?'," Matviichuk said.

Hydrogen Used to Power Passenger Plane Engine in World First by Rolls-Royce

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rolls-Royce and low-cost airline easyJet have tested what they say is the world's first commercial airline engine powered by hydrogen fuel.

A Rolls-Royce AE 2100 turboprop engine, which is usually used on the C-130 Hercules military transport aircraft, was tested on a ground rig at the Ministry of Defence's Boscombe Down airfield, a location long associated with aerospace research.

The successful test marks a milestone in moving global aviation towards greener fuels and away from kerosene. Advocates of the technology say it will help Britain meet a government target of net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050.

Grazia Vittadini, Rolls-Royce's chief technology officer, said: "We are pushing the boundaries to discover the zero carbon possibilities of hydrogen, which could help reshape the future of flight."

The engine tests are being financially supported by easyJet, which has made multi-million pound investments in experiments around future aero engine technologies.

Johan Lundgren, the budget airline's chief executive, said: "We are committed to continuing to support this ground-breaking research because hydrogen offers great possibilities for a range of aircraft, including easyJet-sized aircraft."

Hydrogen has traditionally been seen as an unattractive fuel for aviation thanks to its indelible link with the Hindenburg airship disaster of 1937. The flammable gas erupted in a fireball that killed 35 passengers and crew after a botched landing.

However, the fuel is now being revisited for aviation as the industry looks to cut down on its carbon emissions.

12m Tons of...

FROM PAGE 1

The train, carrying 39 containers of goods, left Chekhov on July 6 and traveled 3,800 km through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan before entering Iran. This train will carry the containers to Bandar Abbas in southern Iran and then head for India's Nhava Sheva Port via seaways.

In July, Iran and Russia had signed an agreement for transiting 10 million tons of Russian goods through Iran. The transit of Russian goods crossing Tehran was also addressed in Jaishankar's visit to Moscow.

"We discussed ways of expanding and diversifying our cooperation, moving beyond traditional areas," he said.

"The promotion of inter-regional cooperation has been a key priority for us, particularly with the Russian Far East. We also discussed enhancing connectivity, including through the International North-South Transportation Corridor as well as the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor. I updated [Russian Foreign] Minister [Sergey] Lavrov and deputy PM [Denis] Manturov on India's flagship initiatives, including Atmanirbhar Bharat, i.e., self-reliant India and Make in India, that can serve as platforms for a more contemporary economic relationship between our two countries," as per the press statement from India's Ministry of External Affairs.

Such goods consignment will surely boost trade relations with Russia, which has been a long-time trade partner.

Tehran Underlines Syria's Right...

FROM PAGE 1

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

According to Iravani, the Zionist regime's recurrent violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and its deliberate targeting of the Arab country's civilians and civilian infrastructures, amounted to contravention of the international and humanitarian laws as well as the UN Charter.

The official, therefore, insisted that the Security Council had to condemn the Zionist regime's incursions and "terrorist attacks" against Syria.

Iravani also said the sanctions that had been imposed by the United States and its allies against the Arab nation as well as Washington's plundering of Syria's natural resources -- a trend that started under former American president Donald Trump -- had compounded the challenges that the country already faced in terms of maintaining public health and food security.

Iran Signs \$4b...

FROM PAGE 1

Raisi said banking, finance and wider business topics were also discussed and that talks between the two allies "will help to resolve bilateral problems".

Sudani thanked Iran for its continued deliveries of gas and electricity, which have been in short supply in Iraq, while he also pointed to discussions on a "mechanism" to enable Iraq to pay Iran for these services.

Iraq relies on Iran for natural gas that generates as much as 45 percent of its 14,000 megawatts of electricity consumed daily. Iran transmits another 1,000 megawatts directly, making itself an indispensable energy source for its Arab neighbor.

The U.S. has had to repeatedly extend sanctions exemption by 45, 90 or 120 days, to allow Baghdad to import Iranian energy, but it is unhappy with close relationship and trade between Baghdad and Tehran.

