

Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Alikhan Smailov Is Scheduled to Visit Tehran Today for Bilateral Talks With Iranian Officials, Announced Deputy Chief of Staff for Political Affairs to Iran's President

IRAN NEWS

President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi On Tuesday Attended One of the Care Centers for Girl Children With Ineligible Parents in Tehran Where He Talked About the Activities of the Center

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Tehran Slams U.S. Unilateral Actions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations says unilateral measures taken by the United States are against the UN Charter while threatening multilateralism in the world.

Amir Saeed Irvani made the remarks in a Monday address delivered during a UN Security Council debate on multilateralism.

"Multilateralism has been recognized as a well-established approach to addressing global challenges and effective multilateralism ... is essential for ensuring international peace and security," he said. The official, however, warned that the integrity and effectiveness of multilateralism are undermined by the abuse of the UN system and selective application of international law, which pose a serious threat to international cooperation, peace, and security.

"Within this context, the United States' unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA, re-imposition of illegal unilateral sanctions on Iran, its coercion of other countries to engage in these illegal actions, and defiance of the International Court of Justice's order are striking examples of how such harmful unilateral acts violate the UN Charter, undermine the UN system and threaten multilateralism," Iran's ambassador said.

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U.S., Israel Unable to Withstand IRGC Capabilities

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The second-in-command of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the elite force has managed to become so powerful that neither the Americans nor the Zionists can hold out against it.

Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi said on Tuesday that the IRGC is a unique organization that improved its capabilities in all material and spiritual domains.

"In other words, when material and spiritual capabilities are put together, it creates a power that no evil power, such as that of the Americans and the Zionists, can withstand it," Fadavi added.

He argued that guarding the Islamic Revolution cannot be done only militarily, and therefore, the IRGC, as one of its main duties, serves the Iranian people to protect the revolution.

Iran celebrated the anniversary of the IRGC's establishment on Saturday.

In a tweet on the occasion, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kan'ani said the IRGC serves as a "powerful arm" that guards the Islamic Republic and its national interests while infuriating the sworn enemies.

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UN Seeks Humanitarian Exemptions for Iran Sanctions



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The UN relief chief says the world body is seeking humanitarian exemptions on Western sanctions against Iran through the Security Council.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, made the remarks while speaking at a press conference in Tehran on Tuesday following his talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian.

"Humanitarian agencies, and people like myself representing them everywhere in the world where there are sanctions, work very hard to mitigate the impact of those sanctions in humanitarian terms, and Iran is no different from anywhere else in that regard," he said.

He added sanctions are applied in different ways "but our efforts to mitigate them do not differ in different countries, whether it is in Iran, in Syria, in Afghanistan or elsewhere."

He also said that the UN relief bodies are very often assisted by decisions from key member states to provide an exemption through the Security Council and through humanitarian operations, saying, "We diligently pursue the implementation of those exemptions."

Griffiths further said UN agencies have also in Iran imported medical and health supplies to make sure that they are usable and used for the people of Iran.

Griffiths also expressed his satisfaction with the meeting and dialogue with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran.

Referring to the fact that his trip to Tehran aimed at meeting Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as other Iranian high-ranking officials Griffiths stated that his position includes opportunities and challenges adding: "One of the issues raised was the existing parties to achieve peace and stability in Yemen."

Referring to the impact of sanctions of Iran, UN official stressed: "The ultimate effort of the United Nations is to reduce the effects of sanctions on Iran, Syria and Afghanistan."

He noted: "We tried to consider exemptions through the Security Council for these countries. Attempts were made to get medical items and drugs reached to Iran."

"Our interest in sanctions is not political, it's humanitarian, and it just seeks to ensure where people need humanitarian aid, sanctions do not impede their access to that aid," he concluded.

The United States under former president Donald Trump reinstated crippling sanctions on Iran after unilaterally walking out of the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018, despite Iran's full compliance with the terms of the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran has repeatedly denounced the sanctions as an act of "economic war", "economic terrorism", and "medical terrorism".

The UN official called on the countries which have committed to provide relief aid to Afghans to fulfill their promises.

He emphasized the significance of UN reports, such as the one prepared by Elena Dohan, the world body's special rapporteurs on the impact of unilateral sanctions.

Several UN institutions and the one "that I represent are active in humanitarian affairs. Wherever sanctions are applied, they do their best to reduce the effects of sanctions on the people, and Iran is no exception to this," he said.

India, Iran Expanding Bilateral Military Cooperation

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India and Iran have a "comprehensive partnership" based on strong "mutual trust" and work is underway to expand bilateral "military cooperation" to newer domains in the future, said Lieutenant General Dinesh Singh Rana, Director General of Defense Intelligence Agency at Iran Army Day celebrations on Monday.

The program organized on the occasion of Iran Army Day in India was addressed by the Director General (DG) of the Defense Intelligence Agency Lt Gen Dinesh Singh Rana. In his address, Rana said that India and Iran are further working toward expanding bilateral military cooperation to newer domains in the near future.

"I am sanguine that our friendship will continue to grow and become stronger in the coming years," he added. Lieutenant General Dinesh Singh Rana, who was the chief guest at the event, said that India and Iran share a millennia-long history of interactions.

He added, "Indian and Iranian culture and religious traditions have grown and evolved over the years. Iran and India have a comprehensive partnership based on strong mutual trust and defense cooperation being a significant part of the same."

Lt Gen Rana also highlighted that besides professional training military courses, a number of Iranian naval delegations have visited various Indian naval training establishments in the past.

"In recent times, the defense engagement between both countries has grown. A number of professional military courses are being attended by both sides, thus increasing the number of interactions," he said.

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Iran Among Top Ten Future Science, Technology Superpowers

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran stands among the top ten science and technology superpowers, ranking higher than Japan, according to a new report published by Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI).

ASPI's new Critical Technology Tracker reported Iran ranked as one of the top 5 countries in six of the forty-four technologies tracked and ninth in the overall ranking to predict the top ten future global powers.

The number of publications and citations along with the Hirsch Index was examined in advanced aircraft engines including hypersonics and the country stood 4th in line, next to China and the United States, clearly surpassing Japan, Italy, and the UK.

According to ASPI, Iran is also among the top four countries in bio-fuel and smart materials science and new technologies that are emerging onto the market which could change the future of the industry.

Iran has published 2 percent of the total number of worldwide publications in synthetic biology marking it as the 8th country in global rankings.

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Iran Imposes Sanctions On EU, British Individuals, Entities

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran imposed sanctions on more than 20 individuals and entities from the European Union and the United Kingdom, after the bloc and London imposed a fresh round of sanctions targeting Iranian officials and organizations.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the EU and UK individuals and entities were blacklisted because of "supporting terrorism and terrorist groups, instigating and encouragement to terrorist acts and violence against Iranian people, interference in domestic affairs of Iran, fomenting violence and unrest in the country, dissemination of false information about Iran and participation in the escalation of cruel sanctions against Iranian people as an economic terrorism."

It added that Iran condemns the measures of the EU and Britain to support, facilitate and deny from countering the destructive acts of aforementioned individuals and entities, which are in violation of international obligations regarding combating terrorism.

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Iran Petrochemical Industry Projected to Grow

TEHRAN (IFP) - The CEO of the National Iranian Company of Petrochemical Industries has predicted a substantial increase in the capacity of the sector.

Morteza Shahmirzaee said at a news briefing of the 14th International Conference of Iran's Petrochemical Industry that the production capacity of Iran is currently 92 million tons and will increase by 3 tons by the end of this year to hit the 95 million ton milestone.

Shahmirzaee added that 10 new petrochemical projects will be launched this year as well, starting this month.

He noted that each month, one petrochemical project will be unveiled. The deputy oil minister pointed to the use of knowledge-based companies in the petrochemical industry, saying currently, 70 petrochemical factories account for the production of 550 types of polymer and chemical products.

Shahmirzaee said the petrochemical industry counts as a downstream industry of the oil sector and creating added value from upstream products of the oil industry is carried out by petrochemical factories.

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Five Turkish Publishers to Attend Tehran Int'l Book Fair

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Five Turkish publishers are supposed to participate in the 34th Tehran International Book Fair, said the head of POL Literary and Translation Agency.

Majid Jafari Aghdam said that Usturlab Yayinlari, Nar Yayinlari, MSE Yayinlari, Vakvak Yayinlari and Sigma Publishing from Turkiye will attend the children and young adolescents section of the exhibition. He added that the Turkish publishers will join Tehran's event May 16-19.

The 34th Tehran International Book Fair will be held in Imam Khomeini Mosalla and at the same time virtually on ketab.ir.

Official Forecasts Iran's Wheat Production At 12m Tons



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran expects to reap 12 million tons of wheat this year at a time of rising concerns over food supplies because of the ongoing war between major wheat producers Russia and Ukraine.

State purchases of wheat from local farmers are forecast at 8.2 million tons, up from 7.2 million tons last year, vice president of planning and economic affairs of the ministry of agricultural jihad Shahpour Alaei-Moqaddam said.

Iran's wheat production last year stood at 11 million tons, up 40 percent from the previous year.

"Wheat is the backbone of the agricultural sector, and the food security of the world is measured by wheat," Alaei-Moqaddam said.

The global food market is facing a serious challenge from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine which is the fifth largest exporter of wheat.

According to Alaei-Moqaddam, about 780 million tons of wheat is produced in the world, with China, India, and Russia respectively ranking first to third well ahead of Iran which is the 13th producer.

Economists say the West's imposition of sanctions on Russia has intensified the rise in prices for energy and food products, especially wheat.

Iran's domestic wheat output can vary widely depending on rainfall and the country has in some years been self-sufficient in the staple cereal.

Guaranteed purchases of wheat are the key plank of Iran's self-sufficiency drive in the strategic staple food. However, the former government's reluctance to raise its prices in accordance with inflation rates dissuaded many wheat

growers from selling their produce to the state.

As a result, the Rouhani administration imported more than 3 million tons of wheat at a cost of \$3.8 billion in 2020. For the fiscal year of 2021, Iran ran on a shortage of 30 percent which meant the country had to import 5-6 million tons of wheat, according to officials.

Kazakhstan, a top-10 world wheat exporter which signed a Caspian transit pact with Iran, appears an ideal candidate as the new source of import.

Iranian and Kazakh companies in the fields of food and agriculture including flour and grains, beverages, macaroni and pasta, as well as oil and semi-prepared foods, wood, cable, metallurgy, wagons and chain stores presented their capabilities.

For a long time, one of Iran's aspirations has been self-sufficiency in strategic agricultural products such as wheat, oilseeds and livestock inputs, but successive droughts in recent years and the lack of water resources have made it far-fetched of a goal, giving weight to the idea of overseas cultivation.

