

Iranian Security Forces Have Arrested a Foreign National, Identified as Molavi Abdulaziz Omar Zehi, Who Influenced Fomenting Unrest in Sistan-Baluchestan Province in Southeastern Iran

IRAN NEWS

General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Announced That All Conscripts With at Least Three Children, and Those Who Have Four Children and Aged Over 40, Qualify For Exemption From Military Service

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Iran Has Hit Israeli Regime From Within

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The intelligence minister of Iran highlighted the country’s success in taking action against the Zionist regime’s domestic and foreign operations.

In comments at a meeting in Iran’s Markazi Province on Sunday, Esmail Khatib praised the country’s great achievements in dealing with the Zionist regime.

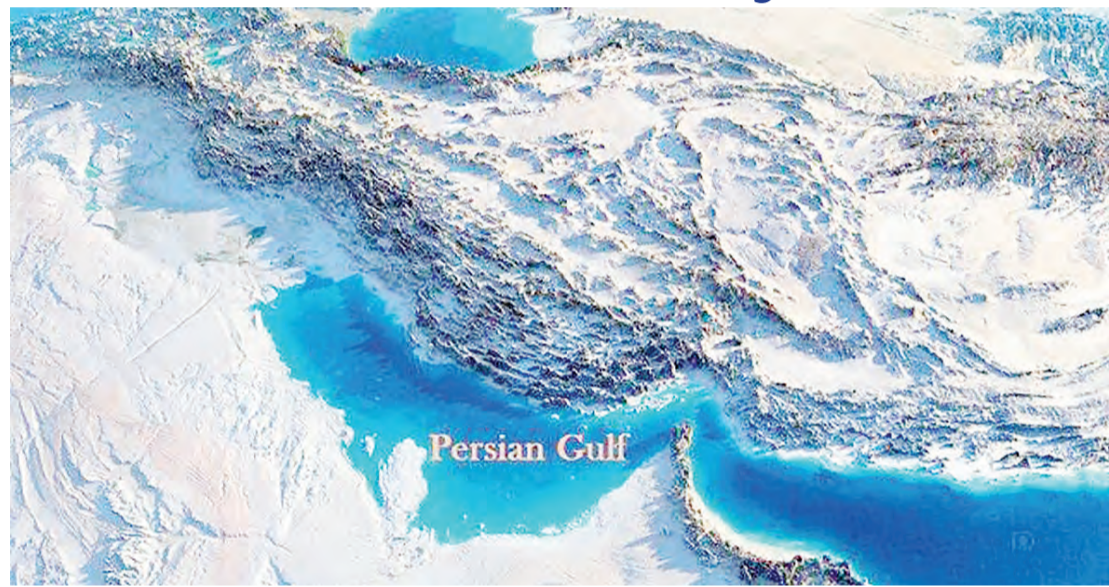
By God’s grace, the Islamic Republic of Iran has achieved major success in counteracting the Zionist regime’s domestic and foreign measures and operations, the intelligence minister stated.

Khatib noted that Iran’s success in thwarting the Israeli plots results from the cooperation and synergy among the Iranian intelligence and security organizations.

In remarks on April 22, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei urged the Muslim world to seize the great opportunity provided by the acceleration of the decline of the Zionist regime which has begun since a couple of years ago.

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Persian Gulf, Important Part of Undeniable Identity of Iran



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran’s foreign minister says the Persian Gulf is an “important part of the undeniable identity” of the country and the entire region.

“The Persian Gulf is an important part of the undeniable and common identity of Iran and the region and is a natural resource full of benefits” for its littoral states, Hossein Amirabdollahian said in a post on Twitter on Sunday on the occasion of the National Persian Gulf Day.

He said getting the most out of the Persian Gulf necessitates security, convergence and collective participation of the littoral states.

Iranian people on Sunday held nationwide ceremonies to celebrate the national day, which symbolizes the Islamic Republic’s unwavering anti-hegemonic stance and dismisses futile attempts by certain regional countries to rename the strategic body of water.

Iranians are marking National Persian Gulf Day, which is the anniversary of the victory over Portuguese troops during a war in the strategic body of water back in 1622.

In a tweet to mark the occasion, Iran’s Foreign Ministry said, “The name of the ‘Persian Gulf’ is born with the history. All historical & international sources, ancient maps, documents, books as well as UN directive confirm that the body of water in south of Iran has always been called Persian Gulf.”

The Persian Gulf — which spans some 251,000 square kilometers — is bounded by the Arvand River in the north, which forms the frontier between Iran and Iraq, and the Strait of Hormuz in the south, which links the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

The strategic inland sea is an international trade route connecting West Asia to Africa, India, and China.

On Sunday the military and civilian vessels held a parade to mark the National Persian Gulf Day in the waters of Imam Khomeini port in the Persian Gulf.

On Sunday, a commemoration ceremony was held to mark the National Persian Gulf Day with the participation of vessels from various naval fleets, including the 3rd District of the IRGC Navy, the Navy of the Police Force, Fisheries and the General Administration of Ports and Maritime Affairs of Khuzestan province, holding a rally in the waters of Imam Khomeini port.

A number of different military and government officials that were taking part in the ceremony emphasized their resolve for preserving the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz for Iran.

Iran-Eurasian Economic Union To Remove Customs Barriers

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran increases its customs cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union in order to remove customs barriers and develop and facilitate trade.

According to Shada, Mohammad Rezvani-Far, Deputy Minister of Economy and Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), met with Eldar Alisherov, Minister in charge of Customs Cooperation of the Eurasian Economic Commission, and his accompanying delegation on Saturday morning.

In the meeting, issues related to the removal of customs barriers and easing and developing trade with the Eurasian Economic Union were discussed.

Rezvani-Far said: “Although the free trade agreement with the Eurasian Union is temporary, and it is going through the formalities of making it permanent, the government intends to plan Iran’s trade with the member countries of Eurasia as long-term.”

Announcing Iran’s trade volume with Eurasian countries in the last year, he added: “Trade during this period was \$3.3 billion, of which \$1.5 billion were Iran’s exports to Eurasia and more than \$1.7 billion were imports from Eurasia.”

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Hate Crimes On the Rise in the West

Racism and nationalism in the Western countries have led to the rise in the number of hate crimes and the U.S. is the leading country in the terms of hate crimes.

What is a hate crime? A hate crime (also known as a bias-motivated crime or bias crime) is a prejudice-motivated crime which occurs when a perpetrator targets a victim because of their membership (or perceived membership) of a certain social group or racial demographic.

Examples of such groups can include, and are almost exclusively limited to ethnicity, disability, language, nationality, physical appearance, political views and/or affiliation, age, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Non-criminal actions that are motivated by these reasons are often called “bias incidents”.

“Hate crime” generally refers to criminal acts which are seen to have been motivated by bias against one or more of the social groups listed above, or by bias against their derivatives. Incidents may involve physical assault, homicide, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse (which includes slurs) or insults, mate crime, or offensive graffiti or letters (hate mail).

This type of crime is mostly common in the Western countries and of course one can see it in other countries but not in the level of the U.S. and West European countries because of the number of immigrants.

According to a new report by a civil rights organization, hate crimes in the United States are likely to spike ahead of the 2024 election.

The Leadership Conference Education Fund said on Thursday that FBI data shows an unmistakable pattern of a rise in hate crimes during general elections, Yahoo News reported.

“From the mainstreaming of hate and the failure of social media platforms to adequately address disinformation, the current climate is rife with opportunities for the trend of increased hate to continue into the 2024 election — unless action is taken,” stated the report by the Leadership Conference Education Fund, the research arm of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

The report charts “an unmistakable pattern that has emerged during the last four presidential campaign cycles” showing “reported hate crimes increase during elections.”

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Uzbekistan Enters New Historic Era

BY: F. TAHERPOOR

TASHKENT – Referendum poll in Uzbekistan on Sunday witnessed a historic turnout by Uzbek people as more than 84.5% eligible voters turned out in this biggest political event in the country and the country enters a new era.

Son Monday, the chairman of Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan announced the results of referendum in the country. He said that 16.67m out of almost 19.5 eligible voters cast their ballots which is a landslide turnout in the contemporary political event of the country.

He added that 90.21% voted in favor of renewing the Constitution and only 9.35% were opposed it.

Polls were conducted in 55 places overseas while in Uzbekistan it involves 10,758 centers.

Those 18 and above were eligible to cast their votes answering a simple question of “Do you accept the constitutional law regarding the constitution of the Uzbekistan Republic, with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer.

Around 500 foreign guests including as well as foreign journalists were in Uzbekistan for the coverage of this historic referendum.

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Israel Furious Over President Raisi’s Upcoming Visit to Syria

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi’s upcoming visit to Syria has reportedly ruffled some feathers within the ranks of the Israeli regime.

Raisi, at the head of a high-level econo-political delegation and at the official invitation of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, is scheduled to visit Damascus in a two-day trip on Wednesday.

Israeli media expressed concern about Raisi’s trip, saying the visit is “exceptional” and that Israeli authorities should be concerned.

“[President] Ebrahim Raisi’s trip is his first to Damascus after 2011, during which he will also have field visits outside the protocols,” Israel’s Channel 13 television network said.

Pointing to the potential impact of Raisi’s visit on regional developments and relations, the Israeli television network said, “Iran intends to unify the axis of Iran-Hezbollah-Hamas-Islamic Jihad, which makes Tehran adopt a new plan regarding the Middle East’s politics.”

Israel’s Channel 13 also referred to Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian’s recent visit to Beirut and his meeting with Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Lebanon’s Hezbollah resistance movement, and Ziad al-Nakhala, the secretary general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement.

Israeli news sources said Tel Aviv followed Amiraabdollahian’s trip to Beirut “with concern,” and some Zionist circles said the visit was in line with the recent developments in the region, and coincided with the chaotic internal situation of the occupying regime.

Hossein Akbari, Iran’s Ambassador to Damascus, described Raisi’s imminent trip to Syria as a “turning point in the region” and said the visit would have positive-extra regional effects as well.

Raisi’s trip to Syria will be “very important” due to the changes that are taking place in the region, the Iranian ambassador said, adding that “In addition to its regional and extra-regional effects, the trip will help strengthen and develop relations between the two countries in all fields. Other countries in the region can also benefit from the achievements of the visit.”

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India's National Security Advisor Due in Tehran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Ajit Doval, the national security advisor to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was scheduled to visit Tehran on Monday at the invitation of Iran's top security official Ali Shamkhani.

During his visit to Tehran, Doval will meet with Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) of Iran, and other senior Iranian officials to discuss regional and international issues of mutual interest, IRNA reported. The expansion of relations with India, as a major member of both the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS group of emerging economies, could help advance the Islamic Republic's strategy of forging closer economic cooperation with member states of those organizations.

Today Cooperation of Branches Necessary To Solve Problems

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi considered the submission of warnings, questioning and impeachment among the powers of the parliament and by stating that we do not consider the performance of the representatives to perform the duties of representation in any way as a manifestation of differences between the branches, at the same time he noted, “Today more than ever, the cooperation and solidarity of the branches to solve the issues of the country are essential”.

