

Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare Announced That the Survey of Employment Status for Afghan Nationals Has Been Extended Until May 21 and So Far 650,000 Afghans Have Registered Online

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali Said That Russia Would Like to Establish Direct Flight Routes Between Cities in the Country and Iranian Tourist Destinations of Isfahan and Shiraz, Among Others

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Iran Oil Exports Doubled Since August 2021

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's oil exports has doubled compared to figures reported when President Ebrahim Raisi's government took office in August 2021, according to a senior official in the country's Oil Ministry.

Mohsen Khojastemehr, the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), made the remarks on Saturday while touring oil export facilities Iran's Persian Gulf Island of Kharg. Khojastemehr said that all the facilities and logistics at Kharg have been repaired and modernized to help increase Iran's oil exports.

He elaborated on measures taken to expand Iran's oil terminals, including among others upgrading fire extinguishing systems, fundamental overhaul of storage tanks and installation of a new storage facility with a capacity of 4 million barrels in Kharg and another one in Jask with 10 million barrels. Kharg or Khark Island is a continental island in the Persian Gulf belonging to Iran.

The island is located 25 km off the coast of Iran and 483 km northwest of the Strait of Hormuz. Its total area is 20 km².

Khojastemehr described Kharg Island as the last link in the export chain, where revenues are earned.

Iran, EAEU Discuss Trade Expansion

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Eurasian Economic Union and Iran have discussed trade expansion and the development of a common customs transit system, the press service for the Eurasian Economic Commission said.

Eurasian Economic Commission Minister for Customs Cooperation Eldar Alisherov held a meeting with Iranian Deputy Economy Minister Mohammad Rezvanifar in Tehran, the press service said.

"The two sides noted keen interest in developing customs cooperation between the EEU member states and Iran, especially for broadening trade in furtherance of the interim agreement of May 17, 2018, and the future free trade agreement," Interfax reported.

"The meeting addressed practical aspects of the implementation of the interim agreement [confirmation of the origin of imported goods, determination of customs value and administrative cooperation], ways of further development of customs infrastructure, including the North-South transportation corridor and the possibility of forming a common customs transit system of the union and a third party," the press service said.

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Iran Exports Hit Record High In Four Decades



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says that Iran has exported over \$50 billion worth of goods in the Iranian calendar year 1401 (March 20, 2022, to March 20, 2023), which was a record in the past four decades.

President Raisi made the remarks at the opening ceremony of IRAN EXPO 2023 in Tehran on Sunday.

The notable figure demonstrates that the government is fairly determined to support production, the Iranian president said.

In his remarks, the president mentioned the activation of Iranian trade offices in other countries to introduce the Islamic Republic's economic and scientific potentials.

The Iranian products are capable to compete with rivals in neighboring states and around the world, the president added.

Raisi further hailed Iran's progress in scientific and manufacturing fields, including in petrochemicals and in nuclear and defense areas and said that some 95% of Iran's needs to medicines are currently met inside the country.

He also said that his administration's foreign policy is focused on strengthening ties with neighbors and allies, and developing economic diplomacy.

"Iran is generally recognized as a country rich with oil and gas. Heavy emphasis on these two sectors has overshadowed other capabilities of the country. The first step in this regard is to introduce the Islamic Republic's export capabilities and get familiar with those of other countries," Raisi said in the Iranian capital of Tehran on Sunday while addressing the inauguration ceremony of Iran Expo 2023.

He said his administration, therefore, intends to upgrade the level of its commercial and economic interactions with most of the countries it has relations with.

Highlighting Iran's growth in different spheres, including exports, he said such achievements were made despite U.S. pressures and Western sanctions.

Raisi said Iranian scientists and industrialists have achieved anything that was banned under the sanctions. He added that economic operators have also circumvented and offset the sanctions regime.

He called on executive agencies and businessmen not to stop at this stage, complete the added-value chain in the mining industries and prevent the sale of raw materials, and boost employment, production as well as exports.

Raisi also underlined the importance of both quantity and quality throughout production and export processes, noting that quality must not be overlooked for the sake of larger quantity.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian president referred to the talks on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and termination of anti-Iran sanctions, emphasizing that his administration will not tie the country's progress and settlement of the problems to the JCPOA.

"It was the United States that left the negotiating table, and it was the European parties that did not fulfill their commitments and reneged on their obligations under the deal," Raisi said, reminding the European parties to the JCPOA – Britain, France and Germany – that Iran has logical and legitimate demands.

The Iranian president also stated that Iran Expo 2023 exhibition, which kicked off on May 7 and will run through May 10, serves as a proper ground for the development of economic and commercial ties between Iran and other countries.

Meanwhile addressing the ceremony, the acting minister of industry, mines and trade said that one of the most important goals of the IRAN EXPO 2023 is to expand the country's exports and conquer new markets.

The 5th Export Potential Exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRNA EXPO 2023) started work in Tehran on Sunday and will last for four days.

Mehdi Niazi described the exhibition as an outstanding event, saying 1,200 industrialists and businessmen attended it to see Iran's export capabilities.

The exhibition, he said, is being held in an area of 35,000 square meters in 12 fields.

Niazi added that under its new approach, Iran intends to broaden its export markets, especially to the countries of Southeast Asia, Africa, and neighboring regions.

He also expressed hopes that such events would lead to the signing of MoUs, contracts, and agreements that would in turn bring about a trade boom in the country.

Meanwhile Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari said that over 700 Iranian companies and holdings have showcased their export potentials and products in the fields of manufacturing, services, petrochemicals, food industry and technology in the IRAN EXPO 2023 exhibition.