Of the 162.2 million hectares of land in Iran, more than 18 million hectares is agricultural land, which constitutes 12% of the country's land area. However, about 85% of Iran's fresh water is consumed in agriculture, which explains why overseas cultivation can be a shortcut for agricultural development and revival of the country's water resources.

Red Crescent Production of Medical Products rises by 37%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The overall production of medical equipment and devices by Iran's Red Crescent's manufacturing unit increased by 37% in 1401 (March 21, 2022-23).

Alireza Askari, the managing director of Iran's Red Crescent manufacturing unit told Iranian media, "A 37% increase in the amount of production compared to 1400 (March 21, 2021-22) has been registered as well as a 21% increase in the amount of production compared to the 5-year average in the production of strategic medical products in the medical equipment company."

"The number of these products is over 270 million and include syringes and needles, dialysis filters, dialysis set, fistula needles, thalassemia set, angiocath, bicarbonate powder and dialysis solvent.

The Red Crescent's manufacturing unit of medical devices usually produces single-use medical equipment and has increased its annual production considerably over the past few years.

Based on this, this company has been able to make important achievements by using advanced production facilities and complying with national standards and obtaining the CE standard for all its products.

Iran, China Stress Expanding Cultural, Tourism Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian and Chinese cultural officials in a meeting stressed the expansion of Tehran-Beijing cooperation in the field of tourism and cultural heritage.

Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage Ali Darabi met and held talks with China's Vice Minister for Culture and Tourism Li Qun during his visit to Beijing which was aimed at attending the General Assembly of the Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia.

Referring to the old history of Iran and China, Darabi called for the development of Tehran-Beijing relations. Li Qun, for his part, appreciated the Islamic Republic for announcing its readiness to hold a museum exhibition and considered such events as an effective step for the development of cultural diplomacy.

If the level of tourism interactions increases, many problems in other cooperation areas will also be solved, he said.

Over 1,500 Companies to Participate in Iran Oil Show 2023

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - More than 1,500 Iranian and Foreign companies will participate in the 27th Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition (Iran Oil Show 2023), which will be held at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds during May 17-20.

As reported, the international event will be participated by companies active in various sectors including upstream oil and gas sectors, exploration and production, as well as domestic manufacturers, knowledge-based companies, startups and other companies related to the oil industry, in addition to technology parks and universities.

"Oil Industry, Technological Production, Optimal Consumption" is the motto of this year's event.

President Ebrahim Raisi has said that the oil and gas sector experienced a growth of nine percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20).

Oil Minister Javad Oji has recently said that a new record high will be reached in the country's oil export in the current Iranian calendar year.

High-Ranking Russian Delegation Due in Tehran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A high-ranking Russian delegation will travel to Iran next month to hold talks on expansion of bilateral ties on issues ranging from oil and gas to transportation.

A Monday report by the Iranian Oil Ministry's news service Shana said that the Russian delegation will be in Tehran in mid-May to attend the 27th edition of Iran Oil Show, a prestigious event which focuses on investment and development plans for major oil and gas projects in Iran.

It said the delegation will be led by Alexander Novak, a former head of Russia's state energy company Gazprom and the current deputy prime minister of the country.

Novak and Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji serve as co-heads of Russia-Iran intergovernmental commission.

The Russian delegation traveling to Iran will also feature Governor of the Bank of Russia Elvira Nabiullina, according to Iranian deputy oil minister for international affairs Ahmad Assadzadeh.

Assadzadeh said members of the Russian delegation will hold business-to-business meetings with Iranian counterparts on the sidelines of the Iran Oil Show which is planned to be held on May 17-20.

He said talks will mostly focus on banking, cargo transit, oil, gas and petrochemicals, adding that the two sides will also sign a series of contracts.

Iran and Russia have sought to significantly expand their economic and energy ties since early 2022 when Russia came under Western sanctions because of its involvement in the war in Ukraine.

Belarusian Ambassador Visits Sarakhs Special Economic Zone

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Ambassador of Belarus to Iran Dmitry Koltsov visited the Sarakhs Special Economic Zone in Khorasan Razavi province, northwestern Iran, said the governor of Sarakhs.

Hassan Nourizadeh said that one of the goals of the Belarusian ambassador on this visit was to see the transit activities and the facilities of goods transshipment of the region.

Nourizadeh added that since Belarus has significant capabilities in the field of agricultural equipment and



tractor manufacturing, joint activity in Sarakhs Special Economic Zone can facilitate the investors' investment.

Stating that Belarus is also under sanctions, the governor of Sarakhs said that it seems that Belarus' activities in Sarakhs Economic Zone can be done without any worries about sanctions.

With an area of 5,290 hectares, Sarakhs Special Economic Zone is located northeast of Iran and connects ports in the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf to Central Asia, the Caucasus and Russia.

Developing Parliamentary Cooperation to Expand Iran-Mexico Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) - In a meeting with the Mexican envoy to Tehran, a senior Iranian MP called for boosting parliamentary cooperation between the two countries, expressing hope that such cooperation will positively affect the bilateral ties.

The Spokesman for Iran Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission and the Head of the Iran-Mexico parliamentary friendship group Abolfazl Amouei met and held talks with the Mexican Ambassador to Iran Guillermo Puente Ordorica.

Considering the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mexico as important and influential countries in the developments of the Middle East and Latin America, Amouei cited that the expansion of cooperation between the two countries will be effective in increasing regional and international peace and stability.

Referring to the favorable political and cultural relations between Tehran and Mexico City, the senior Iranian parliament member called for increasing the level of interactions and cooperation between the governments and parliaments of the two countries.

The Mexican envoy, for his part, expressed his country's willingness to develop bilateral ties with Tehran, calling for expanding Iran-Mexico relations in all fields including economy, trade, industry, and agriculture.

Members of the Iran-Mexico parliamentary friendship group are scheduled to visit Iran next week at the invitation of Abolfazl Amouei.



Huge Numbers of Iranian Nurses Migrating to Foreign Countries

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian nurses are migrating to the UAE, Kuwait, Oman and Europe. That's according to the head of Iran's Nurse House, Mohammad Sharifi Moghaddam.

Speaking during an interview with Entekhab online news outlet, Sharifi Moghaddam said the monthly salary of a nurse in Germany is 1800 euros but in Iran nurses are paid 120 thousand tomans, slightly more than 2 dollars, per day for the healthcare services they provide.

He noted that this has annoyed the Iranian nurses. Sharifi Moghaddam said, add to this the huge income inequality between physicians and nurses.

He singled out Saudi Arabia as an example, saying a doctor with specialty in Saudi Arabia is paid 15 thousand rials while a nurse receives 10 thousand rials per month, but the inequality between them in Iran is 100-fold.

The head of Iran's Nurse House said another reason for the migration of nurses is that they think the foreign countries to which they emigrate are attractive.

Sharifi Moghaddam added that Oman has always been an important destination for migrating nurses. He noted that the Omanis do not pay huge salaries to nurses, but they are fair. Sharifi Moghaddam predicted that Iranian nurses will also move to Kuwait and the UAE in large numbers.

The Iranian Health Ministry has yet to comment on this report.

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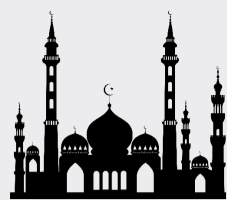
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108. Say: "O ye men! Now Truth hath reached you from your Lord! those who receive guidance, do so for the good of their own souls; those who stray, do so to their own loss: and I am not (set) over you to arrange your affairs."

109. Follow thou the inspiration sent unto thee, and be patient and constant, till Allah do decide: for He is the best to decide.

Surah 10. Jonah (108 - 109)

Kazakhstan Keen To Expand Its Trade With Iran

BY: F. TAHERPOOR

TEHRAN – Vice-Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan says his country is determined to broaden its economic cooperation with Iran and reiterated Astana is determined to increase the current trade volume to the \$3b target which has been set by the presidents of both countries.

Speaking in the Iran-Kazakhstan Business Forum at Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Kazakh Vice-Minister Kairat Torebayev emphasized that cooperation of Kazakhstan with Iran has a strong base, adding that currently 511 companies with investment of Iranians in different fields are active in Kazakhstan.

He went on to say that the trade volume between Iran and Kazakhstan was over \$528m in 2022, adding that the figure showed 20% growth comparing to 2021 but unfortunately the figure has declined by 43% this year and it is mainly because of decline in purchase of wheat from Kazakhstan.

Torebayev noted that Kazakhstan is eager to cooperate with Iranians in the fields of tourism, fruits and vegetables, adding that Kazakh companies are ready to export to Iran over 100 items of goods worth of \$162m, reiterating that Astana is ready for materializing the \$3b trade target with Iran and use diplomatic capacity for linking traders of both sides.

He said petrochemical products, construction materials and fruits are major imports of Kazakhstan from Iran which is on the rise. He noted that boosting the bilateral trade is the policy of the Kazakh government and representatives of 20 companies have accompanied him to Tehran for talks and signing contracts.

Meanwhile in the forum, Head of ICCIMA Mr. Gholam-Hossein Shafei welcomed the vice minister and his entourage and said that Kazakhstan is one of important countries for Iran and trade with it is important. He noted that Kazakhstan has a special place in Iran's



foreign policy. He admitted that the current trade volume is not satisfactory despite both countries' capacities. He also pointed to the presence of Kazakhstan in the SCO and EAEU and despite sanctions, today the ground is ready for boosting trade.

He reiterated lack of joint bank, banking problem, lack of infrastructures for transportation as well as lack of acquaintance to both countries' markets are the hurdles in way of boosting the trade which should be taken into consideration and be resolved.

He hailed Kazakhstan for revoking visa regime for Iranians but he said that duration of visa for two weeks is not enough for businessmen and called for more attention on it.

Shafei added that the North-South Corridor is the best opportunity for cooperation with Kazakhstan and this corridor will help the countries a great deal.

He also called for the launch of a committee for developing transportation. He said developing shipping transportation will reduce cost of trade exchange and portal infrastructures should be reinforced for marine transportation. He said soon the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber in collaboration with ICCIMA will open its trade center in Kazakhstan which will help traders of both countries for their businesses.

Addressing the event, Kazakh Ambassador to Tehran Askhat Orazbay said that this is the third Iran-Kazakhstan forum which turns into a tradition and shows the interest of Kazakhs for broadening trade ties with Iran. He then pointed to the exchange of trade delegations between the two countries and visit of Kazakhstan President to Tehran. He announced readiness of Kazakhstan embassy for cooperation with the ICCIMA for broadening trade and said that direct flight and easing visa issuance have helped the trade between the two countries to increase.

Meanwhile Head of Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber Mr. Abedi, for his part, invited Kazakhs to attend IRANEXPO which will be held in Tehran on May 7-10 and called it a good opportunity for boosting cooperation.