Speaking at cabinet session Raisi referred to the impeachment of the Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade in the parliament, appreciated the efforts of Dr Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin and his colleagues in this ministry.

The President considered the submission of warnings, questioning and impeachment among the powers of the parliament and by stating that we do not consider the performance of the representatives to perform the duties of representation in any way as a manifestation of differences between the branches, at the same time he noted, “Today more than ever, the cooperation and solidarity of the branches to solve the issues of the country are essential”.

Recalling the anniversary of the “Issuance of the Supreme Leader's Eight-Article Decree to the Heads of Branches to Fight Economic Corruption” in 2001, Raisi considered supervision to be one of the effective management tools in preventing and dealing with corruption, and inefficiency.



The President said, “In their meetings and correspondence with me, people sometimes express dissatisfaction and complain about the inefficiency of some managers, so all officials, especially in the provinces, are expected to have strict and effective control and supervision over the performance of their subordinates in order to see how people's affairs are followed up”.

In another part of his speech, the President referred to the Supreme Leader's statements in the yesterday's meeting with a group of workers and members of labor organizations, and obliged the relevant departments to form a task force to follow up on this issue.

Raisi also pointed out the capacity of Shadegan Wetland to create employment and become an economic and tourism hub in Khuzestan and tasked the relevant authorities to pursue the development plan of Shadegan with seriousness and urgency.

Emphasising the follow-up and implementation of the government's provincial travel resolutions, the President appreciated the actions taken in the implementation of the first round of travel resolutions to Khuzestan, especially in the field of oil, water and electricity, and considered it honorable.

Raisi further urged the Vice-President for Science and Technology and related departments to seriously follow up and finalize the roadmap for the development of the knowledge-based sector in line with the fulfilment of the Supreme Leader's orders and emphasis.

Two Major Chinese Companies Plan to Invest In Khuzestan

TEHRAN (IFP) - Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Chang Hua says two major Chinese companies plan to invest in Khuzestan, in Iran's oil-rich southwest.

During a meeting with Khuzestan's governor-general on Sunday, Hua said other Chinese companies could also come forward with any investment plans as related to the Iranian province.

He expressed hope that given the two countries' good relations and Khuzestan's tourism capacities, a large number of tourists would travel to the Iranian province from China and visit its historical sites.

Hua emphasized the need to advertise the province's tourist spots to attract visitors.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Chinese ambassador said the boosting of the ties between Iran and China would lead to more Chinese companies entering the Iranian investment market.

This comes as Iran is under US sanctions.

He said Beijing supported Iran's territorial integrity as strongly as it supported its own and backed “Iran against Western countries, which assail Iran's and China's interests under various pretexts.”

He also said the reestablishment of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia last month — which came after Chinese mediation — was helpful to regional peace and development.

Iran Thanks Saudi Arabia for Assisting in Repatriating Iranians From Sudan

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's chargé d'affaires in Saudi Arabia has thanked Riyadh for its assistance in repatriating Iranian nationals from Sudan where the army and a rebel group are engaged in heavy fighting.

This happened during a meeting between Iranian Chargé D'affaires Hassan Zarnegar Abarghousi and Commander of Saudi Arabia's Western Region General Ahmed al-Dablis.

A video shows the Saudi military officials warmly greeting Zarnegar.

A video shows the Saudi military officials warmly greeting Zarnegar. Iran and Saudi Arabia are improving their relations after their normalization deal brokered by China. The two countries signed the rapprochement deal several weeks ago after extensive talks.

The Iranian foreign ministry spokesman said on Saturday, with Saudi Arabia's help, dozens of Iranian nationals were taken out of Sudan.

FM Appoints Advisor on Caspian Sea Affairs

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has appointed his new advisor on Caspian Sea affairs.

In an appointment decree issued on Sunday, Amirabdollahian picked Alireza Jahangiri as his new aide on Caspian Sea issues.

Alireza Jahangiri has a PhD in international law and has previously served as Iran's ambassador to the Netherlands and Iran's permanent representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). He has also served for a period as director general of Iranian Foreign Ministry's International Law Department.

Iran's Pistachio Exports More Than Halved Last Year

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Latest figures by Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) says the country's pistachio exports registered a dramatic year-on-year decline in the past Iranian year to March 21.

Iranian pistachio were sent to as much as 57 countries in the one-year period, according to the IRICA report.

The figures said that Iran exported some 56,298 tons of pistachio worth \$405 million during the time span, registering a 58.4% fall in terms of tonnage and a 55.7% decrease in value terms when compared to figures from a year earlier.

Russia took delivery of 7,329 tons of Iranian pistachio in the past year to become the first importer of the product from Iran followed by India with 7,139 tons of imports.

Iraq, the UAE, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Germany, Turkey, and Tajikistan were other main importers of Iranian pistachio during the period under review.

Iran Transactions With Caspian States Rise by 9.5% to \$3.8b

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's trade with Caspian Sea littoral states stood at 6.89 million tons worth \$3.81 billion in the fiscal 2022-23.

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, Iran's trade (excluding crude oil exports) with Caspian Sea littoral states stood at 6.89 million tons worth \$3.81 billion, registering a 12.78% fall in terms of weight, but a 9.51% rise in value compared with the similar period of last year, respectively.

Russia was Iran's main trading partner among Caspian states with 4.04 million tons (down 17.79%) worth \$2.32 billion (up 3.44%) during the period under review. It was followed by Azerbaijan with 784,380 tons (down 7.9%) worth \$688.03 million (up 13.2%), Turkmenistan with 1.31 million tons (down 6.45%) worth \$487.62 million (up 32.34%) and Kazakhstan with 750,955 tons (up 3.05%) worth \$320.14 million (up 20.79%).

Iran's exports exceeded 3.93 million tons worth \$2.05 billion during the year, registering a 2.43% and a 23.21% rise in terms of weight and value year-on-year, respectively.



French Spies' Liaisons In Iran Arrested

TEHRAN (IP) - Members of a sabotage team affiliated with the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) and French spies were arrested in Iran.

The arrested element, who were formerly arrested and had the Iranian leader's amnesty in their records, formed a group to create tensions in workers' and teachers' protest gatherings and lead them to riots.

Maryam Assadollahi, nicknamed Anisha, and Reyhaneh Ansari also were arrested last year due to their connection with French spies.

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the US and Israeli regime along with their allies, including the UK and France, started campaigns to subvert the Islamic Republic.

In recent years, the 'maximum pressure policy' of the US was mingled with security maximum pressure, in which extensive cooperation is going on among the Israeli regime, the US, the UK, and France's intelligence services.

Iran Losing \$4b a Year To Fuel Smuggling

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran is losing an estimated \$4 billion a year to smuggling of gasoline and diesel.

Extensive fuel smuggling across Iranian borders is leading to an estimated loss of \$4 billion per year for the country, according to findings of a report in the local media.

The Sunday report by Fars news agency cited figures from Iranian Oil Ministry's fuel department showing that smuggling of diesel fuel from Iran had reached over 10 million liters per day.

The figures showed that some five million liters per day of gasoline distributed to motorists in Iran end up in the hands of fuel smugglers operating at southeastern and southern borders of Iran.

“Based on estimates by specialist government departments it seems that the combined amount of smuggling of gasoline and diesel from the country could amount to at least 15 million liters per day which is equal to an annual loss of \$4 billion,” said the report.

It said that Iran's seizures of smuggled gasoline and diesel fuel rose by 250% and 69%, respectively, in the calendar year to late March, compared to the previous year, to reach over 52 million liters combined.

However, it said that extremely cheap prices of gasoline and diesel have lured many people living in Iranian border provinces into the business of fuel smuggling.

The report said that diesel fuel delivered to Iranian power plants for electricity generation currently account for nearly a third of total fuel smuggling from the country.

Annual Export of Minerals Exceeds \$12.2

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Iranian Mines & Mining Industries Development & Renovation Organization put the country's export of mine and minerals in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022 to March 20, 2023) at over \$12.2 billion, registering a 3.4 percent rise in weight compared to a year earlier.

Companies in mining and mineral industries sector exported over 48 million tons of products, valued at \$12.239 billion, in the past Iranian calendar year, showing a 7.6 percent decline in value compared to last year's corresponding period.

In this period, about 4.4 million tons of various minerals, valued at \$4,995,200,000, were imported into the country to meet the demands of domestic factories, indicating a 27.5 and 3.9 percent growth in value and weight respectively compared to the same period of last year.

Manned, Unmanned Aircraft To Join Army Air Force

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Commander of the Army Air Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran says that manned and unmanned aircraft will join the Army Air Force in the near future.

Referring to the significant developments of the Army Air Force in the years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi in an interview with Mehr news agency said that the country's air force is developing day by day.

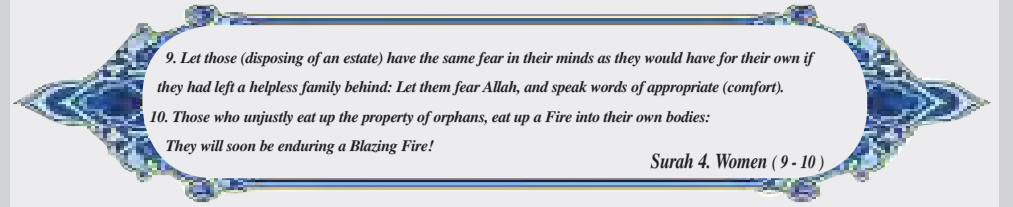
Some manned and unmanned aircraft will join the Army Air Force in the near future, the commander noted.

He also added that Iran is capable of training pilots and in the near future, student pilots from friendly countries can be accepted for training.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:10
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:36
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:10



Air Tickets Should Be Increased by %100 to Save the Industry

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of Association of Iranian Airlines says the association has asked the decision-makers to increase the price of air tickets by 100% to save the industry as the industry is not concerned about decline in the number of passengers due to the hike in prices.

Speaking to ILNA, Maqsood Asaadi Samani said that the association in its first meeting of the year with transportation coordinating council called for 100% rise in the air ticket prices but the council has not yet decided and not announced its approval of increasing the price of tickets.

Touching on doubling the price of air tickets, he said that one of the factors is devaluation of the national currency and rise in the price of forex in the market. He added that the association tabled its demand for increasing the air ticket price last year when a dollar was traded for 25,000 tomans but today even the government decides to give haval forex to the airlines will be 40,000 tomans per dollar and the dollar in the free market is traded for more than 53,000 tomans.

He added that the airlines for purchasing equipment has to buy dollar or its required forex from the exchange trade center and this dollar does not cover all required items of the airlines and the center has cut supply of dollar to the airlines with the rate of the center which is 28,500 tomans per dollar.



Asaadi Samani reiterated that they are not concerned for decline in the number of passengers after the air ticket prices are doubled, reiterating that the proposed demand for doubling the prices will fluctuating and it will be based on the demand-and-supply in the routes and in some periods even they price of tickets because of low demands may drop.

On the real price of per hour flight, he said that each per hour flight costs \$48 but currently the airlines sell it to the customers for \$17 and the gap between these two figures is the loss that the airliners are suffering and to compensate this loss, the government gives no subsidies to the airliners.