He said that the current administrative government led by President Ebrahim Raisi has taken a distinguished approach in dealing with the issue of exports, adding that various agreements have been signed to help boost exports and growth in country.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Iran Navy Strong Enough To Defeat Enemies

In recent decades most media outlets and experts have been focused on the progress of the Islamic Republic in nuclear program, drone and missile but the Islamic Republic of Iran has expanded its achievements and progresses to other fields and boosting its Navy to confront enemies in the waters has been one of the fields of progress.

Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman are two major places that the Islamic Republic needed to strengthen its position there and it needed to boost its Navy's power and capabilities as well as its naval frigates and destroyers, equipping them with deadly weapons.

In recent years and specially in the past two years Iran's Navy either its Army Navy or IRGC Navy have shown their astonishing progresses in a way that enemies of the country have acknowledged it and have been forced to look for a way to tackle it.

IRGC Navy's power in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman has been shown to the enemies mainly to the U.S. and Israel and they do not seem to have enough guts to take any action from the sea against Iran. In recent weeks, IRGC's Navy seized to violator ships in the southern waters to send a warning signal to the enemies that the era of hit and run has ended and any mistake in the region against the Islamic Republic will face a proper response.

The seizures of violator ships has angered the U.S. and Western countries and they are looking to find a solution for this bold action of the Islamic Republic of Iran in giving response to their hostile actions in the region.

On this show of muscles of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United States military has gotten rattled over Iran's growing naval power and its expansion of maritime activities.

Media reports said that U.S. political and military officials are now urging Washington's West Asian allies to enhance their maritime forces by deploying new robotic vessels across the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, and parts of the Indian Ocean, as well as the three critical and militarily strategic choke points of the Strait of Hormuz, Bab al-Mandeb and the Suez Canal.

In order for the U.S. and its allies to counter Iran's growing maritime military power, the U.S. has been trying to convince its regional allies to purchase a range of various types of unmanned surface vehicles (USV) robot vessels, which use solar batteries in long-lasting missions to gather data for processing by Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems, to better detect and monitor the movement of the Iranian forces and their vessels in the seas.

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Iran Committed to Supporting Syria

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi reiterated the Islamic Republic's unrelenting support for Syria and the resistance axis, saying the Arab country would certainly achieve final victory in the face of enemies.

Raisi made the remarks in an interview with Syria's official SANA news agency and Syria TV broadcast as he wrapped up a historic visit to Damascus, the first by an Iranian president since the foreign-backed militancy gripped the Arab country in 2011.

He said the Americans occupied some areas in Syria to plunder its resources in an attempt to achieve what they could not through terrorism.

"Syria is not a poor country but a rich one with its people, agriculture, and underground resources; it can witness a huge economic growth," the president stated.

He said the U.S. and some Western states allied with the Israeli regime could never weaken the Syrian military so they have resorted to an economic blockade. Raisi said the Syrian people's resistance would surely thwart that scheme.

The Iranian president said despite threats and sanctions, Syria is on the right path.

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Top General to Visit Oman for Mutual Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Chief of General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces at the head of a high-ranking military delegation will visit Oman to discuss bilateral relations.

Major General Mohammad Bagheri's visit to Muscat will take place at the invitation of his Omani counterpart.

During his visit to Oman, the Chief of General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces is scheduled to meet and hold talks with Oman's high-ranking political and defense officials as well as conduct negotiations for bilateral and regional cooperation.

Iran an Important Country And Ally of Nicaragua

BUSHEHR (IRNA) - Nicaraguan Ambassador to Tehran Isaac Lenin Bravo Jaen has underlined the "strategic ties" between the Latin American country and Iran, saying that the Islamic Republic is an important state and one of allies of Nicaragua.

The strategic ties between Iran and Nicaragua are in a "very good" status, the ambassador said on Saturday, adding that a trip by Iran's President Ibrahim Raisi to Nicaragua -- due to take place within the next two months -- will help further strengthen relations between the two countries.

Lenin Bravo made the comment in Iran's southern city of Bushehr where he met with Mayor Hossein Heidari.

The diplomat also said it is of paramount importance for the Nicaraguan government that a sisterhood agreement is signed between Bushehr and Nicaragua's city of



Bluefields, as the deal will help the two cities carry out joint projects, he added.

The mayor of Bushehr, for his part, said that the city has long been of interest to major countries, with many governments having consulates in this port city.

Heidari said that the historical structure of Bushehr can serve as a good capacity for cooperation with Bluefields, while the Iranian city can also contribute to supplying energy and food in many countries thanks to its vast resources.

Majlis Speaker Rejects Allegations MPs Received Luxury SUVs

TEHRAN (IFP) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf has denied allegations that a number of lawmakers received luxury SUVs to take back their votes for the impeachment of the former minister of industry, mines, and trade.

Qalibaf said on Sunday that the Parliament's Security and the Representatives' Behavior Monitoring Board had looked into the allegations and concluded that claims about the link between the SUVs and the impeachment vote were purely false.

But he added that relevant authorities had been notified to investigate the offering of the vehicles.

An Iranian lawmaker, Alireza Beigi, earlier claimed that the former Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade, Reza Fatemi-Amin, who was recently impeached at the Parliament and dismissed, had facilitated access by a number of lawmakers to luxury SUVs in order to have them withdraw their votes of impeachment.

A special inspector appointed by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi investigated the allegations but then claimed that, while the SUVs had been given to the lawmakers, the development had occurred before Raisi's administration came into office.

Beigi recently said that he was in possession of documents that proved the matter and claimed some of the lawmakers' relatives, too, had received cars.

Call for More Efforts to Boost Politico-Economic Ties Between Tehran, Tashkent

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi has called for the expansion of economic ties between Iran and Uzbekistan, stressing the need for a speedy implementation of the cooperation agreements his government signed with Samarkand in September.

"The development of political and economic relations between Iran and Uzbekistan in the past year has made the situation different in comparison to the past but the existing capacities require more efforts to promote ties," Raisi said in a meeting with Chairman of Uzbekistan's Legislative Chamber Nuriddinjon Ismailov in Tehran on Saturday.