He said that Kazakhstan's annual trade volume is \$135 while Iran's share of it is less than 0.5% and this is not good for the country.

He also invited Kazakh traders to attend an exhibition which will be held on Kish Island this year.

IME Posts Higher Records In Value of Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 3,154,093 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$712m, posting growths of 18% and 20% in volume and value of trades compared with the week before that.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,555,886 tons of commodities worth nearly \$434m. On this floor the IME sold 1,327,505 tons of cement, 608,000 tons of iron ore, 423,871 tons of steel, 175,000 tons of sponge iron, 60,600 tons of zinc, 13,335 tons of copper, 10,425 tons of aluminum, 500 tons of cast iron and 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 527,530 tons of commodities valued at more than \$245m. Commodities traded on this floor included 160,831 tons of bitumen, 137,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 102,349 tons of polymeric products, 58,000 tons of lube cut, 39,144 tons of chemicals, 23,320 tons of sulfur, 5,058 tons of base oil, 2,008 tons of petroleum products, 290 tons of gas feedstocks and 200 tons of insulation.

The IME also traded within the same week 70,677 tons of commodities on its side market.



Iran Exports to Turkey Up 23% In Year to March

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian exports to Turkey jumped by nearly a fourth in the year to late March, according to a senior official in the country's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

TPO's head of West Asia Office Farzad Piltan said that Iranian exports to Turkey had amounted to \$7.45 billion in the calendar year to March 20, up 23% from the previous calendar year.

"That made Turkey the third largest buyer of Iranian exports," said Piltan while citing annual trade figures from the Iranian customs office.

He said that main goods and commodities exported from Iran to Turkey over the past calendar year included natural gas, aluminum, urea, polyethylene and copper products.

On imports from Turkey, Piltan said that Iran had taken delivery of nearly \$6 billion worth of goods from its northwestern neighbor in the year to March, up 15% from the year before.

He said Turkey was the third largest supplier of goods and commodities to Iran in the past calendar year.

Cooking oil, over-the-road tractors for semitrailers, animal feed corn, banana and transformers were the main goods imported from Turkey to Iran over the year to late March, said the official.

Heads of ICCO, JICA Meet

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The president of the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC), in a meeting with the president of the JICA office emphasized the importance and priority of education and stated: Considering the extent of the cooperative sector and the necessity of training the latest technology in various fields, the training of managers and colleagues of the cooperative sector is one of the highest issue of the cooperative sector.

Bahman Abdollahi, the president of the ICC met Mr. "Tanaka", the president of the JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) office in Tehran and emphasized the importance of education in various sectors.

While welcoming the president of JICA office in Tehran, the capabilities of the cooperative sector in Iran were introduced and he added: "Cooperatives have an important and effective position in Iran and many products are produced by the cooperative sector."

He said: "One of our main demands is training managers and colleagues of the cooperative sector in various fields." and "In order to increase the productivity, quality and production of products, we urgently need to familiarize ourselves with modern technologies and knowledge."

He admitted: Cooperatives in the fields of agriculture, livestock and poultry, petrochemicals have an active role in the country and training in these sectors has a special priority. to the necessity of holding training courses in other provinces of the country, the president



of the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives said:

The recent JICA courses were held in Tehran, and we hope that these courses will be held in other provinces as well.

Tanaka, while expressing his satisfaction at the presence in the ICC, said: JICA's focus and attention is on job creation for small and medium-sized (SMEs) companies in various industries. He said: Currently, JICA is active in the field of

tourism in Tabriz, fisheries in Hormozgan and in the field of agriculture in the north of Iran, and we are interested in expanding these activities and interacting more with other non-governmental organizations.

In other part of this meeting, the president of the ICC emphasized the importance of holding various face-to-face and online courses in Iran and Japan and suggested shortening the process of holding in-person training courses in Japan.

The head of the JICA office in Tehran also announced the interest of this organization to hold training courses and interact more with the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives in various sectors such as agriculture, knowledge-based and other sectors.

Abdollahi pointed out the importance of knowledge-based cooperatives in Iran: We have more than 210 knowledge-based cooperatives in the country operating in different sectors which have special importance in the country and receive special facilities and support for their activities.

Iran, Syria Discussing Expansion of Economic Ties

TEHRAN - Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash arrived in Syria at the head of a high-ranking delegation and was welcomed by Syrian Economy and Foreign Trade Minister Mohammad Samer al-Khalil.

During the two-day stay in Syria, the two countries' officials are discussing the ways for the expansion of economic relations between the two countries.

Bazrpash and Samer al-Khalil co-chair Iran-Syria Joint Economic Committee. Emphasizing the strengthening of economic relations between Iran and Syria, the Iranian minister announced the talks between the officials of the two countries to expand economic relations in the maritime and rail sectors, facilitate bank transactions and reduce free trade tariffs.

Talking to the reporters after visiting Samer al-Khalil, Bazrpash said about the goals of his two-day trip: "In this trip, the aim is to advance the agreements that were made in the past and lay the ground for new agreements in various fields."

"There are high relations between the two countries, and Iran and Syria are at the highest level of political relations, but in the economic field, there is a lot of possibilities to develop ties, and we are trying to expand economic relations", the minister emphasized.

"The most important issues that we are following in the joint committee meeting today and tomorrow include the sea-oriented economy, which has good plans prepared, also in the rail sector, the alliance between Iran, Iraq, and Syria, and the revival and development of rail lines in the fields of cargo and passenger transit are considered", the chairman of the joint committee further announced on Tuesday.

Iran and Syria have been taking major steps for the expansion of their mutual trade ties. The two sides have exchanged numerous trade delegations and Iranian private companies are investing in various fields of the Syrian economy like providing construction materials especially cement and working on several reconstruction projects.

Chadormalu Co. Sets New Record For Monthly Steel Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company began the first month of the new Iranian calendar month of Farvardin with setting a new record.

According to reports, Chadormalu Company produces over 112,450 tons of steel ingots in Farvardin which is the highest monthly production record as the company by producing 4941 tons of steel ingots set another record for daily production in the history of the company.

As per report of the public relations of Chadormalu Company, the company produced over 1.184m tons of steel ingots last year which was the highest amount in its history and this year in line with the remarks of the Supreme Leader the company is materialize the slogan of the year by increasing production.

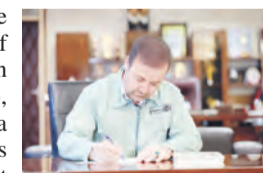
Last year, the company exported 267,582 tons of its steel ingots which earned the country \$148m.



Felicitation Message Over First Production Record of Year

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Following the first production record of the year set by Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO), the CE of the company in a message felicitated this achievement and called it



the outcome of trust and self-esteem of the staff as well as proper planning, boosting productivity and making ready the production lines for the New Year.

Ataollah Maroufkhani in his message which was aimed at boosting the morale and spirit of the personnel hailed this success which was achieved in the first month of the year and in the holy month of Ramadan.

He noted that this is another honor for HOSCO, Mobarakeh Steel Group and Hormozgan Province and ultimately for the national steel industry.

Maroufkhani further in his message reiterated that in the first meeting of the year all promised to continue the successes of the past year by achieving more success through increasing production and profits and today he has honor to announce that in the first month of the year of Controlling Inflation and Increasing Production the company materialized the promise by setting the first production record and expressed hope these achievements would continue by the yearend by setting more records.

Majority of Britons Back Keeping Monarchy

LONDON (Dispatches) - Most Britons want to keep the monarchy but King Charles III lacks support from young people, a new poll suggested, less than two weeks before his coronation.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents backed retaining the monarchy, compared to 26 percent in favor of an elected head of state and 16 percent who "don't know", according to the YouGov survey.

But the poll, commissioned by the BBC before Charles's May 6 coronation, indicated that only about a third of young people support the monarchy while 38 percent would prefer an elected head of state. They showed broad indifference towards the institution, with more than three-quarters of 18-24 year-olds saying they were "not interested" in the royal family.



S. Korea's President To Meet Biden

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol set off for the United States and a summit with President Joe Biden at a time of rare questioning in South Korea of an alliance that has guaranteed its security for decades.

Yoon's April 24-29 trip is the first state visit to the U.S. by a South Korean leader in 12 years and will mark the 70th anniversary of a partnership that has helped anchor U.S. strategy in Asia and provided a foundation for South Korea's emergence as an economic powerhouse. But as North Korea races ahead with the development of nuclear weapons and missiles to carry them, there are growing questions in South Korea about the relying on "extended deterrence", in essence the American nuclear umbrella, and calls, even from some senior members of Yoon's party, for South Korea to develop its own nuclear weapons.



UN Warns Sudan on Edge of Abyss As Battles Spark Mass Exodus



KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Foreign nations pushed on Monday with evacuations of their citizens from chaos-torn Sudan which, the UN chief warned, is "on the edge of the abyss" after 10 days of brutal fighting between rival forces.

As army and paramilitary troops again clashed in Khartoum and across the country, terrified Sudanese have sheltered in their homes from roaming fighters and looters amid acute shortages of water, food, medicines and fuel as well as power and internet blackouts.

The United States and multiple European, Middle Eastern, African and Asian nations have launched emergency missions to bring to safety their embassy staff and Sudan-based citizens by road, air and sea.

At least 427 people have been killed and more than 3,700 wounded, according to UN agencies, which reported Sudanese civilians "fleeing areas affected by fighting, including to Chad, Egypt and South Sudan".

"Morgues are full, corpses litter the streets" said Attiya Abdallah, head of the doctors' union, which on Monday reported scores more casualties after sites in south Khartoum were "heavily shelled".

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that the violence in Sudan -- already one of the world's poorest countries, with a history of military coups -- "could engulf the whole region and beyond".

"We must all do everything within our power to pull Sudan back from the edge of the abyss," Guterres said, calling again for a ceasefire.

Britain has requested an emergency meeting of the Security Council on Sudan, which was expected to take place on Tuesday, according to a diplomat.

A UN convoy carrying 700 people completed an arduous 850 kilometre (530 mile) road trip from the capital, where gunfire and explosions have echoed through the streets, to Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast.

French military personnel upon their arrival at a French military air base in Djibouti, where they evacuated around 200 people from Sudan.

The United Nations head of mission Volker Perthes and other key staff will, however, "remain in Sudan and will continue to work towards a resolution to the current crisis," said a UN statement.

With Khartoum airport disabled after battles that left charred aircraft on the runways, many foreigners were airlifted out from smaller airstrips, to countries including Djibouti and Jordan.

US special forces swooped in with Chinook helicopters Sunday to rescue diplomats and their dependents, while Britain launched a similar rescue mission.

European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said more than 1,000 EU citizens had been taken out during a "long and intense weekend" involving airlift missions by France, Germany and others.