When he was asked why there are many applications for the launch of airlines despite such losses, he said that although the applications are very but the applicants cannot take the required licenses, adding that in recent years the association has received some 60 applications for the launch of airlines but none of them has been successful because investment in air industry is very heavy and entering this industry is very tough and jumping out of it is harder due to the existing obligations.

Caretaker of Industry Ministry Appointed

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi appointed Mehdi Niazi as caretaker of industry, mines, and trade ministry shortly after parliament impeached and dismissed Reza Fatemi Amin from his post as minister.



President Ebrahim Raisi appreciated services rendered by Fatemi Amin and the hardship he has suffered during his tenure at the ministry and introduced Niazi as the temporary caretaker of the Mines, and Trade Ministry.

Niazi's former position at that ministry was deputy minister for coordinating trade affairs.

Fatemi Amin was dismissed from his post after failing to regain the vote of confidence of lawmakers in the Iranian parliament.

Fatemi Amin appeared in a parliament impeachment session to defend his performance on Sunday.

The impeachment motion gained the approval votes of 162 out of 272 lawmakers present in the session. Some 102 MPs voted against the motion, two abstained and six votes were dismissed.

Fatemi Amin had survived a first impeachment in the Iranian parliament in November.

He served at the top of one of Iran's most economically important ministries since September 2021.

Country Facing Shortage for Poultry Vaccines



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of Iranian Veterinary Pharmaceuticals and Biologics Importers Association (IVPPIA) says the country is facing the shortage of poultry vaccines, noting that the price of veterinary pharmaceutical items will increase by 30%.

Speaking to ILNA, Hamid Reza Tavakoli said that warehouses have been depleted of the veterinary medicines and importers who had imported their goods offer them very limitedly in order to find the fate of their goods to see they will be categorized in Group 21 or 22 by the ministry. He added that today one can see hoarding or smuggling of veterinary medicines it will increase the final cost of livestock products.

He said that the price of poultry vaccines will increase by up to 30%, adding that the ministry has not earmarked any forex for the veterinary products and efforts of the association for getting forex have been so far useless.

He noted that the country has not reached self-sufficiency in producing poultry vaccines and almost 90% of the livestock vaccines are produced in the country but 70% of poultry vaccines are imported and only 30% of the domestic needs are produced in the country and in the field of vitamins the country needs imports.

Tavakoli further said that importers are waiting to learn the fate of categorizing the veterinary medicine by the related ministries because the current condition deprives importers of getting dollar for 28,500 tomans and this will increase the final cost of livestock products.

He noted that the country needs annually \$1b for imports of veterinary pharmaceuticals that \$550m is for importing raw material and \$450m for additive medicines.

He urged officials to move faster in making decision over the fate of categorizing the veterinary pharmaceuticals because the delay will harm this industry.

Chadormalu Co. Enjoyed Successful Record Last Year

TEHRAN - Chadormalu Mining and Industrial

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Company in last Iranian calendar year 1401 could produce its highest amount of steel ingot and sponge iron productions in its history and it could break the record of previous record for annual production which had been set in the preceding year 1400.

The CEO of Chadormalu Company Eng. Amir Ali Taherzadeh announced this news and said that due to endeavors of the personnel as well as contractors, the company not only could succeed in producing products but also had a move ahead towards achieving its developmental goals. Speaking on the occasion of Labor Day, he felicitated the day to all who are active in the field of production in the country, adding that last year, Chadormalu ranked first in the country in terms of iron concentrate with producing 11m tons and it met the demands of the national steel industry.

He add the company also by producing 1.185m tons of steel ingots, 1.615m tons of sponge iron and 3.768m tons of iron pellet and the total production of over 17m tons of steel chain products had an effective role in the national economy.

Taherzadeh also stipulated that in 12 months of last year the company beside supplying products to meet the domestic needs exported over 268,000 tons steel ingots in international grades which earned the company and the country forex revenues and the earned forex were consumed based on the directives of the Central Bank for purchasing the required parts and equipment and the developmental projects.



He went on to say that last year despite the decline in the international prices of some part of steel chain products as well as the rise in the prices of energy carriers, rise in the expenditures and losses because of energy supply restrictions, the company could earn 409,000b rials.

Taherzadeh reiterated that they have tried to focus on environmental issues beside earning financial profits and it has had programs in this regard, adding that the launch of laboratory for measuring and controlling pollution in the company was one of the programs of the company.

He also emphasized modernization and upgrading the production process especially diversifying the basket of steel products and said that Chadormalu Company as one of the main and influential poles in the national steel value chain and as one of the biggest economic enterprises is considered as one of the main actors in the steel production chain.

Taherzadeh also touched upon the agreements with universities and the launch of Chadormalu Center for Developing and Supporting Innovation and Technology in the Science and Technology Park of Yazd to pave the ground for developing knowledge-based economy and support of developing technologies and innovations in Yazd Province.

He also reiterated that one of the strategies of the company is to find access to new iron ore resources and expressed hope they can materialize the slogan of the year and having a sustainable production in the steel industry.

It is worth mention here that currently Chadormalu Company have 40 developmental projects with predicting investment over 4b euros.

Cars Imported From China Will Hit The Market Soon

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran said that the first shipment of Chinese cars is about to hit the market while the minister responsible for the country's car industry was impeached over his lackadaisical performance.

According to reports, the shipment was unloaded at an inland intermodal terminal near Tehran directly connected by road or rail to a seaport. This shipment includes 1,108 Changan CS35s and 125 Changan CS55s imported by Iranian automaker Saipa.

Mehdi Zeighami, the director of the car import plan at the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, said on Sunday that the import was finally carried out "after a five-year hiatus." He did not say if this is anyhow related to the impeachment of Industry Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin, who appeared at the parliament on the same day to defend his ministry's performance about the car industry. Even if it was a publicity stunt by the ministry, it did not prove to be effective as Fatemi-Amin could not convince the lawmakers and was sacked anyway.

The government plans to import about 100,000 cars from one single Chinese state-owned company, Changan Automobile, by the end of the current Iranian year - March 20, 2024.

Arya Sasol Developing Export Marketing Plan

SHANA (Tehran) - Iran's Arya Sasol Polymer Company has moved toward developing its export marketing plan, said the ASPC managing director on Sunday.

Mohammad-Reza Heidarzadeh, who made the remark in an interview and Iran Petroleum, added, "In addition to exports to neighboring countries, we have focused on markets in Europe, China, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Africa, and even Latin America."

He said the company has attracted good customers in Europe, continuing, "We have now regular customers in Europe, seeking to boost our exports to the European markets this year."

Arya Sasol Polymer Company's direct exports over the past year stood at 15 percent, mentioned Heidarzadeh, adding the company has made plans to increase its direct sales to 25 percent this year.

Iran-Syria to Cooperate in Electricity

DAMASCUS (IP) - The Deputy Minister and Head of the Organization for Investment Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran, during his trip to Syria, met with Syrian officials and discussed the development of cooperation between the two countries in the electricity industry.

Heading a specialized and expert delegation Ali Fakhri has traveled to Syria to operate the Abu Kamal-Al-Qa'im border crossing and develop cooperation between Iran and Syria in the electricity industry.

The Deputy Minister of Economy, while attending the Abu Kamal border crossing, emphasized the transit through Syria as one of the missing links in the East-West corridor and the development of cooperation in the electricity industry with this country.

In another part of the trip, while visiting the Aleppo power plant, he announced Iran's readiness for the comprehensive design development of Syria's electricity network and transmission.

Iran to Spend €800m on 6 New Steam Power Plants

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran will start construction of six steam units in two power plants with an investment of 800 million euros, according to the CEO of Saba Group, an energy holding operated by government-affiliated Mostazafan Foundation.

Mohsen Amiri said that the Iranian government had approved the allocation of funds for the six new steam power plants, adding that Iran's National Development Fund will provide for the foreign exchange investment needed in the projects.

Amiri added that the projects will add nearly 1,000 megawatts (MW) to Iran's electricity generation capacity.

He said the two projects will be executed in gas-fired power plants in Khorramshahr in southwestern Iran and in Aliabad in northern Golestan province.

Top Iranian, Russian Universities Ink 17 MoUs

MOSCOW (IRNA) - As many as 17 bilateral and multilateral memorandums of understanding have been signed by top universities of Iran and Russia.

The MoUs were signed by the chancellors of the universities as part of a two-day event in the Russian capital where the heads of the Iranian and Russian universities convened, Iran's Scientific Attaché in Moscow Hadi Goudarzi told IRNA correspondent on Sunday.

He said that the agreements are expected to lead to further scientific and technological cooperation between the Iranian and Russian universities.

Lomonosov Moscow State University hosted the event on April 27-28.

Armed Attack Kills 10 in Ecuador Port Guayaquil



GUAYAQUIL (Dispatches) - At least 10 people were killed in an armed attack overnight in Guayaquil, Ecuador's main port city and economic hub that is under a state of emergency due to rising drug violence, police said.

The gruesome attack, which one witness described as a shooting, occurred at a mechanic shop in the city's southwest. Bodies could be seen lying on the sidewalk in pools of blood, as people cried and hugged one another while police cordoned off the area, AFP saw.

Ecuador's attorney general's office said on Twitter that it had opened a "preliminary investigation into the murder of 10 people, following an armed attack on Saturday night.... Two other people are wounded."

Mass Exodus From Sudan as Feadly Fighting Continues



KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese have fled Khartoum and the Darfur region to seek refuge in neighbouring countries amid ongoing deadly clashes between army and the rival paramilitary group the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). But the violence that grips the country is making it hard for them to leave.

Hundreds of thousands of people have fled Sudan in the past two weeks, according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. But thousands remain trapped in the country.

Violent battles between the forces of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former number two Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary RSF, have rocked the country since April 15. The deadly clashes have sparked a mass exodus of civilians, the scale of which is still hard to pin down.

Tens of thousands of people from the western Darfur region, which is especially volatile, have crossed the border into Chad. Others are trying to reach South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Egypt or Ethiopia, raising fears of vast displacement from a country with 45 million inhabitants, one of the largest in Africa.

Despite the latest three-day ceasefire set to expire at midnight, army forces clashed with paramilitaries on Sunday in Sudan's capital Khartoum. Fighting was reported around the army headquarters in the centre of the city, with the Sudanese army also carrying out air strikes in the capital's twin city of Omdurman across the Nile River.

Although countries like Saudi Arabia, France and the United States have managed to repatriate nationals and diplomats back home in recent days, millions of civilians living in Khartoum are caught up in the chaos gripping the megacity. Without outside help, they face a dilemma: risk their lives on the road or stay cloistered in their homes, where they endure crippling shortages of water and electricity. "To leave the city, you have to dodge bombing raids. Roads are no longer safe and armed attacks happen frequently. Travel costs have also quadrupled and there is a gas shortage," explains Omar*, a Sudanese journalist whose family managed to flee Khartoum on April 26.

"In the east of the country where I live, things are still calm. Some people come here to seek refuge in big cities like Kassala, Al-Qadarif and Port Sudan. Others head towards Ethiopia in the east or Egypt in the north to flee the country."