He added that the 18 agreements and memoranda of understanding, signed between the two sides when he visited Samarkand in September, would greatly help elevate relations.

The president also emphasized the effective role that increased cooperation between the legislative bodies of the two nations can play in helping bilateral ties.

"The exchange of experience between the parliaments of Iran and Uzbekistan will be an effective and positive step towards development of relations between the two countries," he stated.

Ismailov, for his part, hailed Iran's foreign policy which prioritizes the development of relations with neighbors and said Uzbekistan also gives priority to the expansion of ties with the neighboring countries.

He added that the two countries' parliaments should play an effective role in strengthening cooperation between the governments.

Uzbekistan's parliament would certainly use all at its disposal to implement the agreements between the two countries, Ismailov noted.

President Urges Transformation In Iran's Educational System

TEHRAN (IP) - In the meeting with the Iranian teachers and educators, Iran's President urged transformation in the country's educational system and Ministry of Education.

Speaking at the meeting with the teachers and the educators on Sunday morning, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi called for transformation in Iran's educational system and the Ministry of Education.

In this regard, Raisi stressed that the transformational view should be adopted in all parts of the educational system of the Islamic Republic of Iran including the principals of the schools.

Elsewhere President Raisi went on to call Farhangian University, the epicenter of the educational transformation in Islamic Iran the educational progress should be noticed.

He also stressed that Iran's educational system is in dire need of creativity and innovation as well as training skills and skill enhancement especially among the teachers and the students for the teacher's job is educating the children.

He also called for evaluation not in a month or even a year but on an even daily basis.

Farhangian University is a public Teacher training university with more than 90 teacher-training colleges and a total enrollment exceeding 39,000, located in Iran.

Tehran Ready to Cooperate with Regional States In Medicines, Medical Equipment Fields



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Health minister said the Islamic Republic is ready to cooperate with the countries of region in the fields of medicines and medical equipment.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of 26th G5 High Level Experts Meeting on Health Cooperation, held at the Esteghlal Hotel in Tehran on Saturday, Bahram Einollahi said, "We should provide the necessary platforms for boosting health parameters in the region optimally."

In addition, Iran should establish cooperation with all neighboring countries including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Tajikistan to boost health parameters.

Managing contagious and communicable diseases is one of the challenges in the region, he said, adding that contagious diseases cost countries dearly, so Iran should cooperate with these countries to prevent the outbreak of contagious diseases.

The First Healthcare Leadership and Governance Training Program kicked off in Tehran on May 6 and will run until May 10.

Tehran, Baghdad Sign MoU to Complete Shalamcheh-Basra Railway

TEHRAN (MNA) - Heads of the railways of Iran and Iraq have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on taking executive measures for completing the Shalamcheh-Basra railway, the portal of Iran's Transport and Urban Development Ministry reported on Sunday.

The MOU was signed at the place of the Iranian embassy in Baghdad, on the sidelines of the visit of Seyed Miad Salehi, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) to the Arab country.

During the visit, which was carried out in line with the agreement between the transport ministers of the two

countries last month; after a joint meeting between the technical teams of the two parties at the border of Shalamcheh, the railway heads of the two countries along with the technical teams paid a visit to the railway project.

Iran and Iraq signed an MOU for the construction of the Shalamcheh-Basra railway in the Iranian calendar year 1390 (March 2011-March 2012) which was not implemented completely.

The construction of the railway which connects Iran's southwestern Shalamcheh town to Basra city in Iraq has faced several problems for many years.

Isfahan Officials, Mexican MPs Discuss Expanding Mutual Cooperation

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Mexico-Iran parliamentary friendship group held a meeting with Isfahan provincial officials to discuss expanding bilateral cooperation, especially in the cultural fields.

The members of the Mexico-Iran Parliamentary Friendship Group met with different provincial officials in Isfahan province during which they emphasized the expansion of scientific, cultural and economic relations between Mexico and Iran with Isfahan at the center.

According to a report by Public Relations and International Affairs Department of Isfahan Provincial Office, Mohammad Reza Janesari, the deputy of the governor of Isfahan for political and security affairs said at the meeting that, "We are happy to host this group in the beautiful and historical city of Isfahan. Certainly, Iran has many attractions and it is necessary to lay the ground for the visit of the people of Mexico to Iran."

Janesari continued, "We are happy to have a friendly relationship with an important country like Mexico. It doesn't matter if the countries are in our neighborhood or far away. What matters to us is that our relations are friendly and brotherly."

Isfahani official further said, "Throughout history, Iran has never invaded other countries while it has always strongly defended its own lands."

"Pay special attention to the depth of Isfahan's civilization," Janesari said, adding that "Mexico has also preserved its identity well and we know this well."

"We will inform the representatives of the province at the Iranian parliament about the outcome of this meeting in order for them to assist in expanding relations with Mexico," he also said.

The chairwoman of Mexico-Iran parliamentary friendship group, for her part, lauded the beauties of Isfahan, and said that they seek opportunities to have stronger relations with the people of Isfahan.

She added that friendship group members are experts in different fields, adding "we are trying to get closer to Isfahan in the fields of technology, science, medicine, mines, etc., which we specialize in."

She added, "Iran and Mexico have a rich and great culture, and as you explained to us about Iran's culture, we also have great cultural advantages that can bring the people of the two countries closer to each other with these cultural similarities."

"Art can be a shared ground between the people of two countries. Also, next year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of friendship and brotherhood between the people of Iran and Mexico, and we hope that the cultural groups of the two countries will be able to participate and create art on this occasion," the chairwoman further said.

Iran, Russia to Expand Educational, Research Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran and Russia will expand educational and research cooperation in the near future.