Years of war following the 2003 U.S. invasion have left Iraq's power infrastructure in tatters and a deficit of some 7,000 megawatts.

In the past, officials in Baghdad have said there is no easy substitute to imports from Iran because it would take years to adequately build up Iraq's energy infrastructure.

They have said American demand acknowledges neither Iraq's energy needs nor the complex relations between Baghdad and Tehran.

Iraq also imports a wide range of goods from Iran, including food, agricultural products, home appliances, air conditioners and car parts.

President Emphasizes...

FROM PAGE 1

Raisi considered paying attention to the people's wishes as one of the most important aspects of the popular administration, and emphasizing the need to be sensitive to misbehavior and mismanagement, he said, "All those who serve in the name of the government and the Islamic system must be careful by doing their work on time to prevent administrative corruption and disruptions in providing services to the people, improve the efficiency of the departments and boost hope, trust and public satisfaction".

At the beginning of this meeting, Raisi congratulated the auspicious birthday of H.H Zeynab (PBUH) and Nurse's Day, and appreciated the efforts and sincere services of nurses to protect people's lives, especially during the COVID-19 period, and emphasized the need to pay attention to the demands of nurses, especially their legal and livelihood demands.

Israel Desperately Urges...

FROM PAGE 1

In a statement it issued, the ministry called to pressure Israeli apartheid authorities in order to stop the violence of the Israeli army forces and the settlers, saying "these violations amount to war crimes and are within the framework of the official escalation of Israeli aggression against our people and their rights."

Since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds, the regime has built more than 250 illegal settlements where more than 600,000 Israelis live.

All the settlements are illegal under international law. The United Nations Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent state with East al-Quds as its capital.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion.

Wigan Appoint Toure as Manager

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wigan Athletic have appointed Lex-Arsenal and Manchester City defender Kolo Toure as their new manager on a three-and-a-half-year contract, the struggling Championship club said.

Toure, who made 353 appearances in the Premier League for Arsenal, City and Liverpool between 2002-16, was previously part of the coaching set-up at Leicester City and Scottish side Celtic under Brendan Rodgers.

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Binotto Resigns as Ferrari F1 Team Boss

PARIS (Dispatches) - Ferrari Formula One boss Mattia Binotto has handed in his resignation and will leave at the end of the year, the championship runners-up said.

The news came after considerable media speculation that the 53-year-old, whose contract was due to expire at the end of 2023, had lost top level support after another failed title challenge.

"With the regret that this entails, I have decided to conclude my collaboration with Ferrari," the Italian sportscar manufacturer quoted Binotto as saying in a statement announcing his departure.

IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

THURSDAY DECEMBER 1, 2022

England, U.S. Advance as Iran Knocked Out of World Cup

DOHA (Dispatches) - Christian Pulisic fired the United States into the last 16 of the World Cup as the Americans downed Iran 1-0 in their politically charged grudge match. Chelsea star Pulisic bundled home the do-or-die Group B game's only goal on 38 minutes to set up a second round clash with Group A winners the Netherlands on Saturday.

The victory was no less than US coach Gregg Berhalter's youthful side deserved in what was only the third international football clash between the bitter ideological rivals.

The build-up to a pulsating showdown had been marked by steadily escalating tension, with Iran's Football Federation on Sunday demanding FIFA sanction US Soccer for posting a modified version of their country's flag on social media.

But despite an electrifying atmosphere at Doha's Al Thumama Stadium, Tuesday's game played out without controversy as the U.S. avenged their 1998 World Cup defeat to Iran to send the Asian qualifiers crashing out of the tournament.

Iran's fans had roared their team onto the field at the start of the game amid a deafening cacophony of air-horns and cheers from the crowd of 42,127.

But despite the intimidating reception it was the Americans who looked more comfortable, quickly establishing their dominance.

U.S. captain Tyler Adams and Juventus' Weston McKennie controlled proceedings in midfield to leave Iran struggling to gain foothold.