More than 14,000 Sudanese people and a further 2,000 nationals from other countries have crossed into Egypt since the conflict began, according to the country's government. Meanwhile, International Organization for Migration (IOM) spokesperson Eric Mazago told AFP on Thursday that more than 3,500 people have moved southeast into Ethiopia between April 21 and 25.

Another hot spot in the Sudan conflict is the western region of Darfur, still scarred by a war that erupted in 2003. Its capital, El Geneina, has seen a surge in attacks on civilians in recent days. At least 20,000 people crossed into Chad during the first 10 days of fighting, according to the UNHCR, despite its government closing the border with Sudan at the start of the conflict on April 15.

The country already hosted more than 400,000 Sudanese refugees across 13 camps in local communities, who had fled the 2003 to 2010 genocide. Border villages in Chad like Koufroun, Midjiguila and Dize Birte have seen the highest influx of displaced people. Humanitarian organisations on the ground are trying to provide emergency aid by supplying water, food, health care and temporary shelter.

Marcos to Forge Stronger Relationship With U.S. During Visit



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said his meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden was essential in advancing his country's national interest and strengthening the "very important alliance" between Manila and Washington.

Before leaving for his four-day official visit to Washington, Marcos said on Sunday he would convey to Biden his determination to forge "an even stronger relationship" with the United States to "address the concerns of our times," including issues related to the economy.

Erdogan, Rival Draw Vast Crowds Ahead of May 14 Vote



ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his main opponent staged massive rival rallies, setting the stage for a bruising battle in the final two weeks of Turkey's election campaign.

The veteran Turkish leader filled a central Ankara square that can fit a few hundred thousand people with flag-waving supporters, showing no signs of an illness that sidelined him for three days this week.

"Are we ready to come out with a crushing victory?" Erdogan, draped in a scarf of the Turkish capital's main football club, demanded from the enthusiastic crowd.

"On May 14, our nation, God willing, will eliminate them from the political scene," he said of secular leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu and his six-party opposition alliance. The 69-year-old president has bounced back strongly from what was described as a digestive problem in the run-up to one of Turkey's most important elections of its post-Ottoman history.

The illness shook Erdogan's strongman image, which he has cultivated over two decades of economic booms and busts, social transformation and crackdowns on dissent. "As you know I was sick recently, and from every house people were praying for me," Erdogan told the crowd.

Texas Mass Shooting Suspect Could Be Anywhere

CLEVELAND (Dispatches) - The search for a Texas man who allegedly shot his neighbors after they asked him to stop firing off rounds in his yard stretched into a second day Sunday, with authorities saying the man could be anywhere by now. Francisco Oropeza, 38, fled after the shooting Friday night that left five people dead, including an 8-year-old boy. San Jacinto County Sheriff Greg Capers said Saturday evening that authorities had widened the search to as far as 20 miles (32 kilometers) from the scene of the shooting.

Investigators found clothes and a phone while combing a rural area that includes dense layers of forest, but tracking dogs lost the scent, Capers said.

Police recovered the AR-15-style rifle that Oropeza allegedly used in the shootings but authorities were not sure if he was carrying another weapon, the sheriff said.

"He could be anywhere now," Capers said. The attack happened near the town of Cleveland, north of Houston, on a street where some residents say neighbors often unwind by firing off guns.

Capers said the victims were between the ages of 8 and 31 years old and that all were believed to be from Honduras. All were shot "from the neck up," he said.

The attack was the latest act of gun violence in what has been a record pace of mass shootings in the U.S. so far this year, some of which have also involved semiautomatic rifles.

The mass killings have played out in a variety of places — a Nashville school, a Kentucky bank, a Southern California dance hall, and now a rural Texas neighborhood inside a single-story home.

Capers said there were 10 people in the house — some of whom had just moved there earlier in the week — but that that no one else was injured. He said two of the victims were found in a bedroom laying over two children in an apparent attempt to shield them.

A total of three children found covered in blood in the home were taken to a hospital but found to be uninjured, Capers said.

Ukraine Says It Controls Key Supply Route Into Bakhmut

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine remains in control of a key supply route into Bakhmut, a military spokesperson said, as the head of Russia's mercenary Wagner Group threatened to withdraw some of his troops from the eastern city if Moscow did not send more ammunition.

Russian forces have been trying for 10 months to punch their way into the shattered remains of what was once a city of 70,000. Kyiv has pledged to defend Bakhmut, which Russia sees as a stepping stone to attacking other cities.

"For several weeks, the Russians have been talking about seizing the 'road of life,' as well as about constant fire control over it," Serhiy Cherevatyi, a spokesperson for Ukrainian troops in the east, said in an interview with local news website Dzerkalo Tyzhnia.

"Yes, it is really difficult there ... (but) the defence forces have not allowed the Russians to 'cut off' our logistics." The "road of life" is a vital road between the ruined Bakhmut and the nearby town Chasiv Yar to the west — a distance of just over 17 km (10.56 miles).

Ukraine's top military command said in its daily update on Sunday that its forces had repelled 58 Russian attacks over the past day along the part of frontline stretching from Bakhmut through Avdiivka and on to Maryinka further south in the Donetsk region.

If Bakhmut fell, Chasiv Yar would probably be next

to come under Russian attack according to military analysts, though it is on higher ground and Ukrainian forces are believed to have built defensive fortifications nearby.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of Russia's Wagner Group, who has often claimed unverifiable successes, said that his forces have advanced some 100 to 150 metres (109 to 164 yards) in Bakhmut, leaving just under 3 square km of the city in Ukrainian hands.

But he said he lost 94 troops. "It would have had been five times fewer if we had more ammunition," Prigozhin said in an audio statement published on the Telegram messaging app of his press service on Saturday evening.

Separately, in a nearly 90-minute video interview with Russian military blogger Semyon Pegov published on Saturday, Prigozhin threatened to withdraw troops from Bakhmut, saying they had enough ammunition left only for days.

"If the shortage of ammunition is not replenished, then ... most likely, we will be forced to withdraw part of the units," Prigozhin said, quoting a letter he said was sent to Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, giving an April 28 deadline.

It was not immediately known when the interview was recorded.



Paraguayans Head to the Polls With Taiwan Ties at Stake



ASUNCION (Dispatches) - Paraguayans began voting in what could be the biggest electoral challenge to the ruling conservative Colorado Party in over a decade and with the country's long ties with Taiwan potentially at stake.

Polling stations opened at 7 a.m. in what is expected to be a close contest between Colorado Party presidential candidate Santiago Pena, a 44-year-old economist, and 60-year-old political veteran Efrain Alegre, who is leading a broad center-left coalition and who promises a foreign policy shake-up.

In addition to the single-round winner-take-all presidential race, voters are also electing members of Congress and governors in the country of fewer than 7 million people.

At the Mariscal Francisco Solano López school in the capital Asuncion, Ramona Oddone was one of the first in line to cast her ballot: "Look at all the young people taking part - that shows people want change," the 79-year-old retired schoolteacher told Reuters. "They need jobs and I need a better pension."

Eugenio Senturion, 65, said his loyalty was firmly with the continuity candidate, Pena. "Once a Colorado always a Colorado," he said, speaking outside his local polling station in the area of Jara, Asuncion, where dry weather conditions could favour a high turnout, analysts said. "You cannot betray someone of your own (party) color," he said.

A 34-year-old mother of three, Maria Jose Rodas, was undecided. "I'm worried about crime. All the candidates are the same for me ... nothing will change," she said as a busload of voters arrived at the inner-city polling station.

The Colorado Party has dominated politics in the landlocked South American country since the 1950s and has ruled for all but five of the last 75 years. But its popularity has been hit by a slowing economy and graft allegations.

Ahead of casting his own ballot in the capital, Pena reiterated that the party would recognize a defeat. "No one can question our democratic credentials, not me as a candidate or the party," he told journalists on Sunday. "We are convinced that we are the best option ... we have full confidence in electoral justice."

Meltdown: 2023 Looking Grim For Swiss Glaciers



GENEVA (Dispatches) - This year is already shaping up to be another bad one for glaciers in the Swiss Alps, with the snowpack covering them around 30 percent below the 10-year average, according to the scientist tracking their decline.

Every year in April, when the snowpack reaches its peak, the Glacier Monitoring in Switzerland (GLAMOS) organisation surveys around 15 glaciers.

"This year, the conditions are quite similar to 2022 which had record ice losses. Once again, we have very little snow," GLAMOS chief Matthias Huss told AFP.

"It's not as dramatic in every region as it was in 2022, but we're still well below average," the glaciologist said, referring to snowpack cover.

"There are even regions with a deficit of up to 50 percent" below the 10-year average for the depth of snowpack covering the surface of the glaciers.

"The preconditions for the coming summer are therefore bad, as it stands. But we cannot say if we will once again have a record melt during the summer," as that will depend on the temperatures over the coming months.

The snowpack is doubly important for glaciers because the fresh snowfall not only feeds them but also provides them with a protective layer in the summer sunshine.

For the first time this year, snowpack measurements were made on a glacier located at around 4,100 metres (13,450 feet) above sea level.

"We had zero centimeters of snow depth. There was really nothing there at all. It was surprising," said Huss. The situation is "serious for the glaciers when even at 4,000 meters there is no snow towards the end of winter".

According to the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the past eight years have been the warmest on record and the average temperature of the planet in 2022 was 1.15 degrees Celsius warmer than the 1850-1900 average.

In the European Alps, glaciers melted to a record degree last year due to low winter snowfall, Saharan dust settling on the surface in March and then heatwaves between May and early September.

The situation was particularly dramatic in Switzerland, with the glaciers having lost 6.2 percent of their ice volume.

Huss is struck by how quickly the glaciers are shrinking.

"2022 was an absolute record. And what strikes me is that now, at the end of winter, we once again have a situation that is very particular," he said.

The WMO says the game is already up for glaciers and there is no way to stop them melting further unless a way is found to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The disappearance of glaciers is "symbolic of climate change", said Huss.

He noted the effects they will have on humans in the short term -- ranging from natural hazards, loss of tourism -- and in the longer term, as they supply rivers and hydroelectric power plants.

Much of the water that flows into the Rhine and the Rhone, two of Europe's major rivers, comes from the Alpine glaciers.

But Huss has not lost all hope.

"If we manage to limit global warming to 1.5C or 2C, we could still save about a third of the volume of the Alpine glaciers," he said.

"On the other hand, if climate change exceeds 4C, there will be an almost total loss of glaciers by around 2100."

Behind EU Lawmakers' Challenge to Rein in ChatGPT And Generative AI



LONDON (Dispatches) - As recently as February, generative AI did not feature prominently in EU lawmakers' plans for regulating artificial intelligence technologies such as ChatGPT.

The bloc's 108-page proposal for the AI Act, published two years earlier, included only one mention of the word "chatbot." References to AI-generated content largely referred to deepfakes: images or audio designed to impersonate human beings.

By mid-April, however, members of European Parliament (MEPs) were racing to update those rules to catch up with an explosion of interest in generative AI, which has provoked awe and anxiety since OpenAI unveiled ChatGPT six months ago.