China said Monday it had "safely evacuated" a first group of citizens and would "try every means to protect the lives, properties and safety of 1,500 plus Chinese compatriots in Sudan".

The capital, a city of five million, has endured "more than a week of unspeakable destruction", Norway's ambassador Endre Stiansen, who was evacuated, wrote on Twitter.

He voiced "immense sadness" for colleagues and friends left behind. "I fear for their future, because at present weapons and narrow interests carry more weight than values and words."

Looking ahead at what fate awaits Sudan, he said that "most scenarios appear bad".

China Says It Respects Sovereignty of Ex-Soviet States

LUXEMBOURG (Dispatches) - China respects the status of former Soviet member states as sovereign nations, its foreign ministry said, distancing itself from comments by its envoy to Paris that triggered an uproar among European capitals.

Several European Union foreign ministers had said comments by ambassador Lu Shaye - in which he questioned the sovereignty of Ukraine and other former Soviet states - were unacceptable and had asked Beijing to clarify its stance.

Asked if Lu's comments represented China's official position, foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said that Beijing respected the status of the former Soviet member states as sovereign nations following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Mao told a regular news briefing that it was her remarks on sovereignty that represented China's official government stance.

The Chinese embassy in Paris issued a statement later on Monday to say that Lu's comments on Ukraine "were not a political declaration but an expression of his personal views".

Both statements, following the backlash, appeared to be an effort to ease the tension with the EU.

"Beijing has distanced itself from the unacceptable remarks by its ambassador," Josep Borrell told a news conference, saying it was "good news".

The French foreign ministry said it was "taking note" of Beijing's "clarifications" and that the minister's chief of staff had met with Lu on Monday, told him his comments were unacceptable and urged him to speak in a way "that is in line with his country's official stance."

Lu has earned himself a reputation as one of China's "wolf warrior" diplomats, so-called for their hawkish and abrasive style.

Asked about his position on whether Crimea was part of Ukraine or not, Lu had said in an interview aired on French TV on Friday that historically it was part of Russia and had been offered to Ukraine by former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.



Moscow Says Serious Concern Over New Armenia-Azerbaijan Tensions

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Moscow expressed "serious concern" over fresh tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which have been locked for decades in a deadly territorial conflict.

The comments from the foreign ministry came a day after Azerbaijan set up a checkpoint on the only land link to the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh, sparking anger from Armenia.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought two wars over the mountainous enclave of Karabakh that have left tens of thousands dead.

The majority-ethnic Armenian region is still internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan despite breaking away after the fall of the Soviet Union, with tensions regularly flaring between the two countries.

Moscow brokered a ceasefire after the latest bout of fighting in 2020, and posted peacekeepers along the sole road linking Karabakh to Armenia, the Lachin corridor.

"We express our serious concern about the situation within the zone of responsibility of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh," the Russian foreign ministry said.

The statement also warned against "unilateral steps" in violation of the ceasefire.

Tensions over the Lachin corridor have soared since last year, with Armenia accusing Azerbaijan of blockading the route and creating a humanitarian crisis in the mountainous enclave.

Under the ceasefire agreement, Azerbaijan must guarantee safe passage through the corridor.

Azerbaijan, however, said it set up the checkpoint on Sunday "to prevent the illegal transportation of manpower, weapons, mines."

It added the checkpoint "shall be implemented in conjunction with the Russian peacekeeping force." Armenia denied the claims as a "far-fetched and baseless pretext" and said the move breached the ceasefire.

The country of three million people on Monday commemorated the 108th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

Far-Right Backers, Police Tussle as Spain Fascist Leader Re-Buried

MADRID (Dispatches) - Far-right protesters in Madrid tussled with police as the remains of a fascist party founder were to be re-buried in a simple grave as Spain works to reckon with its authoritarian past.

The exhumation of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera's body came six months after Spain passed its so-called democratic memory law aimed at tackling the legacy of the 1936-39 civil war and the decades of dictatorship that followed.

Primo de Rivera founded the Falange party in 1933 which went on to become one of the pillars of Franco's brutal regime, along with the military and Spain's Roman Catholic Church.

He was executed in November 1936 for conspiring against the elected Republican government and in 1959, his remains were transferred to a vast basilica in Valley of the Fallen, 50 kilometres (30 miles) northwest of Madrid.

As his remains arrived for reburial at Madrid's San Isidro cemetery, scuffles broke out between police and around 200 far-right activists chanting and making fascist salutes, an AFP correspondent said.

Police had blocked off access to the cemetery although banner-waving supporters began gathering outside before the arrival of his remains.

The basilica where Primo de Rivera's remains lay for over six decades, is part of a vast hillside mausoleum built after the civil war by Franco's regime -- in part by the forced labour of 20,000 political prisoners.

When the dictator died in 1975, he was also buried there, in a tomb by the altar, with the site long being a draw for those nostalgic for the Franco era.

Under the new law, no figure linked to the 1936 military coup that triggered the civil war should have a grave in "a prominent public place" that could encourage acts of homage or exaltation.

Primo de Rivera's family agreed to have his remains removed, selecting April 24 because it marks 120 years since his birth.

Honoring Franco-era victims has been a top priority for Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's left-wing government.

It wants to strip the mausoleum of its status as a symbol of Francoism and far-right ideology and turn it into a place of memory for the dark years of the dictatorship.

Education Minister Pilar Alegria said the exhumation was "one more step towards restoring the dignity of Spain's democracy" which would see the complex repurposed as a space of remembrance for the victims.



Czech Republic Looks to Supply Vietnam More Aircraft, Radars

HANOI (Dispatches) - Vietnam is in talks with the Czech Republic for military supplies, including aircraft, radars, upgrades of armored vehicles and firearms, a Czech government source told Reuters, as Hanoi aims to diversify its mostly Russian arsenal.

Security was one of the main topics discussed with Vietnam leaders by Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala in a three-day visit last week, the official said, noting that security firms were the largest component of the business delegation that accompanied Fiala.

The former Soviet satellite state is seen as being well positioned to meet some of Vietnam's growing security needs as its military firms excel in retrofitting Russian gear and often manufacture new equipment that is compatible with Soviet legacy arms - a skill that is particularly well regarded in Vietnam, where 80% of the local arsenal is estimated to come from Russia.

Over the last two decades, Prague has already positioned itself as the European Union's main supplier of weapons to Vietnam, according to data from the Stockholm think-tank SIPRI.

Hanoi ordered a dozen L-39NG light-combat aircraft in 2021 from Czech manufacturer Aero Vodochody, with delivery to begin this year. There are talks to deliver more such planes, said the source, who attended the high-level meetings and asked not to be named because the talks were internal.

At the end of a meeting between Fiala and Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, the Vietnamese government said "the two leaders agreed to step up cooperation in security-defence", among other fields.

The official said that Prague could support the transfer of weapons technology and local manufacturing if significant supply deals were concluded.

Of the 15 companies that made up the Czech business delegation, four were security firms. They were Czechoslovak Group, Colt CZ Group, Omnipol and STV GROUP, the official said.

The companies did not reply to requests for comment and Colt declined to comment. Omnipol has a minority stake in Aero Vodochody and owns Aircraft Industries, the Czech maker of L 410 NG cargo aircraft, whose sale was also discussed last week with Vietnamese military procurement officers, the official said.

Similar talks were held in past days with Indonesian civilian officials and Philippines counterparts, as part of the Czech delegation's tour of Asian countries.



World's Oldest Tree Able to Reveal Planet's Secrets



VALDIVIA (Dispatches) - In a forest in southern Chile, a giant tree has survived for thousands of years and is in the process of being recognized as the oldest in the world.

Known as the "Great Grandfather," the trunk of this tree measuring four meters (13 feet) in diameter and 28 meters tall is also believed to contain scientific information that could shed light on how the planet has adapted to climatic changes.

Believed to be more than 5,000 years old, it is on the brink of replacing Methuselah, a 4,850-year-old Great Basin bristlecone pine found in California in the United States, as the oldest tree on the planet.

"It's a survivor, there are no others that have had the opportunity to live so long," said Antonio Lara, a researcher at Austral University and Chile's center for climate science and resilience, who is part of the team measuring the tree's age.

The Great Grandfather lies on the edge of a ravine in a forest in the southern Los Rios region, 800 kilometers (500 miles) to the south of the capital Santiago.

It is a *Fitzroya cupressoides*, a type of cypress tree that is endemic to the south of the continent.

In recent years, tourists have walked an hour through the forest to the spot to be photographed beside the new "oldest tree in the world."

Due to its growing fame, the national forestry body has had to increase the number of park rangers and restrict access to protect the Great Grandfather.

By contrast, the exact location of Methuselah is kept a secret.

Also known as the Patagonian cypress, it is the largest tree species in South America.

It lives alongside other tree species, such as coigue, plum pine and tepa, Darwin's frogs, lizards, and birds such as the chucao tapaculo and Chilean hawk.

For centuries its thick trunk has been chopped down to build houses and ships, and it was heavily logged during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Park warden Anibal Henriquez discovered the tree while patrolling the forest in 1972. He died of a heart attack 16 years later while patrolling the same forest on horseback.

"He didn't want people and tourists to know (where it was) because he knew it was very valuable," said his daughter Nancy Henriquez, herself a park warden.

Henriquez's nephew, Jonathan Barichivich, grew up playing amongst the *Fitzroya* and is now one of the scientists studying the species.

In 2020, Barichivich and Lara managed to extract a sample from the Great Grandfather using the longest manual drill that exists, but they did not reach the center.

They estimated that their sample was 2,400 years old and used a predictive model to calculate the full age of the tree.

Barichivich said that "80 percent of the possible trajectories show the tree would be 5,000 years old." He hopes to soon publish the results.

The study has created excitement within the scientific community given that dendrochronology -- the method of dating tree rings to when they were formed -- is less accurate when it comes to older trees as many have a rotten core.

This is about more than just a competition to enter the record books though, as the Great Grandfather is a font of valuable information.

Is Molecular Farming a New Lead in the Hunt for More Plant Proteins?



PARIS (Dispatches) - In order to rethink our food system, which has a heavy impact on our planet, we must find a way to produce protein in a way that doesn't involve raising livestock.

While lab-grown meat is sparking interest, it's not the only innovation in the area. Have you ever heard of molecular farming? On the occasion of Earth Day, April 22, we explain what it involves.

You may be familiar with molecular gastronomy, which combines scientific principles with culinary arts allowing cooking techniques to be considered from a different perspective. It's been the subject of books such as one by Hervé This, who has long worked on the subject.

But do you know what molecular farming is? While the names suggest they're related, similarities basically end there. Molecular farming is about rethinking the food system and making it less impactful for the planet.