Mohammad Hassan Sheikholeslami, the head of the Institute For Political And International Studies of Iran's Foreign Ministry and Alexander Yakovenko, the head of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation exchanged views on the expansion of educational and research cooperation between the two centers.

The two sides discussed the fields of expanding educational and research cooperation between the two centers. During the meeting, proposals were presented in the field of upcoming cooperation which were decided to be implemented in the near future.

Iran-Iraq Joint Water Committee Resumes Activity

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Iranian minister of energy on Sunday revealed the resumption of activities of the Iran-Iraq Joint Water Committee.

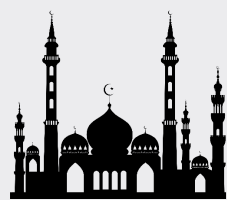
Ali Akbar Mehrabian made the comment in a news conference held on the sidelines of the 3rd Baghdad International Water Conference and said that the reactivation of the Joint Water Committee between Iran and Iraq is among the agreements reached by the two sides.

He said it will start its activities within the framework of the international treaties after a short hiatus.

Evaluating the process of organizing this edition of the International Water Conference in Baghdad as 'positive', the Iranian energy minister stated that constructive talks were held by the Iranian and Iraqi officials in the water sector on the sidelines of the conference.

Mehrabian, who is the head of the Regional Center on Urban Water Management (RCUWM), affiliated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), stressed that promoting the level of cooperation with neighboring countries, especially Iraq, is one of the priorities of the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi.

"We live in a region where it is necessary to increase the level of cooperation and take advantage of experiences of each other due to the climatic condition and reduced rainfalls in order to manage the existing situation optimally," Mehrabian emphasized.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:16
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:28
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:04

17. Allah accept the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards; to them will Allah turn in mercy. For Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.
18. Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil, until death faces one of them, and he says, "Now have I repented indeed;" nor of those who die rejecting Faith: for them have We prepared a punishment most grievous.

Surah 4. Women (17 - 18)

Oman Eyes Joint Venture With Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Welcoming Iranian high-quality products, the Sultanate of Oman called for joint investment with the Islamic Republic in trade and economic fields.

In a meeting of Omani Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammad Al Yousef and Iranian Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Ali Rasoulia, the two sides explored avenues for enhancing cooperation in industrial fields.

Rasoulia submitted a comprehensive report on the industrial capabilities and potentials of the country, especially in industrial towns and areas.

He put the number of Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the country's industrial towns at more than 51,000, saying they have generated new employment opportunities for over one million job-seeking people.

The Omani minister of commerce, industry and investment promotion, who has visited Iran at the head of a trade delegation comprising more than 60 industrialists, welcomed the idea of purchasing Iranian products including home- and electrical appliances, electronic products, tiles, ceramics, medicines, etc.

The visiting Omani trade and economic delegation voiced interest in broadening joint cooperation in trade and economic fields.

The chief executive of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) said that Iran attaches great importance to Oman for the development of bilateral ties in trade and economic fields.

In addition to his meeting with senior officials of the country, the Omani minister of commerce participated in the inaugural ceremony of the Iran EXPO 2023 and also the Iran-Oman Joint Trade Forum.



Mohammad Al Yousef visited Tehran to attend the opening ceremony of the Export Potential Exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran EXPO 2023) and also a business forum at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

Back in November 2022, Oman's Deputy Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Saleh bin Said Masan announced that Iran and Oman are finalizing a mechanism for facilitating financial exchanges between the two countries.

Saleh bin Said Masan made the announcement in a meeting with ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafei.

The Omani deputy minister said the two countries, however, are still facing challenges in trade exchanges, adding that the central banks of both countries have offered different solutions to these challenges.

Referring to a memorandum of understanding signed between the two countries on trade cooperation and customs facilities, the Omani minister said technical teams from both Iran and Oman are working to take the agreements into effect.

Omid Investment Group Announces Full Support for Chadormalu Co.'s Projects

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Omid Investment Group after two days of visiting different parts of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Complex announced the group's full support for the development projects of Chadormalu Co.



After getting acquainted with vast activities of Chadormalu Co. and its ongoing projects and in meeting with managers of the company, Dr. Salehabadi hailed sincere efforts of the whole managers and staff of this company and called it very valuable and appreciable especially in the current economic condition that the country is enjoying with successive record-breaking which has increased productivity and it is very valuable.

He then noted that Omid Investment Group with its full capacities has stood beside reputed Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company.

Salehabadi also called for acceleration in implementing and completing all developmental projects especially in the production chain and access to the new iron ore resources. He added that Omid Investment Group as the major shareholder of this company as well as other shareholders will do their best for providing required capital of the company for advancing the ongoing projects and it will stand beside Chadormalu.

Then the CEO of Chadormalu Co. Eng. Taherzadeh in the joint meeting explained the goals and strategy of the company and said that the base of activities of the company is sustainable production based on protecting value chain and implementing smart technologies in the developmental projects in the downstream industries, from mine to processing steel, reiterating that last year despite restrictions in gas and electricity supply, the company could continue its positive growth by taking effective measures.

Iran Ready to Restore 5 GW of Syria's Lost Power Capacity

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian says the country is ready to provide funding and expertise to restore some 5 gigawatts (GW) of electricity generation capacity that has been lost due to

more than a decade of war in Syria.

Mehrabian told Syria's Minister of Water Resources Tammam Raad on Saturday that Iran is preparing a second major line of credit to fund

reconstruction projects in Syria which he said will mostly focus on electricity projects and power plants in the Arab country.

He said that Syria has some 6.5 GW of power generation capacity that is currently out of service because of the impacts of the war with militants.

The minister said Iran has already repaired two thermal power plants in Syria's second largest city of Aleppo with a total capacity of 0.48 GW.

Mehrabian said he will soon travel to Syria to open two other new power plants that have been built by Iranian companies.