That scramble culminated on Thursday with a new draft of the legislation which identified copyright protection as a core piece of the effort to keep AI in check.

Interviews with four lawmakers and two other sources close to discussions reveal for the first time how over just 11 days this small group of politicians hammered out what could become landmark legislation, reshaping the regulatory landscape for OpenAI and its competitors.

The draft bill is not final and lawyers say it will likely take years to come into force.

The speed of their work, though, is also a rare example of consensus in Brussels, which is often criticised for the slow pace of decision-making.

Since launching in November, ChatGPT has become the fastest growing app in history, and sparked a flurry of activity from Big Tech competitors and investment in generative AI startups like Anthropic and Midjourney.

The runaway popularity of such applications led EU industry chief Thierry Breton and others to call for regulation of ChatGPT-like services.

An organisation backed by Elon Musk, the billionaire CEO of Tesla Inc and Twitter, took it up a notch by issuing a letter warning of existential risk from AI and calling for stricter regulations.

On April 17, the dozen MEPs involved in drafting the legislation signed an open letter agreeing with some parts of Musk's letter and urged world leaders to hold a summit to find ways to control the development of advanced AI.

That same day, however, two of them - Dragos Tudorache and Brando Benifei - proposed changes that would force companies with generative AI systems to disclose any copyrighted material used to train their models, according to four sources present at the meetings, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the discussions.

That tough new proposal received cross-party support, the sources said.

One proposal by conservative MEP Axel Voss - forcing companies to request permission from rights holders before using the data - was rejected as too restrictive and something that could hobble the emerging industry.

After thrashing out the details over the next week, the EU outlined proposed laws that could force an uncomfortable level of transparency on a notoriously secretive industry.

"I must admit that I was positively surprised on how we converged rather easily on what should be in the text on these models," Tudorache told Reuters on Friday.

"It shows there is a strong consensus, and a shared understanding on how to regulate at this point in time."

The committee will vote on the deal on May 11 and if successful, it will advance to the next stage of negotiation, the trilogue, where EU member states will debate the contents with the European Commission and Parliament.

Europe's Largest Gas Producer Is Set To Nationalize Its Gas Pipelines



OSLO (Dispatches) - Norway will nationalize all of its natural gas pipelines within the next five years, the country's oil and energy ministry said.

The nationalization plan would provide Norway with greater control over its critical infrastructure. Standing in the way of an immediate nationalization are existing concessions, which aren't due to expire until 2028. After that, Norway will be able to move forward with its plan.

Norway became Germany's single-largest natural gas supplier last year, overtaking Russia, with Germany's gas imports dropping by 12.3%. Norway provided Germany—Europe's largest economy—with 33% of all of the gas it imported in 2022, while Russia's share of the German gas market fell to 22% last year, the Germany Federal Network Agency Bundesnetzagentur said in early January.

Also in January, Norway disclosed plans to pump its current high volumes of natural gas for at least another five years—through 2028—as operators pledged \$30.3 billion to develop new fields and to extend the lifetimes of currently producing fields.

Norway's gas production was 9 billion standard cubic meters higher in 2022 than in 2021, with gas now accounting for more than half of production from the shelf. "Gas production is projected to remain at around 2022 levels for the next four to five years," the directorate said in January.

Norway's oil and gas ministry said on Friday that it was notifying licensees to let them know that the country wants to "make use of the right of repatriation at the end of the license period," adding that it "wants complete state ownership of the central parts of the Norwegian gas transport system."

Deadly Invader Devastating Venezuelan Coral Reefs

CHORONI (Dispatches)

- An ominous shadow in the turquoise Caribbean waters off Venezuela comes from a deadly intruder — a soft coral that experts say has caused one of the most destructive habitat invasions on record anywhere.

The *Unomia stolonifera*, native to Indonesia and the Indo-Pacific, is a pinkish type of pulse coral so called for its dance-like movements in the ocean currents.

It is a popular aquarium ornament — pretty to look at and hardy — with a single polyp fetching as much as US\$80 to US\$120.

But it is also a killer — settling on native hard corals, rocks and even seagrass which it suffocates and replaces, ultimately destroying entire ecosystems.

Off Venezuela's north coast, *Unomia* dominates the ocean floor landscape after being introduced through the illegal aquarium trade around 20 years ago.

"This is an ecological catastrophe," said marine biologist Juan Pedro Ruiz-Allais, director of Project *Unomia*, named after the invader he has spent years investigating.

Fish stocks are drastically decreasing in the waters off Venezuela as native reefs, which serve as nurseries and feeding grounds, die off, he told AFP.

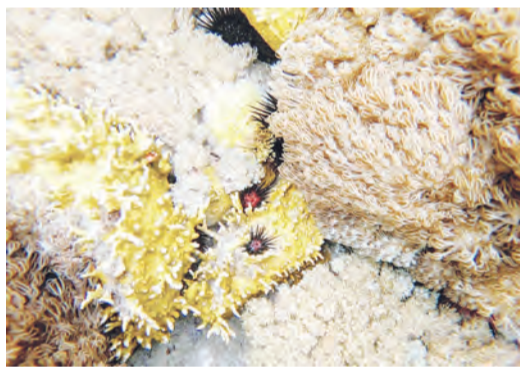
"When the reef dies, when it is covered by the *Unomia stolonifera*, a disruption of the food chain occurs," said the biologist.

"It is a social, food security, and economic problem because the livelihood of fishermen is compromised."

When Ruiz-Allais first came across the invader in 2007, it was an unknown species in the Caribbean and even the Atlantic, he recalled. "Nobody knew what it was."

It was first spotted in the Mochima National Park, a gorgeous archipelago covering more than 94,000 hectares, and has since been found to have colonised most of those islands.

The first scientific report was published in



2014, and the coral was initially classified as a member of the broad *Xeniidae* family before it was finally categorised in 2021 as *Unomia stolonifera*.

From Mochima, it has spread west and east in the Caribbean Sea.

Off the northern state of Anzoategui, it has taken over the equivalent

of 300 football stadiums.

The coral is spread by fishing nets, anchors, and ship ballast water.

"It is a great coloniser," Gustavo Carrasquel, director of the Azul Ambientalistas, an environmental NGO, told AFP.

The threat extends beyond Venezuela's borders: officials say *Unomia* traces have been found near the islands of Aruba and Curacao, and in waters off Colombia and Brazil — where it became attached to an oil rig but was controlled.

"It is a problem that will affect the rest of the Caribbean," said Ruiz-Allais.

But nowhere has it been more destructive than in Venezuela.

"It is an unprecedented case," said Project *Unomia* coordinator Mariano Onoro.

Fishermen and tour operators, concerned about the invasive coral's rapid propagation, have resorted to manual extraction.

But experts say this is not advised, because broken-off fragments are transported by the tides, settling to create yet more colonies.

The privately funded Project *Unomia* has developed an extraction machine with a group of engineers that is awaiting government approval for testing.

Venezuela's Institute for Scientific Research and the ministry of eco-socialism have launched an investigation into the coral's rapid spread but have yet to come up with a solution.

For now, the magnitude of the problem is such that the invader's elimination appears impossible.

"What we can do is recover some areas and control it," said Onoro.

Worry Burnout, Or When Too Much Worry Leaves You Exhausted



PARIS (Dispatches) - Do you feel overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted by a state of anxiety that's not just related to your work? Then you might be suffering from what experts are calling worry burnout.

Worry burnout is a relatively new term that describes a general and overwhelming feeling of anxiety that is closely related to the multiple crises the world has been facing in recent years, from the climate emergency to the pandemic, war and inflation. There are just so many things to worry about!

As its name suggests, this condition has symptoms similar to those of a work-related burnout, except that it is rooted outside the work sphere. Symptoms can include irritability, insomnia, digestive problems, loss of motivation, constant fatigue and more. The signs are numerous and should not be taken lightly if they continue long term, warn professionals.

The causes too can be numerous, and can accumulate to become a significant burden of worry that eventually becomes overwhelming.

Once cause could be feeling anxious when reading the news, for example. This can result in an attitude of rejection, whereby people stop following current events entirely.

On the contrary, others might fall into an obsessive overconsumption of news. Not following the news has become so common that it has given rise to another phenomenon, the relief of missing out (ROMO), or the relief of having an event or a news story pass you by.

But worry burnout doesn't just stem from world events, it can also be fuelled by our personal lives, especially if we accumulate worries, whether at home, in relationships and/or at work.

Colombia's Central Bank Raises Benchmark Rate

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Colombia's central bank board raised the benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points to 13.25%, continuing a long tightening cycle amid persistent inflation and significant stability risks to the global financial system, it said. Four policymakers voted for the 25 basis point increase, while two wanted to keep the rate unchanged and one voted for a 50 basis point increase. While economic activity continues to slow, it is decelerating at a lower than expected rate, the board said in a statement. Annual consumer price growth remained relatively stable in March thanks to a slowdown in food price increases - which fell to 21.8% last month from 24.1% in February - but inflation expectations remain above target, the bank said.



Turkey's Tourism Revenue Jumps Over 30%

ANKARA - Turkey's tourism revenue jumped by more than a third in the first quarter of this year, official data showed Friday, as the vital industry maintains last year's strong trend despite February's devastating earthquakes in the country's southeast.

Tourism revenue is critical to Turkey as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his government focus on reducing the current account deficit to tackle high inflation and interest rates.

Last year's complete rebound from the pandemic fallout saw the number of foreign tourists near the record, generating all-time high revenues and prompting the government to raise its annual tourism estimates.

The tourism income rose 32.3% year-over-year to \$8.69 billion in the January-March period, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) reported on Friday.

In 2022, revenues climbed 53.4% from a year earlier to a record high of nearly \$46.3 billion, as lingering pandemic effects dissipated and the Ukraine war fallout drove a surge of Russian arrivals, partly due to flight restrictions imposed by Western nations on Russia.

Hundreds of thousands of Russians are also estimated to have moved last year to Türkiye, a haven for investment in homes and other assets.

Surging demand from European countries also backed arrivals, spearheaded by Germany and the United Kingdom.

Last year's income blew past the previous high of \$38.4 billion in 2019 before the pandemic hit. The figure stood at \$30.2 billion in 2021 after the outbreak more than halved it just \$14.8 billion in 2020.

The foreign exchange it brings in makes the tourism sector vital to Turkey's economy. The government's new economic program focuses on flipping the current account deficits to a surplus, prioritizing exports, production and investments while curbing rising prices inflation. More than one-fifth, or 20.8%, of tourism income in the first quarter of this year was generated by visits of Turkish nationals residing abroad, the TurkStat data showed.

Turkey welcomed 8.2 million visitors in January-March, a surge of 26.8% year-over-year, the institute said. Some 20.4%, or 1.7 million, were Turkish citizens living in other countries.

Foreign visitors surged 80.33% year-over-year to 44.6 million in 2022, just shy of the peak of 45.1 million in 2019. The figure is compared to the 24.71 million arrivals in 2021 and 12.73 million in 2020.

The government has said foreign arrivals are expected to reach 60 million in 2023 before hitting 90 million in 2028. For the income, it sees it rising to \$56 billion this year and \$100 billion five years from now.