According to the FAO, the United Nations agency for agriculture and food, the meat industry is responsible for about 14.5 per cent of CO2 emissions related to human activities, while it's estimated that the food industry is linked to around one third of greenhouse gas emissions.

Adding to the complexity of the issue are population projections for 2050, which indicate that by that date the planet will be home to ten billion people who will have to be fed. In this context, the consumption of meat and dairy products are predicted to increase by 70 per cent.

Could plants hold the solution? They're already used as a source of proteins, in particular the legume proteins provided by soy, lentils and chickpeas. With molecular farming, the use of plants takes on another dimension since this approach sees them used to manufacture proteins.

The principle is nothing new. For 40 years now, molecular farming methods have been used by the pharmaceutical industry to develop drugs and vaccines. The technique consists in manipulating the plants on a cellular, genetic level to stimulate the production of proteins.

What's really new here is applying this principle to the food industry. In California, Nobell Foods has been "instructing" plants to produce casein since 2016, in the aim of creating "cheeses" with the same elasticity or meltability as conventional dairy-based cheese.

The US company has just hired a former executive of the famous meatless burger startup Impossible Foods, which supplies many fast food restaurants with their plant-based offerings.

In Massachusetts, the start-up Ingredient Werks relies on corn to produce not only casein, but also the leghemoglobin that gives plant-based meat alternatives their red colour.

"The Impossible Burger includes an ingredient from soybeans called leghemoglobin, a protein that is chemically bound to a non-protein molecule called heme that gives leghemoglobin its blood-red colour.

In fact, a heme — an iron-containing molecule — is what gives blood and red meat their colour.

Leghemoglobin is evolutionarily related to animal myoglobin found in muscle and hemoglobin in blood, and serves to regulate oxygen supply to cells," explained Mark R. O'Brian, a professor of biochemistry at the University of Buffalo, in an article published in *The Conversation*, a media outlet dedicated to academic expertise that relays the analyses of scientists.

As a result, there are hopes of developing cells capable of structuring a material resembling meat.

The challenge is currently being taken up in Iceland, where the company ORF Genetics is growing some 130,000 barley plants. The plants are genetically modified and serve as a basis for the extraction of proteins that are then put under a microscope to stimulate cell production.

Every Breath a Struggle, as Air Pollution Harms Health in Thailand



BANGKOK (Dispatches) - An elderly patient hooked up to a tangle of tubes lies struggling for breath in a Bangkok hospital as Thailand battles a "drastic increase" in respiratory problems caused by a spike in air pollution.

His wife holds his hand and strokes his face, with a nurse in blue scrubs listening to his chest through a stethoscope.

Every single breath is an exertion.

About 2.4 million people in Thailand have needed treatment for medical problems linked to air pollution since the start of the year, including nearly 200,000 this week alone, according to health officials.

Bangkok and the northern city of Chiang Mai were among the top 10 most polluted cities in the world yesterday, according to air quality monitoring firm IQAir.

Piamlarp Sangsayunh, a respiratory disease specialist at the Central Chest Institute of Thailand in Nonthaburi, says she has seen a "drastic increase in patients since February".

"The patients usually have respiratory problems like coughing and sore throats," she told AFP yesterday, adding that eye irritation is also common.

Elderly people are among the most vulnerable to air pollution, which can exacerbate existing conditions, sometimes requiring them to be put on oxygen machines, she said.

But she said those working outdoors — such as Bangkok's vast army of street vendors and motorbike taxi drivers — were the ones "on the front line" of the crisis.

Uraivan Chantana, who sells fish balls on the street in Bangkok's central shopping district, said breathing in toxic air every day made her exhausted, but she could not shut her stall because she had no other way to earn money.

Scientists Save Ancient Arctic Ice In Race to Preserve Climate History

PARIS (Dispatches) - Scientists have succeeded in saving samples of ancient Arctic ice for analysis in a race against time before it melts away due to climate change, they said this week.

The eight French, Italian and Norwegian researchers camped in Norway's Svalbard archipelago in March and April, braving storms and mishaps to preserve crucial ice records that can be used to analyse what the Earth's climate looked like in the past and chart the devastating impact human activity is having on it now.

The Ice Memory Foundation team extracted three huge tubes of glacier ice on Svalbard. They, like others collected by the 20-year project launched in 2015, will be preserved for future scientific analysis at a research station in Antarctica.

Analysing chemicals in such deep "ice cores" provides valuable data about centuries of past climatic and environmental conditions, long after the original glacier has disappeared.

But it is a race to preserve this "ice memory". Experts warn that as global temperatures rise, meltwater is leaking into ancient ice and risks destroying the geochemical records it contains before scientists can collect the data.

When the Ice Memory team set up camp in March on Holtedalfonna, one of the highest and most northerly glaciers in the Arctic, the first hitch was the weather.

Instead of the expected -25 degrees Celsius (-13 degrees Fahrenheit), fierce winds forced the temperature down to -40C, delaying drilling for several days.

Then, once they had bored a 24.5-metre (80-foot) hole in the ice, water from the melting glacier rushed into it.

Even though radar data collected since 2005 showed there was some meltwater inside the Holtedalfonna glacier, "we did not expect to find such an extended, abundant and saturated aquifer in the selected drilling site, at the end of winter", explained Jean-Charles Gallet, snow physicist at the Norwegian Polar Institute and expedition coordinator.

"Glaciers are not only dramatically losing their mass but also their cold content."

Aquifers are underground reservoirs of freshwater or saltwater that permeate the ice crystals in glaciers and weaken them.

"Seeing all that water in the glacier gave us the clearest evidence yet of the effects that dramatic climate change is having in the Arctic," said Daniele Zannoni, a member of the team from the Ca' Foscari University in Venice.

Human-caused carbon emissions have warmed the planet by 1.15 degrees Celsius since industrialisation, powered by fossil fuels, began the 19th century. Studies indicate that the Arctic is warming between two and four times faster than the global average.

On Friday, the United Nations said the world's 40-odd "reference glaciers" -- those for which long-term observations exist -- are more than 26 metres thinner now on average than in 1970.

The pressure of the meltwater rushing into the Holtedalfonna drill hole damaged two of the team's driller motors, forcing them to relocate to the summit of the Dovrebreen glacier, 13 metres higher up.

When drilling resumed, the researchers succeeded in extracting three ice cores 50-75 metres long. The strata and air bubbles trapped in these precious translucent cylinders, just a dozen centimetres in diameter, could contain up to 300 years of climate history.

The race is on for glaciologists, who "are seeing their primary material disappear forever from the surface of the planet", Jerome Chappellaz, president of the Ice Memory foundation, told AFP on April 3.

"It is our responsibility as glaciologists of this generation to make sure a bit of it is preserved."

When the researchers had three ice samples, the temperature in Svalbard shot up to -3C, turning part of the route back to their base at the Ny-Alesund research station into a treacherous torrent of water.

Two of the ice cores made it base but the third is still stuck at the drilling site, waiting for more clement weather to be shipped out.

In the meantime, Ice Memory has put out an international plea to other researchers.

Pollution, Bird Flu Threaten Very Fragile Chilean Dolphin Population



SANTIAGO (Dispatches) - Growing pollution, industrial activities and now bird flu are threatening the Chilean dolphin, one of the world's smallest cetaceans, in the cold Pacific waters off Chile's western coastlines.

Also known as the "tonina negra," the dolphin's small population lives along the Chilean southern and central coasts, in bays also used for industrial activities such as sea farming and seaweed extraction.

Chile's long coastline helps make it one of the world's top exporters of fish and aquatic crops.

"Chilean dolphins share spaces with humans, and knowing this, we have to work even more to protect this unique species," said veterinarian Cayetano Espinosa, adding that the species is "very fragile, because there are only a few of the dolphins left."

Espinosa is a member of the Yaqu Pacha study center on marine ecosystems.

Jose Luis Brito, curator of the Natural History Museum at the country's main maritime terminal, San Antonio, said he receives constant reports of dolphins stranded on beaches, sometimes tangled in nets and other times killed by pollution after consuming plastic or other waste.

"The Chilean dolphin is disappearing at an alarming rate," he said. "Every day we see less of them on the coast."

One official also pointed to the threat of bird flu, which has been detected in Chile's wild birds, marine animals and industrial complex. A human case was also reported in March.

Soledad Tapia, the director of the country's fisheries service, said two species of dolphins had been infected by the virus. "They are also a vulnerable category," she said.

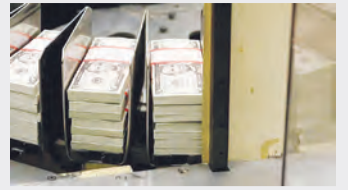
U.S. Bank Deposits, Loans Ticked Down in Latest Week

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Deposits at all U.S. commercial banks dropped in the second week of April, though at smaller banks deposits held steady in a sign of stabilization in the financial institutions hardest hit by deposit outflows after last month's failure of two large regional banks.

Federal Reserve data released last week showed deposits at all commercial banks fell to \$17.38 trillion in the week ended April 12, on a non-seasonally adjusted basis, from \$17.43 trillion a week earlier.

The drop was almost entirely at the top 25 banks, the data showed.

A drop in deposits can leave banks with less capacity for loans, though there was little to show that in the Fed's data Friday.



Chinese EV Dominance Hastens End of Petrol Engine Era

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - This year's Shanghai Auto Show signalled the end of the petrol engine era in China, as domestic electric vehicle brands drive change across the sector and leave foreign companies in the dust, analysts and industry insiders said.

Government support for EVs and growing interest from a vast consumer base has assured Chinese companies' dominance of their home market, the world's largest -- and they are now beginning to set their sights overseas.

Shanghai has shown Chinese brands "can compete with all of the legacy automakers in every way -- performance, quality, comfort, there's nothing they can't do", said EV specialist Elliot Richards, joking he had seen "a lot of worried-looking German men wandering around".

"I think this show marks the end of the internal combustion engine and the beginning of the EV era," he added.

EV companies are well aware they are closing in on their fossil-fuelled predecessors.

"We regard high-end petrol vehicles such as BMW, Mercedes Benz and Audi as our main competitors," William Li, CEO of the "Chinese Tesla" Nio, told AFP.

According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, electric vehicles made up a quarter of car sales in the country in 2022, a year-on-year increase of 94 percent.

Despite a downturn across the global auto sector, Li said he thought EVs' market share in China could increase to over 40 percent this year.

In Shanghai, dozens of new models were on display from new and legacy carmakers alike.

"The future is very much here now," Mike Johnstone, a top executive at British luxury brand Lotus, told AFP.

"There's a lot of proliferation of electrified products (in China), and it's changing the entire market."

China has dedicated huge resources to the industry.

"They skipped developing petrol engines because they can't compete with the rest of the world," said Richards.