The U.S. signalled their attacking ambition after only two minutes, Pulisic surging forward menacingly before being dispossessed.

That was a shape of things to come as they laid siege to the Iranian goal.

Valencia midfielder Yunus Musah shot over the bar and Pulisic just failed to get enough power on a header after a cross from Antonee Robinson.

Fullback Sergino Dest was a constant threat down the right flank for the Americans, whipping a cross over in the 17th minute that Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand could only parry.

After sustained U.S. pressure, the breakthrough finally came in the 38th minute.

A brilliant crossfield pass from McKennie picked out Dest down the right.



The AC Milan defender headed back across goal and Pulisic was on hand to bravely finish.

Knowing that an equalizer would send them into the second round, the Iranians stepped up the pressure in the second half but failed to score and the U.S. achieved a crucial win to move to the next stage.

In another match of the group, England booked a World Cup last 16 clash against Senegal as Marcus Rashford and Phil Foden inspired a 3-0 win against Wales that sent their neighbors crashing out of the tournament.

Gareth Southgate's side sealed first place in Group B thanks to key contributions from Rashford and Foden after they were restored to the team by the England boss.

Foden showed why there has been such a clamour for him to start as he won the free-kick that Rashford converted to break the deadlock early in the second half at the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium in Doha.

Foden doubled England's lead just seconds later to effectively ended the one-sided 'Battle of Britain' and Rashford struck again to ensure Wales' first World Cup since 1958 ended in disappointment.

With Foden and Rashford providing the cutting edge so lacking in their previous match -- a four goalless draw against the United States -- England won for just the second time in their last nine games.

A spluttering first half showed the Three Lions still have room for improvement as they chase a first major trophy since the 1966 World Cup.

But the ruthless way they demolished Wales after the break provided encouragement ahead of Sunday's showdown with Group A runners-up Senegal.

Referee Admits Cheating to Help Pacquiao Win Fight

MANILA (Dispatches) - Former boxing referee Carlos Padilla has admitted cheating to help fellow Filipino Manny Pacquiao defeat Australian Nedal "Skinny" Hussein in a fight more than two decades ago.

Pacquiao was 21 and a rising star when he went 10 rounds against Hussein for the WBC International super-bantamweight title near the Philippine capital Manila in 2000.

But in a stunning confession, Padilla — known for refereeing the "Thrilla in Manila" between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier in 1975 — said he helped Pacquiao secure victory by "prolonging" the standard 10-count when the Filipino was knocked down and left dazed in the fourth round.

"I am a Filipino and everybody is Filipino watching the fight, so I prolong the count. I know how to do it," Padilla, who was recently inducted into the Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame, said in an interview posted on the World Boxing Council's YouTube page.

"When he get up I said to him 'hey are you okay?' — and that's prolonging the fight," a smiling Padilla said.

Pacquiao later headbutted Hussein, leaving the Australian with a cut above his left eye.

But Padilla classified the head clash as a "punch". Pacquiao won by a technical knockout after the doctor stopped the fight due to Hussein's bleeding.

"I declare it a punch but it's (a headbutt)," Padilla said, which allowed the fight to continue.

"As a referee, that's the best way to do — let the doctor stop the fight but they know that it's my fault."

Hussein, who was coached by Australian former world champion Jeff Fenech, said on Instagram that Padilla's admission was a "travesty and a true injustice".

"They should be held accountable for the sport we love," Hussein said in a post addressed to World Boxing Council president Mauricio Sulaiman.

Pacquiao did not immediately respond to AFP's requests for comment.



Hazard was speaking to the media along with experienced goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois today after they replaced the players originally scheduled to talk, Yannick Carrasco and Arthur Theate.

It was a move by team management to try to quell growing speculation that a number of players have fallen out.

Belgium, ranked second in the world, will almost certainly have to beat Croatia on Thursday to advance to the last 16.