"Today, we are ready to offer our economic and technical capacities to Syria's reconstruction," he was quoted as saying in the meeting with Raad which took place in Iraq on the sidelines of a regional United Nations water conference.

The comments come days after Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his ministers signed a series of major agreements with Syrian government officials in Damascus to expand trade and economic ties between the two countries.

Iran Reports 32% Rise in April-May Wheat Output

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has reported a considerable increase in its purchases of domestically-grown wheat in the 37 days to May 3.

CEO of Government Trading Corporation (GTC) of Iran Saeid Raad said on Saturday that wheat purchases in seven provinces with warm climate in south and southeastern Iran had reached some 1 million metric tons (mt) in more than a month to early April.

Raad said the figure is an increase of 32% compared to the same period in 2022.

The official said Iran's southwestern province of Khuzestan had accounted for 623,000 mt of wheat supply delivered to GTC silos over the 37 days to May 3, adding that output in provinces of Kerman and Fars, in southeast and south of Iran, had also increased compared to April-May last year.

Iran buys a bulk of its domestically grown wheat under a guaranteed purchase program which offers farmers a series of favorable prices and transport conditions.

Authorities in the GTC, which is a subsidiary of Iran's agriculture ministry, expect domestic wheat purchases in the country could increase by 13% to 8.5 million mt this year.

Iran's total wheat output reached 13 million mt last year, up from 10.1 million mt in 2021, according to figures by United Nations food agency FAO.

That comes as the GTC bought some 7.2 million mt of wheat from domestic farmers last year while wheat purchases by private buyers reached 0.3 million mt over the same period.

Maneuver of Almsgiving, Empathy for Preparing and Distributing 2,000 Livelihood Packages in Kermanshah

Setting up procession commemorating martyrs of Bazi Daraz in the Bazi Daraz Mountains and the place of Mursad gorge and Imamzadeh Ahmad bin Ishaq and distribution of 20,000 dishes of hot food and several thousand bottles of mineral water.



same time with the official start of the Rahian-e Noor of the West and Northwestern of the country and on the occasion of commemorating the martyrs of Bazi Daraz, there will be six processions on the route of commemorators of the martyrs of Bazi Daraz and the place of Tenge Mursad and Imamzadeh Ahmad bin Ishaq. In these processions, on May 14 and 15, along with cultural activities, 20,000 packs of packs of hot food and several thousand bottles of mineral water were distributed. While thanking the benefactors, she noted: these livelihood packages and hot food were prepared and distributed among the needy in Kermanshah province with the efforts and cooperation of benefactors across the country, especially benefactors in Tehran. Choupani, the director of the Central Deprivation Center of the country, announced this news and said, "Absharatefha International Charitable Foundation has more than 950 agencies in the country which with the help and support of more than 1.32m benefactors support the families of orphaned and neglected women and it also supports needy patients and students as well as the families of prisoners.



"Fateme Choupani", the manager of the central camp for the eliminating deprivation of the Absharatefha Charity, emphasizing that friendship and helping has a long history in the culture of Islamic Iran, which reached its peak in the history of the Islamic Revolution, said: eight years of Sacred Defense was supported in the best way with the support of people's help. In this direction, the role of mothers and women has been irreplaceable. She pointed out: The activities of disenfranchisement and the sense of duty of jihadi groups in the deprived parts of our country during the past years have become a capacity for empowerment and elimination of deprivation, which was emphasized by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution. The director of the central headquarters of the Absharatefha Deprivation Charity described some of the activities of this group and said: As in previous years, the Absharatefha Charitable Foundation prepared and distributed 2,000 packages of livelihood packages to the families under the support of Sar Pol Zahab and the surrounding towns of Kermanshah by holding the Almsgiving and Empathy Maneuver like the past years in previous years. Choupani also mentioned the procession in Bazi Daraz Mountains and added: At the

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*Address: Unit 11, 4th Floor, No. 1011, South Kargar Street, between Hor Square and Pastor Square

Asia, Africa, Latin America Iran Priorities For Economic Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) - Neighboring countries, as well as Asian, African, and Latin American countries, are among the priorities of Iran for developing economic and commercial ties, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to develop its transit infrastructure, Mehdi Safari said, referring to Iran's historical position on the Silk Road and the potential and actual economic capacities of the country.

Safari made the comments in the opening ceremony of the fifth Export Potential Exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran EXPO 2023) which is underway at Tehran International Permanent Fairground.

Neighboring countries, as well as Asian, African, and Latin American countries, are among the priorities of the Iranian government for developing economic and commercial cooperation, he further said.

He also expressed Iran's readiness to cooperate with foreign partners not only in the fields of export and import but also in investment and financing, and transit areas.

Iran-Qatar

Trade Volume Up 45% in 2022

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The chairman of the Iran-Qatar Joint Chamber of Commerce said that the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries registered a 45 percent hike in 2022, compared to a year earlier.

Adnan Mousapour made the comment on the sidelines of the 5th edition of the Export Potential Exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran entitled "Iran Expo 2023", adding that Qatari merchants and traders will visit the expo to see the achievements of Iranian companies.

Establishing trade and economic relations with neighboring countries both in the short and long terms will benefit the economy of the country, he emphasized.

To realize the objectives of restoration of economic relations with neighboring countries, the private sector should take a leading role, he said, calling on government officials to throw their weight behind the economic activists of the country.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the chairman of the Iran-Qatar Joint Chamber of Commerce pointed to the 45 percent increase of trade between the two countries in 2022 and noted that it reached from \$143 million in 2021 to \$208 million in 2022.

Agricultural products, dried nuts and construction materials were among the most important products exported from Iran to the Qatari market in 2022, Mousapour stated.