The goal was reaffirmed by Deputy Culture and Tourism Minister Nadir Alpaslan, who on Wednesday said income was set to more than double this year.

Turkey is taking quick, bold steps to become one of the world's top tourism destinations, Alpaslan said. He noted that after the pandemic dampened travel worldwide, Turkey's Tourism Promotion and Development Agency helped the country's sector in recovering rapidly.

French GDP Edges Up in Q1 Despite Strikes, High Inflation

PARIS (Dispatches) - The French economy grew slightly in the first quarter, despite a series of strikes against the government's pension reform bill, but inflation remained stubbornly high, rising to nearly 6% in April.

Statistics agency INSEE data showed gross domestic product (GDP) edging up 0.2% in quarter one, in line with expectations, after a flat fourth quarter, helped by household consumption, which was steady after falling 1% in the last three months of 2022.

Inflation in the eurozone's second-largest economy increased more than expected to 5.9% year-over-year in April, from 5.7% in March, which INSEE blamed partly on higher energy prices, as the year-over-year fall in energy prices was smaller than in March.

Prices for services and tobacco also increased, but food prices fell. Month-over-month, inflation eased to 0.6% in April from 0.9% in March, in part due to lower prices for fresh food.

French 10-year bond yields rose three basis points to 3.063% following the release of the inflation data.

"April figures highlight that the fight against inflation is far from over, while the negative impact of higher interest rates is likely to intensify as the year progresses," S&P Economics Director Diego Iscarro said in a note.

French Budget Minister Gabriel Attal said the economy was doing relatively well, adding that this was an opportunity to reduce state deficits swollen by unprecedented government action to protect consumers from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation in recent years.

"The time for 'whatever the cost' is over now ... we need to be rigorous with public finances," he told franceinfo radio.

He said the budget deficit had come down from 9% in 2020 and 6.5% in 2021 to 4.7% last year, and that the government remained on track to cut it further to 2.7% in 2027.

But he warned about higher debt servicing costs - France now borrows at about 3% from 1% a year ago - saying that by 2027 the cost of servicing the country's debt could be France's biggest budget spending item.

GDP data showed that French food consumption fell for the fifth consecutive quarter, but energy demand rebounded and stronger trade figures also helped.

Overall output of goods and services was up 0.4% in quarter one, having risen just 0.1% in quarter four of 2022. The refining industry rebounded, with output jumping 13.1% after falling 11.4% in the previous quarter as strikes in March had been less widespread than in October.



IMF Urges European Central Banks to Kill Inflation Beast

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) urged European central banks to "kill the beast" of inflation by pursuing interest rate hikes.

"You need to go and kill that beast," the IMF's European department director Alfred Kammer told reporters in Stockholm. He said "history is littered" with examples of policymakers who pause rate hikes only to "need to have a second attempt" at bringing down inflation, inflicting even more pain on the economy.

The European Central Bank (ECB), along with the other central banks in the region, has followed the U.S. Federal Reserve since last year in hiking interest rates sharply to rein in inflation.

But with economic growth and inflation slowing and several bank failures under the weight of higher interest rates, there has been widespread speculation that central banks may pause their hikes to let the impact of the measures work through the economy.

The collapse of SVB bank last month in the U.S. forced regulators to step in to avoid disruption in the tech sector it served. At the same time, Swiss authorities arranged a hasty takeover of Credit Suisse as confidence eroded, raising worries about the banking sector.

The IMF believes that central banks should still raise interest rates as it fears that increases in energy prices are feeding through to price increases throughout the economy.

For next week's ECB meeting on interest rates, "that means tightening for longer, and we are estimating until mid-2024, to bring inflation down to target sometime in 2025," said Kammer.

Germany Dodges Recession, But Flat Growth Disappoints

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany narrowly dodged a recession in the first quarter. Still, growth stagnated contrary to expectations for a slight rebound, preliminary data showed, as the energy crisis weighed on Europe's top economy.

Gross domestic product came in flat from January to March, federal statistics agency Destatis said. If the economy had shrunk again - after a 0.5% contraction in the final quarter of 2022 - it would have entered a "technical recession."

The industrial powerhouse, which had long been heavily reliant on Russian energy, was hit hard after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine sent gas prices surging.

Analysts and the government predicted for months that surging prices, particularly of energy, would push the economy into a sharp winter recession.

But expectations changed in recent weeks as Germany's vast industrial sector rebounded, on the back of falling energy prices and the reopening of China, a key market for German manufacturers, after extended COVID-19 lockdowns.

While the economy appears to have avoided the worst, the first quarter reading was below expectations from analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet for an expansion of 0.2%.

There is also a possibility that the reading could be revised when the final figures are published in a few weeks.

LBBW bank economist Jens-Oliver Niklasch said the figures highlighted the economy was still experiencing a "dry spell."

Despite recent figures from the industrial sector having boosted optimism, "now we see that progress is slow," he added.

Nevertheless, Germany still appears to have weathered the energy crisis triggered by Moscow's drastic reduction of energy exports to Europe better than feared.

In response to the upheaval, Berlin rolled out a barrage of relief measures to cushion businesses and consumers, including a cap on energy prices and scrambled to diversify its supplies.

After peaking at 8.8% in October, inflation has been falling steadily. It stood at 7.4% in March.

The first official inflation estimate for April will be released later Friday.

On Wednesday, the German government lifted its economic growth forecast for 2023 to an expansion of 0.4%, up from 0.2% a few months ago.

Recent surveys have also been upbeat, with the Ifo Institute's key business confidence barometer rising for a seventh month in April.

But not everyone is so optimistic, with the IMF predicting earlier this month the German economy would shrink by 0.1% this year.

Europe's Economy Barely Grows as Inflation Pinches Consumers

LONDON (Dispatches) - The European economy scraped out meager growth in the first three months of the year, barely gaining momentum as stubborn inflation hikes the price of groceries and erodes people's willingness to spend paychecks that are failing to keep pace.

Friday's less-than-stellar increase of 0.1% from the previous quarter follows disappointing U.S. growth estimates, which kept the fears of a looming recession in the world's largest economy alive.

The 20 countries that use the euro currency quickly increased from January through March after zero growth in the last three months of 2022. Moreover, the eurozone avoided a winter recession thanks to mild weather alleviating pressure on natural gas supplies.

European governments and utilities also scrambled to line up additional sources to heat homes, generate electricity and power factories after Russia cut off most of its supply to the continent over its war against Ukraine. Industrial activity has picked up, and China's reopening from COVID-19 restrictions boosted the outlook for the global economy. But the U.S. disappointed, growing at an annualized rate of 1.1%, or 0.3%, compared with the quarter before. In Europe, the mild weather also allowed an early start to construction activity.

Inflation, however, is holding back consumer spending, with wage increases only partly offsetting how much people have to pay for groceries, clothing and more. Higher food prices have taken over from energy as a key driver of inflation, running at a painful 15.5% in March as energy costs dropped 0.9% from a year ago.

Interest rate increases by the European Central Bank (ECB) aimed at getting inflation under control also will weigh on growth by making credit more costly for purchases or business investments.

"Easing supply bottlenecks, lower energy prices and signs of global economic resilience offset weakness in private consumption, with real household incomes still struggling under the weight of high inflation," wrote Rory Fennessy, European economist at Oxford Economics.

"We don't expect growth to pick up meaningfully throughout 2023," he added. Annual inflation in the eurozone eased to 6.9% in March from 8.5% the month before but is well above the ECB's goal of 2%, considered best for the economy. So-called core inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, also hit a record 5.7%.

With fears that inflation is becoming entrenched in the economy longer term, the bank is likely to deliver another rate increase at its policy meeting Thursday.

Credit may get even tighter after the failure of Silicon Valley Bank in the U.S. and the forced takeover of Credit Suisse by rival Swiss bank UBS. The turmoil could increase market and regulatory scrutiny of bank finances, making them less likely to risk lending. That could help ease inflation but also weigh on economic growth.



U.S. Venture Global Signs 20-Year Deal To Supply LNG To Japan



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Venture Global LNG has signed a 20-year deal to sell 1 million tons per year of liquefied natural gas from its upcoming CP2 LNG export facility in Louisiana to Japanese customer JERA, the U.S. LNG exporter said.

The CP2 LNG export terminal will be located on a site adjacent to Venture Global LNG's operating Calcasieu Pass LNG facility in Cameron Parish, Louisiana. CP2 LNG, Venture Global's third export project, is expected to commence construction later this year.

Venture Global has already announced Sales and Purchase Agreements (SPAs) for over a third of the 20 million tons per annum (MTPA) nameplate facility, with active discussions ongoing for the remainder of its capacity, the U.S. exporter said.

"Venture Global is thrilled to be expanding our partnership with JERA, one of the world's premiere energy providers and largest buyers of LNG," said Mike Sabel, chief executive of Venture Global LNG.

Sunao Nakamura, Senior Managing Executive Officer, Optimization of JERA, commented, "LNG procurement competition has been intensifying and thus, stable procurement of LNG in a timely manner in line with the domestic electricity supply-demand situation is needed to secure a stable supply of energy in Japan."

At the end of last year, Japan's INPEX Corporation signed a 20-year deal with Venture Global to buy LNG from CP2 LNG for 20 years, as both Asian customers and U.S. developers are seeking long-term agreements.

China Gas Holdings signed earlier this year 20-year LNG purchase deals with Venture Global to buy LNG from the Plaquemines LNG and CP2 LNG projects beginning in 2027.

Iranian Documentary to Go on Screen at Austrian Film Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian documentary "Water, Wind, Dust, Bread" directed by Mehdi Zamanpour Kiasri will take part in Ethnocineca- International Documentary Film Festival Vienna. The 25-minute documentary "Water, Wind, Dust, Bread", which took more than a year to produce, is a delicate narrative of the life of two children named 'Abolfazl' and 'Setayesh' who experience a different life.

The documentary has been previously screened at the 18th edition of ZagrebDox, the International Documentary Film Festival and the 24th edition of the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in Greece, a special screening section of the 15th Miradasdoc International Film Festival in Spain and the 19th edition of the Millennium Film Festival in Poland.



Russia and West Wrestle Over Energy Assets Amid Ukraine Invasion

LONDON (Dispatches) - Russia this week took control of the Russian assets of Finland's Fortum and Germany's Uniper, which both operate power plants in Russia, and warned it could seize more.

The two energy firms' shares were placed in the temporary control of Rosimushchestvo, the federal government property agency, and will be run by managers from Rosneft.

Kremlin said the decision was taken in response to "aggressive actions of unfriendly countries" and mirrored attitude of Western governments towards foreign assets of Russian companies.

Many foreign companies sought to exit from Russia amid sweeping Western sanctions following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in Feb. 2022, but were unable to divest their assets due to legal or financial restrictions.

Here's a list of some of the energy companies that were taken over by Western or Russian governments, or that have struggled to sell their businesses:

GAZPROM GERMANIA

Last November, Germany nationalised Gazprom Germania, a subsidiary of Russia's gas giant Gazprom, after Gazprom quit it without explanation.