"So they thought: '(With EVs) we can get a head start in front of everyone else'."

The country began investing heavily in associated technology from the early 2000s.

"It's ingrained in the nature of the country's economic system: the Chinese government is very good at focusing resources on the industries it wants to grow," Zeyi Yang wrote in MIT Technology Review.

Central and local authorities poured billions of dollars into subsidies and tax breaks, and allocated public transport contracts to EV companies.

The supporting infrastructure was built too -- the government says there are now more than 5.8 million charging piles in China. Guangdong province alone has around three times as many public chargers as the whole of the United States, according to Bloomberg data.

"In general, there are still a lot of preferential policies... for the production and sale of electric vehicles," said Nio's Li, using as an example the waiving of expensive licence plate fees in some cities.

Those policies have applied to foreign brands too.

That tactic helped lure industry leader Tesla to Chinese shores, bolstering the sector's reputation and sparking further competition.

Italians' Economic Optimism Declining

ROME (Dispatches) - Italians' perception of their economic prospects has steadily declined in recent years, according to a new report released by the national institute of statistics (ISTAT).

The "Equitable and Sustainable Welfare Report" shows that the percentage of Italians who say their economic situation is worse than it was a year ago rose more than ten percentage points between 2019 and 2022, reaching 35.1 per cent, reports Xinhua news agency.

It is the first time the figure has risen above the level of 1 in 3 Italians, said the 10th edition of the report, designed as a tool for policymakers.

Italians have struggled with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, then suffered from record levels of inflation sparked by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. However, optimism has declined most recently, said ISTAT researcher Alessandra Tinto.

"This reverses the trend of progressive growth of the optimistic view of the future," Tinto said, adding that even during the pandemic, levels of optimism were maintained.

The drop in Italian optimism comes despite indications that the country's economy is performing better than expected from a macroeconomic perspective.

According to the head of the Bank of Italy's economic statistics department, economic data is mostly pointing upward.

"The short-term outlook appears slightly more favourable with respect to that of our latest projections, which were published in January," Nicoletti Altamari told a Senate hearing on Thursday.



India Central Bank Cautions Banks on Unsecured Lending

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India's central bank has cautioned lenders at meetings held over at least the past three months about the growing risk of delinquencies on unsecured loans amid rising interest rates and high inflation, four banking sources said.

Unsecured loans -- mostly personal loans and credit cards -- do not carry any collateral and therefore pose higher risk. Indian banks have been growing their unsecured lending portfolio as the pandemic-induced stress began to ease.

Banks' outstanding receipts on credit cards stood at 1.87 trillion rupees (\$22.77 billion) as on Jan. 27, up from 1.53 trillion rupees from a year earlier, as per the latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

"Risks in unsecured lending has been on the RBI's radar," said a senior official at a private bank. "The RBI has privately been cautioning banks regarding such risks, asking them to tighten underwriting practices."

The bankers did not wish to be identified because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

As per latest data available from credit information provider CIBIL and published by the RBI, as of end-September 2022, delinquency levels in aggregate consumer credit across all product categories stood at 4.3% for state-run banks and 1.5% for private banks compared to 4.8% and 2.4%, respectively, a year ago.

The RBI, according to bankers, is concerned that the sharp rise in interest rates could trigger defaults and pose more risk. The RBI did not reply to an email requesting comment.

India's rate-setting Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has increased the key repo rate by a total of 250 basis points (bps) since May last year to tame inflationary pressures.

Germany Allocates €3m Euros for UNIDO Project to Develop Ukraine's Industrial Potential

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The Government of Germany and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) signed an agreement on Germany's €3 million contribution to the project "Development of industrial potential, policy and diagnostics for green recovery of Ukraine".

"Ukraine is grateful to Germany for the contribution of €3 million to finance the UNIDO project. We should start rebuilding

Ukraine right now, without waiting for the end of Russia's war of aggression against our country," Yevhenii Tsybaliuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna, told Ukrinform, commenting on the signing of the agreement in Vienna.

The signing ceremony was attended by Fatou Haidara, Deputy to the UNIDO Director General, permanent representatives of Ukraine and Germany, as well as the Organization's secretariat staff.

According to Tsybaliuk, many countries have already declared their readiness to provide financial support for the reconstruction and restoration of energy, transport infrastructure, and industrial facilities damaged or completely destroyed as a result of Russian attacks.

The UNIDO project provides for conducting research and diagnostics in industry, preparing recommendations for possible improvement and planning, in particular in the areas of energy efficiency, circular economy, green energy, improvement of quality standards, etc.

The project will help identify the necessary technologies that will be used during reconstruction and will become the basis for the future global UNIDO Program for green recovery and post-war construction for inclusive and sustainable industrial development in Ukraine.

As reported, Jochen Flasbarth, State Secretary in the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, German Federal Government's Commissioner for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, said that in its efforts for the reconstruction of Ukraine, Germany focuses not on certain regions or sectors of the economy but on the priorities of the Ukrainian government and the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, taking into account the fact that it will later become part of the European one.

Erdogan Offers Free Gas Pre-Election After First Black Sea Field Shipment

ANKARA (Dispatches) - President Tayyip Erdogan flicked the switch on Turkey's first delivery of natural gas to an onshore plant from a reserve discovered

in the Black Sea, and promised to provide free natural gas for households before May 14 elections.

The ceremony was the government's latest attempt to showcase large energy and infrastructure projects in the run up to the election, which opinion polls show Erdogan could lose after two decades in power.

"We will provide free natural gas for household consumption up to 25 cubic meters monthly for one year," Erdogan said at the inauguration of an onshore natural gas port in the northern province of Zonguldak.

Limitless natural gas for all household consumption will be free for the next month, Erdogan said. Natural gas was first discovered in the Sakarya field off the coast of Zonguldak in 2020, and in Caycuma-1 field next to it last year, with total volume having since been estimated at 710 billion cubic metres (bcm).

Turkey, which has little oil and gas, is highly dependent on imports from Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran, as well as LNG imports from Qatar, the United States, Nigeria and Algeria for its gas.

Domestic natural gas production mainly in the Thrace region accounted for less than 1% of Turkey's 60 bcm national consumption in 2021, according to EPDK energy regulator data.

10 million cubic metres of gas per day in Turkey's Black Sea gas fields will be produced initially, Erdogan said. Production will be increased to 40 million cubic metres of gas per day in the coming period, he said.

"When we reach full capacity, we will be able to meet approximately 30% domestic consumption yearly from here," he said.



The presidential and parliamentary elections represent the biggest electoral challenge for modern Turkey's longest-serving leader, after a cost-of-living crisis eroded Erdogan's support. Opposition candidate Kemal Kilicdaroglu leads in opinion polls.

The government has rolled out a series of large infrastructure and defence projects ahead of the vote. Next week, Erdogan is set to inaugurate Turkey's first nuclear power reactor built by Russia's state nuclear energy company Rosatom.

Meanwhile Erdogan said that interest rates will fall as long as he is in power, and that inflation will decline with them, repeating his unorthodox views.

Erdogan was speaking in Istanbul weeks before a presidential election on May 14. Some anticipate a shift to more orthodox policies after the vote.

Bangladesh Pays Russia in Yuan For NPP to Avoid Sanctions



DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh has recently approved payment of \$318m for payment to Russia in the Chinese currency of yuan for construction of the Rooppur NPP. At a recent meeting between the Bangladesh Finance Ministry's Economic Relations Division and Russian officials, it was decided that the payment will be made in yuan at a Chinese bank account, Uttam Kumar Karmakar, head of the European affairs of Economic Relations Division (ERD), Ministry of Finance confirmed. He added that the transaction has not yet been completed as payment details need to be clarified and resolved.

Last year, Western countries excluded Russia from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications, or SWIFT, one of the world's payment systems, due to its military operation in Ukraine. The \$12.65bn two-unit Rooppur NPP is being built by Rosatom in Bangladesh with a 90% loan from Russia repayable over 28 years, with a 10-year grace period. However, due to sanctions, it has not been possible to make repayments in US dollars.

"Russia wanted us to make payment in rouble but that's not possible for us. So we have agreed to pay in Chinese yuan," Karmakar, told Reuters. The transaction will now be completed using yuan via the Cross-border Interbank Payment System (CIPS), developed by the Chinese in 2015 to combat the dominance of the dollar in international trade.

The Bangladesh arrangement comes after several other countries recently indicated they would opt for yuan payments to circumvent the need to use dollars. Paying for the nuclear plant in yuan could pave the way for resumption of normal trade between Russia and Bangladesh, which has been blocked by the sanctions.

Ahsan Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute in Bangladesh, said the nuclear plant could not be delayed. Bangladesh needed to be "pragmatic" and proceed with the project even if it meant circumventing the dollar, he said.

Iranian Footballer Shirchi Dies During Game

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian young footballer Amirhossein Shirchi died of a cardiac arrest on Monday.

The 23-year-old player, a member of the Babolsar football team, passed away in the seventh minute of the match against Naftogaz Gachsaran in the Iran football second tier league.

The player has had a type of heart disease, Majid Pashna, head of the Babolsar football committee, said.

Cardiac arrest is a medical emergency that occurs when the heart suddenly stops beating. It can happen to anyone, including athletes who are physically fit and active.



Climate Change, Farmers Draining Ancient Balkan Lake

RESEN (Dispatches) - For millennia, Lake Prespa was pristine. But under pressure from climate change, unchecked pumping and pollution, the prehistoric body of water in southeast Europe is shrinking at an alarming rate.

Straddling the borders of Albania, Greece and North Macedonia, Lake Prespa is believed to be home to thousands of species that rely on the water and its surrounding habitat.

Warming temperatures have wreaked havoc on the annual snowfall in the area, drying up vital streams that feed into Prespa -- which has put the species that depend on the lake and another nearby body of water at risk.

The drop in precipitation has led to the steady retreat of the water, which in some places has receded by up to three kilometers (nearly two miles), according to park rangers who keep a close eye on the lake.

"Earlier there was a lot more snow that could reach one meter or a meter and a half, while in recent years the snowfall has been almost nonexistent," Goran Stojanovski, a 38-year-old ranger who has spent over a decade monitoring the lake in North Macedonia, told AFP. Other experts concur, pointing to the numerous ways the fallout from climate change has led to the steady shrinking of its shores.

"The changes noted in the lake's levels are connected to climate change," said Spase Shumka, a professor at the Agricultural University of Tirana in the Albanian capital.

Shumka pointed to the higher temperatures that have also increased evaporation and slashed annual precipitation.

"Based on the location, the only solution lies in joint action," the professor added.

To add to Prespa's woes, the surrounding apple farms rely heavily on its water, with one study cited by NASA reporting that the lake had lost seven percent of its surface area and half of its volume between 1984 and 2020.