Hazard Denies Rift in Belgium Squad

DOHA (Dispatches) - Belgium captain Eden Hazard has denied there is a rift in the squad but admits frank words were exchanged between the players following their surprise 2-0 World Cup Group F loss to Morocco.

"We had a good talk among the players," Hazard said. "A lot has been said. We talked for an hour about good things and less good things. Now we want to win against Croatia. We now have two days to prepare. We have to be ready."

Hazard denied there was a confrontation in the dressing-room after the Morocco loss, and said he had spoken with midfielder Kevin De Bruyne after the latter was quoted as saying the Belgium squad was too old to win the World Cup.

"Nothing happened in the dressing-room," Hazard said. "Only the coach (Roberto Martinez) spoke. I spoke to Kevin De Bruyne, he does believe in the group."

Hazard admitted the players were disappointed with their performances in the opening two matches in Qatar.

"We have to do better, we cannot deliver the performance we want (at the moment). We have to show it on the pitch, that is what counts," he said.

Durant Propels Nets Past Magic

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Kevin Durant scored a season-high 45 points to power Brooklyn to a 109-102 NBA victory over the Orlando Magic that kept the Nets trending in the right direction.

Durant's was just one of the 40-point performances as Devin Booker poured in 44 to lead the Phoenix Suns to a 122-117 victory over the Kings in Sacramento and Washington Wizards center Kristaps Porzingis scored a career-high 41 in a 142-127 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

While the league-leading Boston Celtics romped to victory again, leading wire-to-wire in a 140-105 win over the Charlotte Hornets, the Philadelphia 76ers erased a 16-point deficit to beat the Atlanta Hawks 104-101 in star center Joel Embiid's return from injury.

In Brooklyn, the Nets had their hands full early with the Magic, who led by 10 in the first quarter. The Nets were up by one at half-time, and Durant erupted in the third quarter, scoring 19 points, blocking two shots and coming up with a steal in the period as the Nets seized control.

"Teammates set great screens for me, the paint was opened up because we were spaced off properly and I was able to knock some shots down," Durant said after the game.

It's been a rocky season for Brooklyn, who had just sacked coach Steve Nash in the wake of a 1-5 start when star guard Kyrie Irving was embroiled in controversy after posting a link to an anti-Semitic film on social media.

Durant, who was a ruthlessly efficient 19 of 24 from the floor and also had seven rebounds and five assists, was delighted to see them put together back-to-back victories and move to 11-11 for the season.



PSG No Longer Welcome at the Parc des Princes

MADRID (Dispatches) - Nasser Al-Khelaifi, the president of Qatari-owned Paris Saint-Germain, asserted in an interview published the club may be looking for a new home after being made to feel unwelcome at the Parc des Princes.

Al-Khelaifi told Spanish sports daily Marca that PSG was "under pressure" from the Paris municipality to quit the stadium which has been their home since 1974 and the club was looking at "other alternatives", without specifying what those alternatives are.

"We are no longer welcome at the Parc des Princes," said Al-Khelaifi, who last week told Talksport the French giants are considering selling shares in the club.

"They are pressuring us to leave. They are playing with us and we are tired. I love the Parc des Princes, it's our history and I respect it more than anything. Staying has always been our preference. But I don't think they want us.

"We've invested €80 million in the stadium. But it is not ours. Who would agree to do such a thing?" Last week, Al-Khelaifi complained in the press about City Hall's refusal to sell the stadium, which seats 48,000, to QSI (Qatar Sports Investments), owner of the club.

The Paris municipality said that PSG had a 30-year lease but were now trying to pressure the city into selling the ground. "They (PSG) say: 'we will inject €500 or €600 million of works only if we are owners'," the municipality's urban development boss Emmanuel Gregoire said last week.

"It is not our first choice to sell them the Parc des Princes. It is the heritage of the city, of Parisians."

The Parc des Princes was originally built in the south-west of the city, close to the tennis courts of Roland Garros, in 1897 and was home for the national football and rugby teams until the Stade de France was built for the 1998 football World Cup.