The company was renamed Sefo (Securing Energy for Europe), and the German government injected 6.3 billion euros (\$6.92 billion) to recapitalise it with European Commission approval.

Gazprom Germania had total assets of 8.4 billion euros and equity of 2.2 billion euros in 2020, according to regulatory filings.

ROSNEFT

Germany, via its energy regulator, last autumn put two German divisions of Russia's Rosneft Deutschland GmbH and RN Refining & Marketing GmbH under so-called trusteeship.

As part of the arrangement, Germany has taken control of Rosneft's stakes in three refineries: a 54.17% stake in PCK Schwedt, a 24% stake in MIRO and a 28.57% stake in Bayernoil.

Legally, Rosneft remains the owner but has no way to exercise control over these assets as long as the trusteeship remains in place.

Germany's lower house of parliament on April 20 approved changes to the Energy Security Act that would allow a quick sale of Rosneft's stake in the Schwedt refinery without the need for prior nationalisation.

Rosneft took legal action against trusteeship and is seeking compensation for the financial losses it suffered during the first six months of the order.

The company says it is the third-largest refiner in Germany with a total capacity to refine up to 12.8 million tons per year accounting for more than a tenth of the country's capacity.

FORTUM

The Finnish utility has said it would "pursue a controlled exit" from Russia after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, but it also flagged expropriation risk in its annual report for 2022.

Fortum's Russia division has seven thermal power plants in the Ural region and Western Siberia, and a portfolio of wind and solar plants in Russia together with local venture partners.

The company, majority owned by the Finnish government, recorded total impairment charges of 1.7 billion euros related to its Russian operations for 2022.

Fortum bought Russia's TGK-10, a heat and power producer in St. Petersburg area, in 2008 for about 2 billion euros.

In 2018, Russian Minister of Energy Alexander Novak said Fortum had invested about 4.5 billion euros in Russia.



UNIPER/UNIPRO

Russia placed energy producer Unipro, 83.73% owned by German Uniper (UN01.DE) under state administration, the German utility said on April 26.

Uniper has deconsolidated Unipro as of end-2022 and classified it as discontinued business, citing the loss of control despite its majority stake.

The company wrote down \$4.4 billion as a result of deconsolidation and put Unipro's value at a symbolic 1 euro, reflecting the likely chance that it could sell the business.

Uniper acquired Russian power company OGC-4, later renamed Unipro, for 4.2 billion euros in 2007, and invested more about 2.5 billion euros to build new generating capacity.

In 2021, Unipro generated 230 million euros in adjusted operating profit.

Uniper has also taken an impairment of \$1 billion euros for its financial exposure to the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

WINTERSHALL DEA

Germany oil and gas firm Wintershall Dea, majority owned by German chemicals maker BASF, said Russia's takeover of Fortum and Uniper's assets has not affected it, but added that Moscow's policies were "unpredictable".

Wintershall Dea has previously deconsolidated its Russian operations, which prior to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine accounted for over half of its petroleum output worldwide.

Its assets in Russia include a 35% stake in the Yuzhno-Russkoye gas field, and it co-owns two Achimov natural gas production projects in Siberia.

Wintershall Dea has also written down its 15% stake in the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline that had been damaged by mysterious explosions last September.

BASF took a 7.3 billion euro writedown for 2022 due to Wintershall Dea's decision to pull out of Russia.

OMV

Austrian energy group OMV said in February it saw no way to sell its stake in the Russian Yuzhno-Russkoye gas field due to legal restrictions in Russia.

OMV paid 1.75 billion euros for a stake in the Yuzhno-Russkoye field, one of Russia's largest, in 2017, at the time saying it could add 100,000 barrels of oil equivalent (boe) per day to its production.

The company was also one of the five financial backers of Nord Stream 2. It fully impaired the outstanding investment of 1 billion euros.

Analysts See Oil Prices Rising to \$90 by End-2023

LONDON (Dispatches) - Oil prices are set to rise toward \$90 per barrel by the end of this year, driven by Chinese demand and a tightening market following OPEC+'s latest production cuts, a Reuters survey of 40 analysts and economists showed on Friday.

According to the experts, Brent Crude prices are expected to average \$87.12 per barrel this year, a higher average forecast than in the previous poll in March.

So far this year, Brent prices have averaged around \$82, while they traded at just above \$79 early on Friday.

The U.S. benchmark, WTI Crude, is set to average \$82.23 per barrel this year, the analysts in the April poll expect, compared to an average forecast of \$80.88 per barrel in the Reuters poll in March. Early on Friday, the front-month WTI Crude contract traded at around \$75 a barrel.

Most analysts, not only those polled by Reuters, expect the surprise additional OPEC+ cuts of 1.16 million barrels per day (bpd) between May and December to significantly tighten supply in the second half of this year. Rebounding demand in China is also set to reduce supply and potentially offset weakness in major mature economies if the ongoing interest rate hikes lead to recessions later this year.

Hours after OPEC+ announced the new cuts, Goldman Sachs raised its Brent Crude forecast to \$95 from \$90 at the end of the year. The bank also raised its Brent Crude forecast for 2024, now seeing it at \$100 at the end of the year from an earlier projection of \$97.

Despite concerns about economic growth, global oil demand is still set for a record high 101.9 million bpd this year, driven by a resurgent Chinese consumption, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its latest monthly report in the middle of April.

Solid demand from China raised global oil demand by 810,000 bpd year-on-year in the first quarter to 100.4 million bpd, the IEA said in its Oil Market Report for April. "A much stronger increase of 2.7 mb/d is expected through year-end, propelled by a continued recovery in China and international travel," the IEA noted.

Pension Reform Protests Threaten Macron's Agenda

PARIS (Dispatches) - A global credit ratings agency downgraded French debt worthiness a notch on Saturday, citing pension reform protests as a cause. Two weeks after the contested pension reform passed, persistent social movements threaten to erase the financial gains that the French government expected.

As Nantes squares off against Toulouse on Saturday evening for the hotly anticipated French Football Cup finals, the action might not be restricted to the pitch. French trade unions promised a stormy reception for President Emmanuel Macron, who typically greets players of both teams on the pitch before the match kicks off.

They plan to hand out red cards and whistles to spectators outside the Stade de France, to express their anger over the pension reforms.

Macron will still be there despite the pressure, along with 3,000 police officers and gendarmes, but will not step foot on the pitch to avoid being booed, according to AFP.

Iran-Eurasian...

FROM PAGE 1

Rezvani-Far stated: "After the signing of the free trade agreement with the union, the trade between Iran and Eurasia has grown by 32% while the amount of transit between them was also 1.8 million tons."

Referring to the diversity of trade between Iran and Eurasia, the head of IRICA predicted that in less than two years, the trade between the two sides will reach 10 billion dollars.

Rezvani-Far further said: "Online exchange of information and customs documents, cooperation in the field of information exchange and tariff bilaterally, development of educational cooperation, cooperation for the development of transit within the framework of E-Tir, and preparation for providing services to credible economic operators are among the most important action plans for business development with the Eurasian Union."

Providing customs facilities to credible companies was another important agenda of the meeting, in which it was announced that credible large commercial, service, and industrial companies are entitled to receive special services in customs affairs.

Eldar Alisherov, Minister in charge of Customs Cooperation of the Eurasian Economic Commission, also welcomed the development of trade with Iran and said: With the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement with Iran, the volume of trade between the two sides has increased significantly, and we predict that with the implementation of the clauses of the agreement, the volume of trade will increase.

The Eurasian Economic Union, as one of the successful agreements in the region, has played a significant role in the economic development of its member countries.

Israel Furious...

FROM PAGE 1

Akbari said Iran and Syria are both members of the anti-Zionist resistance front. "Both countries have paid heavy costs to this end; therefore, greater synergy between the two countries can increase the strength of the resistance front."

Iran was the first country to rush to Syria's aid following the 2011 outbreak of foreign-backed violence in the Arab country. In 2017, military advisory assistance provided by the Islamic Republic helped the Arab nation score a monumental victory over the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group.

Hate Crimes... FROM PAGE 1

The data, which draws on findings from 230 national human rights organizations, suggests that from 2008, when Barack Obama, the first Black American president in US history, took office, hate crimes have been on the rise.

"Research has shown that the 2008 election cycle served as a 'rebirth' of the anti-government militia movement from the 1990s. The final weeks of the 2008 election saw an increase in hate crimes targeting racial and ethnic minorities as the United States elected its first Black president," the report stated.

The report says hate crimes have nearly doubled since 2015. It says a staggering spike came during and after Donald Trump's election campaign and it has not returned to the levels before the Trump period.

The civil rights group suggests that Black people and Muslims are the main targets of hate crimes.

The Muslim population of the United States has increasingly been the target of Islamophobia and hate crimes in the years following the September 11, 2001 attacks, which unleashed a new era of racism and discrimination against Muslims.

"I think that's a responsibility for anybody in a leadership role, anybody who's running for president or office or anybody who's currently in government, to use their pulpit to speak out against hate," Steven Freeman, vice president of civil rights at the Anti-Defamation League, told Yahoo News.

Anti-hate groups have urged the US government to make sure that tech giants like Meta, YouTube and Twitter increase transparency and "invest in de-platforming hate for the upcoming local, state, and national elections" to address hate incidents.

Last year the UK announced the number of hate crimes recorded by police in England and Wales had risen by 26% - to 155,841 in the year to March 2022.

More than two-thirds - 109,843 - were racist hate crimes.

But crimes against transgender people saw the biggest rise, with 4,355 reports, up 56% from the previous year.

The Home Office said the overall rise could be due to better recording by police - and fewer had been recorded under Covid restrictions in 2020-21.

The rise in crimes against transgender people could also be because "transgender issues have been heavily discussed on social media over the last year", it said.

Hate crimes targeting people's sexual orientation also increased - by 42%, to 26,152.

France and even Germany are other countries which are suffering from the hate crimes and every now and then we see some murders or shooting sprees which are considered as hate crime.

Of course, one should blame the West itself for the rise in the number of hate crimes, and also extremism no matter religious or racial should also be blamed for it.

As long as the world does not move towards equality and social justice and coexistence, we will never see drop in the number of hate crimes and Western statesmen should correct their policies for eradication of hate crimes especially against the minorities either racial or religious.

The U.S. with the current policies should not expect a drop in the number of hate crimes and as it is expected, elections in this country create more rift and hatred than unity and coexistence in the country which considers itself land of freedom but one can see only the Liberty Statue in this country instead of liberty itself.

Iran Has Hit Israeli...

FROM PAGE 1

"Several decades ago, (David) Ben-Gurion, one of the founders of the fake regime, said 'We will be destroyed whenever our deterrent power ends.' The world is currently witnessing this reality and if nothing happens, the end of the usurping regime is close. This too is one of the blessings that has risen from the sacrifices of the devoted Palestinian youth in the West Bank and other occupied areas," the Leader stated in a meeting with a group of Iranian officials and ambassadors from the Islamic countries in Tehran.

Uzbekistan Enters...

FROM PAGE 1

Now with approval of the nation, Uzbekistan will see a transition to broader social reforms and freedom of expression and the country will face a new horizon ahead.