Environmental pollution coming from agricultural run-off from the seemingly endless rows of nearby orchards only adds to its problems, leading to algae blooms that spur fears of creating dead zones.

"The lake has been polluted intensively for decades," says Zlatko Levkov, a biologist at the University of Cyril and Methodius in Skopje.

"Simply said, the habitat of many species could completely change, and the population of those species would decrease and potentially go extinct."

According to experts, Prespa has filled this picturesque valley in southeastern Europe for between one and five million years, making it one of the oldest freshwater ecological systems on the continent.

Approximately 2,000 species of fish, birds and mammals along with an array of flora depend on its waters for sustenance.

Further degradation could prove catastrophic for the local ecosystem, but also for neighbouring Lake Ohrid that lies 10 kilometres to the west.

Due to Prespa's location on higher ground, Ohrid relies on underground water flows through the surrounding limestone to maintain its levels.

Any additional stress heaped on Prespa is likely to be felt downstream in Ohrid, which was at risk of losing its place on UNESCO's list of Natural World Heritage Sites just two years ago due to excessive pollution and unregulated development.



According to a report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), around 65 tonnes of pesticides are used annually in the region, with large amounts of the chemicals reaching Prespa through run-off.

The pesticides and fertilisers are largely used in the apple orchards that are famed in the region, accounting for roughly 70 percent of the economic activity in and around Prespa's shores in the North Macedonia areas of the lake.

The "dumping of biodegradable waste and over-using fertilisers and pesticides" has spurred the rapid growth of biomass in the lake, including algae and invasive grass, that endangers the endemic species, said UNDP.

Myriad initiatives have been launched in recent years to better manage the fallout from the agricultural sector.

One project has seen the construction of eight meteorological stations that gather data that provides farmers with better information about when to spray pesticides, resulting in a 30 percent reduction of their use.

"By decreasing the number of treatments, we have more economic benefit and we improve the protection of the environment," Frosina Gjorgjievska, a 56-year-old apple farmer living near the lake in North Macedonia's Resen, told AFP.

But in a region where economic hardships, creaky infrastructure and falling birth rates remain the most pressing issues, environmental concerns are often relegated to the backburner of government priorities.

Most experts, however, believe more needs to be done to protect the lake's future, including better enforcement of a raft of agreements signed by North Macedonia, Albania and Greece in 2012.

Activists have called for a shift to organic farming along with investment in sustainable tourism to help spread awareness. "We want to keep Prespa's authenticity, its beauty, while still being able to enjoy it," said Marija Eftimovska, 42, a local environmental activist.

Tehran Slams U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

He was referring to Washington's unilateral and illegal withdrawal in 2018 from a multilateral deal with Iran, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), whose other members included the permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany. After leaving the deal, the administration of former US President Donald Trump reinstated all anti-Iran sanctions that the accord had lifted and introduced its signature "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran.

The administration of Trump's successor Joe Biden had alleged a willingness to compensate for Trump's mistake by rejoining the deal, but it has retained the sanctions as leverage and even imposed a slew of its own coercive economic measures on the Islamic Republic.

"Unilateral coercive measures (UCMs), including their extraterritorial application, represent a concerning example of harmful unilateral acts that run counter to the fundamental principles of international law, the UN Charter, and basic human rights," Iravani said, adding, "These illegal measures have far-reaching humanitarian consequences and can undermine diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving disputes and promoting cooperation."

Iravani also referred a March 30 verdict by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which ruled that the United States had violated the international law by allowing American courts to confiscate nearly two billion dollars in assets from Iranian companies, and ordered Washington to pay compensation.

The Hague-based ICJ says the United States violated international law by freezing some Iranian assets, and ordered compensation.

"The ICJ's ruling is final and binding, requiring the US to comply with this decision," the Iranian diplomat noted.

Iravani said, "Collaboration should be the cornerstone of multilateralism, rather than confrontation," because "collaborative approaches foster trust, build consensus, and promote sustainable solutions to global challenges."

He concluded by saying, "Through collaborative problem-solving and engagement with all parties, multilateralism can effectively address the challenges facing our world today. In this context, diplomacy, dialogue, and negotiation should be the preferred means for resolving disputes among member states."

North Sea Countries to Pledge Massive Ramp Up Of Wind Energy



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Energy ministers from European countries surrounding the North Sea are set to pledge to quadruple offshore wind energy capacity by the end of the decade as they aim to turn the region into an engine of renewable power.

Seven European Union countries, including Germany, France and the Netherlands, alongside non-EU countries the United Kingdom and Norway, will commit at a summit on Monday to rapidly build wind farms, develop energy "islands" - connected offshore green power generation sites - and launch their first projects to produce renewable hydrogen at sea.

A draft of the ministers' summit declaration, seen by Reuters, pitched the plans as a way to end Europe's reliance on Russian fossil fuels, after Moscow slashed gas supplies last year following its invasion of Ukraine.

"In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and attempts of energy blackmail against Europe we will accelerate our efforts to reduce fossil fuel consumption as well as dependence on fossil fuel imports," the draft said.

The declaration could still change before it is announced at a summit of European governments to promote North Sea green energy in Ostend, Belgium, on Monday. Ministers from Belgium, Denmark, Ireland and Luxembourg are also set to sign it.

The nine countries are aiming for a combined 120 gigawatts (GW) of North Sea offshore wind capacity by 2030, and to more than double that to 300GW by 2050.

The same countries have around 30GW of offshore wind currently installed, according to industry group WindEurope.

Countries' individual aims include the United Kingdom's plan to build 50GW of offshore wind by 2030, while Germany plans 26.4GW, the Netherlands 21GW and Belgium 6GW.

Iran Imposes Sanctions...

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The ministry emphasized that the acts of those individuals and entities imposing and exacerbating cruel sanctions are "obvious violation of fundamental principles of international law set forth in the United Nations Charter."

It added that all relevant Iranian organizations and institutions, consistent with the regulations adopted by the related authorities, "will take appropriate measures, which are blocking of accounts and transactions in the Iranian financial and banking systems, blocking of assets within the jurisdiction of the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as prohibition of visa issuance and entry to the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for effective implementation of the above-mentioned sanctions."

Among the 11 EU individuals and one entity who face the travel ban and asset freeze, include Frank Haun, the chairperson of Krauss-Maffei; Flourian Seibel, the co-founder and CEO of Drone-Robotics Quantum-Systems as well as a number of lawmakers from Germany, France and the European Parliament.

The ministry also announced sanctions against three British entities and six individuals, including Alan

Mendoza, the founder and the executive director of the Henry Jackson Society, and Admiral Benjamin John Key, a senior Royal Navy officer.

Tehran slammed London and Brussels for supporting, facilitating, and failing to counter the destructive acts of the sanctioned individuals and entities, noting that such measures are in contravention of international obligations regarding the fight against terrorism.

Iran's retaliatory measure came on the same day that the European Union and the UK imposed new sanctions on a number of Iranian individuals and entities over alleged human rights violations, despite the fact that the failure of such a policy has been proven many times over the past years.

The European Union's Council said in a statement on Monday that it has imposed restrictive measures on eight Iranian individuals and one entity over an allegation that they were responsible for serious human rights violations in the country.

The UK government followed suit and announced its decision to toughen its sanctions against the IRGC for alleged human rights violations.

India, Iran...

FROM PAGE 1

Also, Iranian Defense Minister Mohammed Reza Gharaei will visit India to attend the SCO Defense Ministers' Meeting, which is scheduled to be organized in the coming week, Iran's ambassador to India, Iraj Elahi, said.

Addressing the event titled 'Iran Army Day' in Delhi, Elahi said, "I also hope that with the visit of the Honorable Minister of Defense of the Islamic Republic of Iran to India to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Defence Ministers' Meeting, the defence relations between the two countries will be further developed and strengthened in a dynamic bilateral and multilateral format," adding, "I re-emphasize the message of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran which is peace, friendship and cooperation based on mutual respect."

At the event, the Iranian Ambassador pointed out the fundamental principles of the military defense strategy of the country.

He said the military doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran is totally defensive and based on active deterrence. The Islamic Republic of Iran has proven that it is not belligerent, but it resolutely suppresses any aggression.

Elahi further stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always emphasised the security of West Asia by the countries of the region and considers the presence and interference of other powers to be the cause of instability in the region.

Addressing the event, he said there is the sensitive and geopolitical position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the turbulent region of West Asia has increased the importance of the armed forces in maintaining the stability and security of this region.

The occupation of the Palestinian and the displacement of its oppressed people, the huge energy resources of the Persian Gulf and foreign interference in this region, during the past century, have always made the West Asian region full of instability and crisis, Elahi added. (ANI)

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U.S., Israel Unable to...

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"The IRGC is a powerful arm that guards the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic of Iran, supports the nation, and protects the country's national security," Kan'ani tweeted on Saturday.

The IRGC, also known as the "Sepah", was established on April 22, 1979 by the founder of the Islamic Republic Ayatollah Khomeini as a paramilitary organization charged with protecting the newborn Islamic Republic. The force closely cooperates with the Iranian Army in the face of foreign threats as manifested during the 8-year war imposed by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein on Iran in the 1980s.

The IRGC has also made great sacrifices in the fight against terrorist groups operating in the region. It has also helped the Iranian people during tough times such as natural calamities.

Iran Among...

FROM PAGE 1

Beyond the usual competition between China and the US, Iran's very strong performance in artificial intelligence technologies has become immediately striking. Most notably, Iran emerges as an unexpected powerhouse of hardware accelerator research.

Iran has long been considered among the leading countries in producing science in the world for many years. However, the Critical Technology Tracker has gone beyond simple research and has focused on the key performance measures of scientific and technological capability, revealing countries that have a competitive advantage in this measure across the 44 technologies.

Iran Petrochemical...

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He underlined that Iran must move from crude sales to value creation by converting crude and semi-crude products because the petrochemical industry serves as the driving force for other industries.

Shahmirzaee added that most of Iran's oil and gas fields are in the second half of their life cycle and the maximum income model should replace maximum export of raw materials.

This, according to the deputy oil minister, will blunt the anti-Iran sanctions.

Pliskova Withdraws From Madrid Open With Injury

MADRID (Dispatches) - Karolina Pliskova has withdrawn from the Madrid Open due to a knee injury but the former world number one said she hopes to recover in time for next month's event in Rome ahead of the French Open. Pliskova, 15th in the world rankings, said on Twitter she suffered the injury during her quarter-final defeat by Iga Swiatek at the Stuttgart Open last week. The Italian Open runs from May 9-20 before Roland Garros, the second Grand Slam of the year, begins on May 28. Pliskova's best result at the claycourt major came in 2017 when she reached the semi-finals.