Car Blast Wounds Pro-Kremlin Writer

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - A car explosion wounded pro-Kremlin writer Zakhar Prilepin and killed one other person, officials said, the latest in a string of attacks that Russia has blamed on Ukraine.

"Today at about 11:00 am (0800 GMT)... an explosive device detonated in an Audi Q7 car carrying Zakhar Prilepin," said the Russian Investigative Committee, which probes serious crimes.

The blast comes amid a tense security situation. Authorities reported a series of drone strikes and sabotage attempts ahead of the popular May 9 celebrations of the Soviet victory over the Nazis. No-one claimed responsibility for most of the apparent attacks but the Kremlin has usually blamed Ukraine or the West, rarely providing any evidence.



Corpses Pile Up After Nearly 200 Killed in Congo Floods

BUSHUSHU (Dispatches) - At least 176 people have died in flash floods in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a regional governor said, as heavy rain destroyed buildings and forced aid workers to gather mud-clad corpses into piles.

The rainfall in Kalehe territory in South Kivu province caused rivers to overflow on Thursday, inundating the villages of Bushushu and Nyamakubi.

South Kivu governor Théo Ngwabidje Kasi put the death toll at 176 and said that others were still missing. A local civil society member, Kasole Martin, said 227 bodies had been found.



Ukraine Claims It Downed Hypersonic Russian Missile



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian air defences shot down a Russian hypersonic missile for the first time during an attack on the capital Kyiv this week, the Air Force said, in a potentially major setback for the Kremlin's campaign of long-range air strikes.

The Kinzhal, which means "dagger" in Russian, is one of six "next generation" weapons unveiled by President Vladimir Putin in 2018 when the Russian leader boasted that it cannot be shot down by any of the world's air defense systems.

Ukrainian Air Force Commander Mykola Oleshchuk said the Kh-47 Kinzhal had been shot down on Thursday night over the region outside Kyiv. The Air Force said it had been taken down by a U.S. Patriot air defense system. "I congratulate the Ukrainian people on the historic event. Yes, we shot down the 'unparalleled' Kinzhal," he said on the Telegram app.

The U.S. Patriot system is one of an array of sophisticated air defense units supplied by the West to help Ukraine repel a months-long Russian campaign of air strikes that has targeted critical infrastructure, power facilities and other sites.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed in the attacks that Russia stepped up in October ahead of winter. The strikes failed to cripple the power grid but caused sweeping power cuts and other outages. Russia denies targeting civilians.

Russia, which did not immediately comment on Ukraine's statement about the Kinzhal, has in the past boasted that the missile has no equivalent in the West.

The air-launched ballistic missile, which can reach speeds of up to Mach 10 (12,350 kilometers per hour), is capable of carrying nuclear or conventional warheads. It has a reported range of 1,500 to 2,000 km.

Ukraine said the missile was fired during a drone attack on Kyiv and other cities in the early hours of Thursday.

The Air Force had not previously disclosed that a Kinzhal was used for the attack, although Kyiv officials said immediately that a ballistic missile had been involved.

The Thursday air strike came less than a day after Russia accused Ukraine of a failed attempt to assassinate President Vladimir Putin in a drone attack on the Kremlin citadel in Moscow and threatened to retaliate. Moscow has since accused Washington of involvement in allegations denied by both Ukraine and the United States.

Russia has already intensified drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian regions over the past week as Kyiv prepares to launch a counter-offensive against Russian forces who have dug in across swathes of occupied land in the south and east.

U.S. Patriot missiles were only delivered to Ukraine last month, officials said.

Kinzhal missiles have been used on several occasions in Ukraine. The first known use of the weapon in combat was when Russia said it had fired the missile at a munitions dump in southwestern Ukraine on March 19, 2022.

Ukraine's Air Force was previously seen as unable to shoot down ballistic missiles, which Russia used to strike residential areas and Ukraine's power infrastructure.

The Air Force said it shot down eight Shahed drones launched by Russia on the eastern and south-east Ukrainian regions in an overnight attack.

World Leaders Congratulate Charles III

LONDON (Dispatches) - Leaders in the United States and Europe sent congratulations to Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla on their coronation, while China called for "cooperation" and "peace".

US President Joe Biden, whose country was represented at the lavish ceremony in London by First Lady Jill Biden, paid tribute to the "enduring friendship between the US and the UK".

He tweeted that the countries' relationship was "a source of strength for both our peoples" and that he was "proud" his wife could be there for the "historic occasion".

Congratulations to King Charles III and Queen Camilla on their Coronation. The enduring friendship between the U.S. and the U.K. is a source of strength for both our peoples.

In an interview aired Friday, he said he would meet Charles, 74, in July to talk in particular about environmental issues.

Chinese President Xi Jinping urged the UK to work for "a stable and mutually beneficial... relationship" with his country after recent strains in their relations. "China and Britain, both permanent members of the UN Security Council, should take a long-term and strategic view to jointly promote the historical trend of peace,

development and win-win cooperation," he said.

The head of the European Union's executive, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, called the coronation "a testament to the enduring strength of the British monarchy".

"A symbol of stability and continuity," von der Leyen tweeted, alongside a picture of her at the pageant-filled ceremony in Westminster Abbey.

EU Council President Charles Michel said the members of the 27-nation bloc, which the UK voted to leave in 2016, "appreciate the king's vast experience to promote understanding and respect" and "his tireless efforts to promote the sustainability of our planet".

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who is in Kenya for a visit, also welcomed the newly crowned monarch's interest in tackling climate change.

"(It) is very important that he is someone who is committed to a close cooperation between Great Britain and the European Union, and who also has his own personal agenda to advance climate protection," Scholz said.



Sudan's Warring Sides Begin Talks Amid Pressure to End Fighting

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Sudan's warring sides were beginning talks that aim to firm up a shaky cease-fire after three weeks of fierce fighting that has killed hundreds and pushed the African country to the brink of collapse, the United States and Saudi Arabia said.