The referendum on the amendments to the constitution is part of various broad reforms being implemented by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev since becoming interim President in September 2016, elected in an open election with huge majority in the 2016 presidential election, following the death of Uzbekistan's long-time leader Islam Karimov.

Gooch Holds Off Garcia In Singapore Playoff

LONDON (Dispatches) - American Talor Gooch beat Sergio Garcia in a playoff to claim victory in a weather-affected LIV Golf Invitational in Singapore on Sunday and secure a second \$4 million winner's pay cheque in as many LIV tour appearances.

The American, who also won the LIV Golf event in Adelaide last week, went into the final round tied with Garcia, with Brooks Koepka one stroke behind them in solo third.

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Bayern Munich Reclaim Bundesliga Top Spot

MUNICH (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich struck twice in the second half to beat bottom club Hertha Berlin 2-0 on Sunday and retake the lead in the Bundesliga with four matches remaining.

Goals from Serge Gnabry and Kingsley Coman helped the Bavarians take advantage of Borussia Dortmund's draw at VfL Bochum on Friday to leapfrog them into top spot on 62 points. Dortmund are on 61 in second place. Union Berlin are third on 56 points along with fourth-placed Freiburg.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

TUESDAY MAY 2, 2023

Jota Seals Thrilling Win for Liverpool Against Tottenham

LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - Diogo Jota scored a stoppage-time winner as Liverpool clinched a barely-believable 4-3 Premier League victory over Tottenham Hotspur to bolster their hopes of qualifying for Europe.

Liverpool had led 3-0 inside the opening 15 minutes as for the second successive Sunday Tottenham's defence crumbled, but the visitors stormed back and substitute Richarlison's stoppage-time header appeared to have earned his side an unlikely point.

But Jota, also on as a substitute, punished a mistake by Lucas Moura to break Tottenham's hearts and fire Liverpool over the Londoners into fifth place in the table.

A chaotic first half was only three minutes old when Curtis Jones put the hosts in front and two minutes later Tottenham's defence crumbled again as Luis Diaz volleyed home.

When Mohamed Salah blasted a penalty high into the net in the 15th minute Tottenham seemed on course for a repeat of the horror show at Newcastle United last Sunday when they conceded five times in the opening 21 minutes in a 6-1 hammering.

With some Spurs supporters leaving early and fans chanting "we want our money back" the visitors suddenly came alive though and Harry Kane volleyed past Alisson in the 39th minute and shortly afterwards Son Heung-min was denied by the upright.

Tottenham could not believe their bad luck after the break when Son and Cristian Romero saw efforts rebound off the post within the space of a couple of minutes.

Liverpool finally appeared to have restored order but Son raced clear to make it 3-2 in the 77th minute and set up a nerve-jangling finale that had earlier looked improbable.

Former Everton forward Richarlison sent the Tottenham fans delirious when his glancing header bounced into the net but within a minute their joy turned to dismay as Jota beat Fraser Forster with a clinical slow shot.

Liverpool have 56 points from 33 games with Tottenham on 54 from 34 games.

Liverpool remain seven points behind fourth-placed Manchester United who have played one game less.

The teams that finish fifth and sixth will likely qualify for the Europa League next season.



Meanwhile Manchester City claimed top spot in the Premier League for the first time since February as Erling Haaland reached yet another milestone in a 2-1 victory at Fulham.

It took Haaland only three minutes to score his record-equalling 34th Premier League goal of an extraordinary debut season in England, the Norwegian tucking away a penalty. It moved him level on the Premier League single season scoring record of Alan Shearer and Andy Cole.

City were pegged back in the 15th minute when Carlos Vinicius rifled a shot past Ederson but they responded to the setback to carve out a succession of chances.

Jack Grealish was denied by the crossbar before Argentine forward Julian Alvarez produced a moment of magic to beat Bernd Leno with a right-foot shot from outside the area.

City were unable to give themselves a cushion after the break despite several chances and suffered some anxious moments but they held on for an eighth successive league win. They are now top with 76 points to Arsenal's 75 and also have one extra game to play.



Bagnaia Wins Spanish GP

JEREZ (Dispatches) - Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia denied KTM's Brad Binder a sprint-race double with victory at the Spanish Grand Prix to reclaim top spot in the riders standings.

Championship leader Marco Bezzecchi conceded top spot to Bagnaia in the standings when he crashed with seven laps to go while Binder also moved up three places to third in the table. Bagnaia has a 22-point lead over Bezzecchi after four rounds while Binder is a further three points behind. Binder's team mate Jack Miller finished third to move up to fourth in the riders standings.

The two KTMs had a superb start as Saturday's sprint winner Binder and Miller led into turn one but the race was red-flagged after Yamaha's Fabio Quartararo and RNF Racing's Miguel Oliveira crashed on the opening lap.

Oliveira was declared unfit to resume after dislocating his shoulder, marking the second time this season he was forced to abandon the race after Marc Marquez crashed into him in Portugal last month.

It was deja vu on the restart as the KTMs surged into the front with Binder making up three places by turn one to take the lead with Miller and Bagnaia behind him.

Lorient Stun

10-Man PSG With 3-1 Win in Ligue 1

PARIS (Dispatches) - Lorient shocked Paris St Germain with a 3-1 victory at the Parc des Princes after the Ligue 1 leaders were reduced to 10 men when Achraf Hakimi was sent off early in the first half.

PSG, who have now lost nine games in all competitions in 2023, remain on 75 points from 33 games and they could see their Ligue 1 lead cut to five points if Olympique Marseille beat Auxerre later on Sunday. Lorient moved up to 10th.

Lorient took the lead in the 15th minute with some neat interplay on the right flank that stretched the PSG defence, allowing Romain Faivre to put the ball into the box where an unmarked Enzo Le Fee fired home.

PSG were down a man five minutes later when Hakimi received his second yellow card after a late challenge on Darline Yongwa, before Kylian Mbappe equalised in bizarre circumstances following an error from goalkeeper Yvon Mvogo.

The Swiss keeper recovered the ball and attempted to restart play by rolling it forward, only for Mbappe -- who was walking back right beside him -- to take the ball and score into an empty net.

But with the man advantage, Lorient took the game to PSG with Le Fee and Faivre pulling the strings. The second goal came when Faivre danced into the box and his deflected cross from the byline fell to Yongwa, who made it 2-1.

Amid jeers from the home fans, PSG huffed and puffed in search of an equaliser with Sergio Ramos heading over from a Lionel Messi corner, while Mvogo also saved a Danilo Pereira header with his face.

Bamba Dieng had a late goal ruled out for offside but he scored Lorient's third a minute later to seal all three points when he went one-on-one with goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, who saved the first effort before Dieng bundled it home.

Tsitsipas Reveals Secrets Behind Victory Over Thiem



The 24-year-old ended with a first serve percentage of 79%, significantly higher than the 57% he managed in his straight sets defeat to Carlos Alcaraz in last week's Barcelona Open final.

MADRID (Dispatches) - World number five Stefanos Tsitsipas landed 39 straight first serves en route to claiming a 3-6 6-1 7-6(5) comeback win over Dominic Thiem at the Madrid Open, with the Greek crediting his focus and relaxation for his near-perfect serving performance.

Tsitsipas looked in danger of falling in his first match of the tournament, but he found a way back into it by dominating the second set and then clinching the tie-break in the decider.

"That's fantastic, 39 is a lot," Tsitsipas said of his streak.

"That's a positive mark for me. I think I just owe it all to fluidity and just being relaxed on my serve... I think it's just pure relaxation and focus."

Tsitsipas also praised former US Open champion Thiem for turning the two-hour, 19-minute encounter into a physically demanding contest.

"I'm in a way happy that we were able to show that kind of tennis... Today sort of showed what kind of intensity two guys that play single-hand backhands can bring to tennis," Tsitsipas said.

"I'm happy I got away with a win. Things weren't easy at the very end but I just kept fighting... The third set it was just pure fight. He's not someone that's going to give up and he hates even giving the slightest to you in terms of free points."

Tsitsipas will next meet Argentine Sebastian Baez, who beat American Marcos Giron 3-6 6-3 6-4.

Russian Athletes Say IOC Participation Plan Excessive And Discriminatory

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - The International Olympic Committee's (IOC) recommendation to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to return to international competition as neutrals is "excessive and discriminatory", the Russian Olympic Committee's (ROC) athletes' commission said.

The IOC sanctioned Russia and its ally Belarus after Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022 but last month recommended that their athletes be allowed to return to international competition as neutrals.

The recommendations include that Russian and Belarusian athletes can compete with no flag or anthem, while athletes who support the war or are contracted to military or national security agencies are excluded.

In March, ROC head Stanislav Pozdnyakov denounced the recommendations, a position backed by the athletes commission chaired by former Olympic 800 metres champion Yuriy Borzakovskiy. "The proposed reintegration and admission criteria are excessive and discriminatory - by nationality and by passport, by discipline and sport, and by affiliation to certain entities developing sports for decades in most post-Soviet states," the commission said in a statement.

"In our opinion, a dangerous precedent has been set when no athlete in the world can be sure that his or her human and civil rights will be duly respected from now on, that decisions are taken based on the Law and the Olympic Charter - without exemptions."

"Today we, athletes, are detained as hostages of political games that divide the international sports community and at the same time sow discord within the Olympic family - dictating the parameters of admission, defining who is eligible to perform and who is not."

Table tennis, pentathlon, fencing, judo and taekwondo are among the Olympic sports that have readmitted athletes from Russia and Belarus as neutrals.



Ding Liren Defies Odds to Become World Champion

LONDON (Dispatches) - China's Ding Liren was crowned as the 17th world chess champion in a tense match against Russian-born Ian Nepomniachtchi in Astana, Kazakhstan, in the last chapter of an odds-defying sequence of events.

Thirty-year-old Ding won the rapid chess playoff by 2.5 points to 1.5, capitalizing on Nepomniachtchi's mistakes in time trouble in the last of the shorter-format games, following the pair's 7-7 tie in a psychological battle across 14 longer "classical" games.

"One Ding to rule them all," fellow grandmaster Anish Giri wrote on Twitter in honour of the new champion.

Ding's triumph means China holds both the men's and women's world titles, with current women's champion Ju Wenjun set to defend her title against compatriot Lei Tingjie in July. "The moment Ian resigned the game was a very emotional moment, I cannot control my feelings," the new world champion said in a press conference.

Ding had leveled the score in the regular portion of the match with a dramatic win in game 12, despite several critical moments - including a purported leak of his own preparation.

The Chinese grandmaster takes the crown from five-time world champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway, who defeated Nepomniachtchi in 2021 but announced in July he would not defend the title again this year.

Carlsen said he was not motivated to play shortly after Nepomniachtchi won the Candidates tournament, the prestigious qualifier to the match.

Ding, runner-up in the Candidates thanks to an incredible second half of the event, was next in line. He had only been invited to the tournament at the last minute to replace Russia's Sergey Karjakin, whom the international chess federation (FIDE) banned for his vocal support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ding ranks third in the FIDE rating list behind Carlsen and Nepomniachtchi.