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Germany to Face Ukraine In 1,000th Int'l Match

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany will play three friendly matches in June with their 1,000th international match set to be a charity game against Ukraine, the country's football association (DFB) said. With Germany hosting the European Championship next year, the hosts are not involved in the qualifying campaign and will be playing friendly matches instead in the buildup to the tournament. Germany will play Ukraine on June 12 in Bremen, followed by a game against Poland in Warsaw on June 16 and finally against Colombia on June 20 in Gelsenkirchen.

Warriors Survive Late Gaffe, Tie Series With Kings

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Stephen Curry had a team-high 32 points and the Golden State Warriors overcame a timeout violation in the final minute to hold off the Sacramento Kings 126-125 and draw even in their playoff series on Sunday afternoon in San Francisco. The Western Conference first-round series is tied 2-2, with the home team having won all four games. The next game will be Wednesday night in Sacramento. The defending champs led 126-121 and had the ball with under 45 seconds left, but Curry called a timeout when the team had none left. Malik Monk hit the technical free throw, and Aaron Fox buried a 3-pointer to draw the Kings within 126-125. Curry then missed a short jumper, but after a timeout, Harrison Barnes misfired on a buzzer-beating 3-pointer. Klay Thompson added 26 points for the Warriors. Fox led the Kings with 38 points and nine rebounds, Keegan Murray had 23 points, Monk 16 and Domantas Sabonis finished with 14 points, eight assists and seven boards.



New York seized a 3-1 lead in the series, which heads back to Cleveland on Wednesday for Game 5. Brunson made 11 of 22 shots and added six rebounds and six assists, while Barrett went 9-for-18 from the field. Josh Hart chipped in 19 points and seven rebounds for the Knicks, who outrebounded the Cavaliers 47-33. Darius Garland finished with a team-high 23 points and a game-high 10 assists for Cleveland, which canned 36 of 77 (46.8 percent) shots overall, including 6 of 23 (26.1 percent) from beyond the arc. Donovan Mitchell was held to just 11 on 5-for-18 shooting. He scored just two points in the second half.

Timberwolves 114, Nuggets 108 (OT)

Anthony Edwards scored 34 points and Nickeil Alexander-Walker netted six points in overtime as Minnesota avoided elimination by defeating Denver in Minneapolis in Game 4 of their first-round Western Conference playoff series.

The top-seeded Nuggets lead the series 3-1 and will again try to eliminate the No. 8-seeded Timberwolves on Tuesday night in Denver. Mike Conley added 19 points, while Karl-Anthony Towns had 17 points and 11 rebounds before fouling out for the Wolves. Nikola Jokic had 43 points and 11 rebounds to pace the Nuggets.

Jokic had four points and an assist to help Denver take a 102-101 lead in overtime, but Alexander-Walker made consecutive treys to start an 8-0 run that gave Minnesota a 109-102 lead with 1:29 left to play. Jamal Murray had two baskets and Jokic one as the Nuggets got within one point, but Edwards made a 3-pointer with 11.5 seconds left to seal the victory.

Knicks 102, Cavaliers 93

Jalen Brunson poured in 29 points and RJ Barrett supplied 26 as host New York defeated Cleveland in Game 4 of their first-round Eastern Conference playoff series.

Celtics 129, Hawks 121

Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown each scored 31 points to lead visiting Boston to a victory over Atlanta in Game 4 of their first-round Eastern Conference playoff series. Tatum also had seven rebounds, four assists and three blocked shots. Brown made 12 of his 22 field-goal attempts, including 3 of 4 from behind the arc. The Hawks were within five points with 3:36 to play, but the Celtics took control by scoring the next seven points. Atlanta failed to get closer than eight the rest of the way. Trae Young led the Hawks with 35 points and 15 assists. De'Andre Hunter was 11 of 17 from the field and added 27 points. Dejounte Murray finished with 23 points, nine rebounds and six assists.



Lloris Embarrassed by Tottenham's Capitulation At Newcastle

NEWCASTLE (Dispatches) - Tottenham Hotspur captain Hugo Lloris labelled his side's collapse at Newcastle United in the Premier League 'embarrassing' as the North London club's top-four hopes suffered a huge blow. Tottenham could have moved level on points with Newcastle with a win but conceded five goals in the opening 21 minutes, eventually losing 6-1 at St James' Park. Many of the Tottenham fans who had made the long trip to Tyneside were seen leaving before halftime. "It's very embarrassing. We should apologize to the fans. We didn't show a good face and we could not match the performance of the Newcastle players," Lloris, who was substituted at halftime, told Sky Sports. "We were late in all aspects of the game and we completely missed the first part of the game. The second half is a different story but it's really painful. "It is not even about tactics, we just could not fight and we were late. It is difficult right now to assess the performances but there was a lack of pride." Tottenham remain in fifth place with 53 points from 32 games but they are six behind third-placed Newcastle, who have a game in hand, and also six behind fourth-placed Manchester United, who have two games in hand.

Swiatek Feeling Settled as World No.1

STUTTGART (Dispatches) - Three-times Grand Slam champion Iga Swiatek said she had to learn how to manage the pressure of being world number one and not let expectations weigh her down as the Pole prepares to defend her French Open title next month. The 21-year-old beat Aryna Sabalenka 6-3 6-4 in yesterday's Stuttgart Open final for her second successful title defence this year, adding to her victory in Doha. Asked how she settled into her status as world number one, Swiatek she had tuned out the noise and was focused on her game. "Last year was really, really tough, and I felt like this season may be tough, because of what people are saying and expectations from the outside," Swiatek said. "I'm happy that I managed to work through it. That was probably the biggest thing that I had to go through at the beginning of the year." Following her fourth-round exit at the Australian Open in January, Swiatek said she had been affected by the pressure and that she had been going into matches hoping not to lose rather than wanting to win. "Now I feel like I just can use my experience a little bit more, more than worry about stuff," she said. "I'm just happy that I'm world number one for more than a year, and it's an exciting time." The French Open runs from May 28-June 11.

Police Ban 171 Juve Fans From Stadium

ROME (Dispatches) - Police in Turin said they had fined 171 Juventus fans and banned them from their stadium following racist chants leveled at Inter Milan striker Romelu Lukaku. During the April 4 first leg of the Italian Cup semi-final between Juve and Inter Milan, Lukaku was subjected to monkey chants by some Juventus fans, in what his representatives called "hostile and disgusting racist abuse". In a brief statement, Turin police cited "racist chants" during the semi-final. They did not provide details about the fines nor say how long the stadium ban would last.

Kiptum Breaks London Marathon Record



The 23-year-old collapsed on to the ground, exhausted, after crossing the finish line. He ran the second half of the race in just 59 minutes and 45 seconds. Earlier, Dutch middle-distance athlete Sifan Hassan scored a stunning upset to win her debut marathon, an event she saw as a test which could pave the way to her competing

LONDON (Dispatches) - Kenya's Kelvin Kiptum set a London Marathon course record, finishing in two hours, one minute, 25 seconds, nearly three minutes ahead of second-placed Geoffrey Kamworor. Kiptum, who ran the fastest-ever debut marathon in Valencia last year, made his break at mile 19, establishing a solid lead to deliver the second-fastest marathon of all time. Hassan finished in 2:18:34 with a desperate sprint, shaking off second-placed Alemu Megertu of Ethiopia and third-placed Kenyan Jepchirchir in the final 100 metres. Ethiopia's Yehualaw finished fourth. Hassan has snatched victory from the jaws of defeat before: in the 1,500 metres at the Tokyo Olympics she took a hard tumble, picked herself up and charged ahead to win gold.

over the marathon distance at next year's Paris Olympics. Hassan, who has won Olympic gold in the 1,500 metres and 5,000 metres, made a dramatic comeback after an early injury to prevail over Olympic champion Peres Jepchirchir and defending London champion Yelamzerf Yehualaw in what organisers said was the best ever elite women's field for the event. The 30-year-old looked to be in pain around the hip flexor just under an hour in, falling behind as she stopped and stretched, but she caught up with the leading pack with just over six kms to go. Hassan finished in 2:18:34 with a desperate sprint, shaking off second-placed Alemu Megertu of Ethiopia and third-placed Kenyan Jepchirchir in the final 100 metres. Ethiopia's Yehualaw finished fourth. Hassan has snatched victory from the jaws of defeat before: in the 1,500 metres at the Tokyo Olympics she took a hard tumble, picked herself up and charged ahead to win gold.

Arsenal Desperate to Hold Off City Charge In Title Showdown

LONDON (Dispatches) - Like a sky blue juggernaut, Manchester City have begun to fill Arsenal's rearview mirror and on Wednesday the reigning champions have the chance to begin their over-taking maneuver on the road to a fifth Premier League title in six years. A match that has loomed on the fixture list for months as a likely title-decider now feels like a must-win game for an Arsenal side whose hold on the summit is coming loose. While treble-chasing City have been churning out the wins, just as they usually do at the business end of a season, Arsenal's young pretenders have been struck by vertigo. They could have been going to City with a double-digit points lead but after surrendering 2-0 advantages to draw consecutive away games 2-2 at Liverpool and West Ham United, they were then held to a frenzied 3-3 draw by bottom club Southampton on Friday. After that rip-roaring contest, in which Arsenal needed late goals from Martin Odegaard and Bukayo Saka just to salvage a point, the players slumped to the turf and their fans filed away wondering if the dream of a first title since 2004 was fading. Arsenal still have a five-point lead with six games to play but City have two matches in hand and look irresistible having collected 25 points from the last 27 on offer. According to statistician Simon Gleave of data company Gracenote, Arsenal's draw with Southampton left them with a 21 per cent chance of dethroning City, while Pep Guardiola's side now have a 79 per cent probability of finishing top.



Man United to Fight To Derail Man City's Treble Bid

LONDON (Dispatches) - Erik ten Hag vowed Manchester United would "give everything" to prevent Manchester City from matching his club's treasured treble after they beat Brighton to set up an FA Cup final against their fierce rivals. United won 7-6 on penalties at Wembley after the game finished goalless, with defender Victor Lindelof scoring the decisive spot-kick. It went some way to banishing the agony of their shocking Europa League performance in midweek, when they lost 3-0 to Sevilla in the quarter-finals to lose 5-2 on aggregate. But they will have to find more of a cutting edge in the FA Cup final on June 3 if they are to beat Pep Guardiola's City, who are targeting the treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup. City are favorites to win all three of the trophies this season after moving up through the gears in recent weeks. United were on course for three trophies of their own before Thursday's blowout in Spain, but they are still chasing a domestic double after winning the League Cup in February to end a six-year silverware drought. United boss Ten Hag, speaking after the nail-biting Wembley shootout, praised his team's ability to bounce back. "First we are physical, strong, we are mentally strong, so we showed the character and personality necessary... we were determined to win this game," he said.