The negotiations, the first between the Sudanese military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, since the fighting broke out on April 15, were taking place in Saudi Arabia's coastal city of Jeddah, on the Red Sea, according to a joint Saudi-American statement.

The talks are part of a diplomatic initiative proposed by the kingdom and the U.S. that aims to stop the fighting, which has turned Sudan's capital, Khartoum, and other urban areas into battlefields and pushed hundreds of thousands from their homes.

In their joint statement, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. urged both parties to "actively engage in the talks towards a cease-fire and end to the conflict, which will spare the Sudanese people's suffering."

The statement did not offer a timeframe for the talks, which come after concerted efforts by Riyadh and other international powers to pressure the warring sides in Sudan to the negotiating table. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan welcomed the rival sides to Jeddah, saying on Twitter that he hopes the talks would restore "security and stability" in Sudan.

Since a 2021 coup that upended Sudan's transition to democracy, the kingdom has been mediating between the ruling generals and a pro-democracy movement. After Sudan's top two generals — commanders of the military and the paramilitary — turned on each other after months of tensions and the latest fighting broke out in April, Jeddah became a hub for those evacuated by sea from Sudan's main sea port of Port Sudan.

Officials from the military and the RSF said the talks would address the opening of humanitarian corridors in Khartoum and the adjacent city of Omdurman, which have been the centers of the battles.

More Than 50 Aftershocks Shake Japan as Earthquake Kills One

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Aftershocks have rattled Japan a day after a powerful magnitude 6.5 earthquake left at least one person dead and damaged buildings, emergency services said, as officials assessed the damage from the quake that injured more than 20 people and shut high-speed train lines.

Japan's Kyodo News agency reported that a 65-year-old man died when he fell from a ladder during the earthquake that hit the central Ishikawa region mid-afternoon on Friday at a depth of 12 km (7 miles).

Approximately 55 aftershocks, some of them strong, hit on Saturday morning, the country's disaster management agency said, as it warned that heavy rain could trigger landslides in affected areas.

At least 23 people had been injured, the agency said.

Houses and a Shinto shrine were damaged while train services were disrupted, leaving passengers stranded in stations on Friday, which was a public holiday in Japan, part of a run of days off known as "Golden Week" when many people travel for leisure or to visit family.

East Japan Railway Co said bullet trains connecting Tokyo and Kanazawa in Ishikawa prefecture were temporarily halted for safety checks but resumed normal operations with some delays.

There were no abnormalities at nuclear power plants in the area, according to the Nuclear Regulation Authority.

An official from Suzu in Ishikawa prefecture, the hardest-hit city, said two people were rescued after becoming trapped inside destroyed buildings. Some residents in the prefecture were seen clearing rubble in the rain after their wooden houses were partially destroyed.

The earthquake registered an upper six on the Japanese Shindo seismic scale, which goes up to a maximum of seven. Japan has strict construction regulations intended to ensure buildings can withstand strong earthquakes and routinely holds emergency drills to prepare for a major jolt.

A magnitude 6.9 quake struck a fishing village in the same region in 2007, injuring hundreds and damaging more than 200 buildings on the Noto peninsula — a scenic area on the Sea of Japan coast.

Though earthquakes are common in Japan — which sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity across the Pacific basin — the country remains haunted by the memory of a massive magnitude 9.0 undersea earthquake off its northeast in March 2011. The quake triggered a tsunami that left about 18,500 people dead or missing.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who had returned from a tour to four African nations and Singapore, said Friday, said his government would take "measures with a sense of urgency while closely communicating with [officials] at the scene" of the latest quake.



Third-Place Finisher in Paraguay's Presidential Election Arrested

ASUNCION (Dispatches) - Paraguay's national police have arrested a far-right candidate who finished third in Sunday's presidential elections, following days of protests questioning the legitimacy of the results.

The police confirmed the arrest of lawyer and politician Paraguayo Cubas Colomé in a social media post, explaining that Cubas was being held in "preventative detention" in compliance with an order from the attorney general's office.

The arrest took place at 4:30pm local time (20:30 GMT) at a hotel in the city of San Lorenzo, just outside the capital Asunción. Police Commissioner Gilberto Fleitas said in a radio interview afterwards that Cubas had been accused of breaching the peace, among other crimes.

Cubas, a former senator and leader of the populist National Crusade Party, made a strong showing in the recent presidential elections, receiving 23 percent of the vote. That gave him the third-highest tally, behind second-place finisher Efraín Alegre, with 27.5 percent and President-elect Santiago Peña, who won with a commanding 43 percent.

But Cubas has since taken to social media to challenge the results, calling the leaders of Peña's ruling conservative Colorado Party "thieves" and accusing the election of being marred by fraud.

However, the Organization of American States (OAS), as well as Paraguay's own election authorities, have upheld the accuracy of the vote.

"There is no possibility of fraud," electoral tribunal spokesperson Carlos Ljubetic said in a statement to the press earlier this week. "The results of the election are the expression of the citizenry, whether we like it or not."

Still, protesters gathered in Asunción and other parts of the country, defacing Peña campaign billboards and burning tyres to create roadblocks. Outside the election authority's headquarters on Monday, demonstrators lobbed stones at police, who responded with barricades and rubber bullets.

The second-place finisher Alegre, a centre-left candidate, soon joined calls on social media for a manual recount of the vote and an independent international audit.



WHO Downgrades COVID Pandemic, No Longer Emergency



GENEVA (AP) — The World Health Organization said that COVID-19 no longer qualifies as a global emergency, marking a symbolic end to the devastating coronavirus pandemic that triggered once-unthinkable lockdowns, upended economies worldwide and killed at least 7 million people worldwide.

WHO said that even though the emergency phase was over, the pandemic hasn't come to an end, noting recent spikes in cases in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The U.N. health agency says that thousands of people are still dying from the virus every week.

"It's with great hope that I declare COVID-19 over as a global health emergency," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

"That does not mean COVID-19 is over as a global health threat," he said, adding he wouldn't hesitate to reconvene experts to reassess the situation should COVID-19 "put our world in peril."

Tedros said the pandemic had been on a downward trend for more than a year, acknowledging that most countries have already returned to life before COVID-19. He bemoaned the damage that COVID-19 had done to the global community, saying the virus had shattered businesses and plunged millions into poverty.

"COVID has changed our world and it has changed us," he said, warning that the risk of new variants still remained.

When the U.N. health agency first declared the coronavirus to be an international crisis on Jan. 30, 2020, it hadn't yet been named COVID-19 and there were no major outbreaks beyond China.

More than three years later, the virus has caused an estimated 764 million cases globally and about 5 billion people have received at least one dose of vaccine.

In the U.S., the public health emergency declaration made regarding COVID-19 is set to expire on May 11, when wide-ranging measures to support the pandemic response, including vaccine mandates, will end. Many other countries, including Germany, France and Britain, dropped many of their provisions against the pandemic last year.

When Tedros declared COVID-19 to be an emergency in 2020, he said his greatest fear was the virus' potential to spread in countries with weak health systems he described as "ill-prepared."

In fact, some of the countries that suffered the worst COVID-19 death tolls were previously judged to be the best-prepared for a pandemic, including the U.S. and Britain. According to WHO data, the number of deaths reported in Africa account for just 3% of the global total.

WHO made its decision to lower its highest level of alert on Friday, after convening an expert group.

The U.N. agency doesn't "declare" pandemics, but first used the term to describe the outbreak in March 2020, when the virus had spread to every continent except Antarctica, long after many other scientists had said a pandemic was already underway.

WHO is the only agency mandated to coordinate the world's response to acute health threats, but the organization faltered repeatedly as the coronavirus unfolded. In January 2020, WHO publicly applauded China for its supposed speedy and transparent response, even though recordings of private meetings obtained by The Associated Press showed top officials were frustrated at the country's lack of cooperation.

WHO also recommended against members of the public wearing masks to protect against COVID-19 for months, a mistake many health officials say cost lives.

Numerous scientists also slammed WHO's reluctance to acknowledge that COVID-19 was frequently spread in the air and by people without symptoms, criticizing the agency's lack of strong guidance to prevent such exposure.

SpaceX's Starlink Project Crosses a Key Milestone, Fueling IPO Hope



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - SpaceX's satellite-based internet project, Starlink, just crosses a key milestone. After a launch on Thursday, there are now more than 4,000 Starlink satellites orbiting Earth and providing high-speed internet service across the globe, including the most remote areas where traditional fiber optic internet can't reach.

At the current stage, SpaceX is almost done constructing its first-generation Starlink network in space, paving the way for the project's next-phase development and a potential spinoff.

On Friday, a reusable SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launched 56 Starlink satellites to low Earth orbit from the Florida Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. It was SpaceX's fourth mission in less than a week and the 30th launch this year—a record pace. The company is on track to launch 100 rocket missions in 2023, up from 61 last year.

Starlink is SpaceX's main consumer-facing business and accounts for about a third of the company's annual revenue. The broadband internet service starts at \$110 a month, plus a \$599 upfront fee for installing the ground terminal. (Starting this week, the Starlink terminal is available at select Home Depot stores in the U.S.)

SpaceX has been sending Starlink satellites to space in batches since 2019. The company has launched 81 Starlink missions using the workhorse Falcon 9 rocket, making it the largest satellite project ever carried out by a commercial space company.

The first few Starlink missions garnered extensive media coverage for their novelty. As the launch pace picked up and SpaceX worked on new projects like the Starship rocket, attention on Starlink launches waned. But the Starlink constellation in space kept growing, and so did its financial importance to SpaceX.

Last year, Starlink brought in \$1 billion in revenue for SpaceX, and its commercial launch business generated about \$2.3 billion in revenue, according to third-party analysis. (SpaceX is a private company and doesn't disclose financial details.)

Starlink had more than one million users at the end of 2022 and is on track to turn a profit this year, SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell said at an event in February.

Elon Musk, who is the company's CEO, has said he will take Starlink public as a separate company when its satellite internet business proves financially viable. A key metric of financial viability, according to Musk, is positive cash flow, which Starlink achieved for the first time in late 2022, Shotwell said.

SpaceX was most recently valued at \$137 billion. Retail and institutional investors alike are eager to own a piece of the company, but access to its equity is limited because of its private status. If Starlink goes public, it could be one of the largest IPOs in recent years.

SpaceX's Starlink launch calendar is only getting busier, with at least five missions already planned this month between Florida and California launch sites. The company eventually plans to place nearly 30,000 Starlink satellites in Earth orbit to provide faster, more stable internet service. So far, the Federal Communications Commission, which regulates satellite deployment in space, has signed off on 7,500 of those, which SpaceX expects to launch over the next few years.

New App Can Detect Dementia In Less Than 30 Minutes



LONDON (Dispatches) - The NIH Toolbox V3 app can assess cognitive, motor, sensory, and emotional function in people three to 85 years old faster than previous testing methods.

For people wondering if their occasional forgetfulness is a sign of dementia or another neurological condition, taking a quick cognitive assessment at a routine doctor's office visit could deliver the answers they need. Moreover, rapid and accurate screening for neurological disorders could also save time for healthcare providers already strapped with heavy patient loads.

Now, a new iPad app developed at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago with scientific contributions from over 250 experts across 80 institutions might be the tool that fulfills the assessment needs of both healthcare providers and their patients.

Designed for clinical and research use, the NIH Toolbox V3 iPad app can assess cognitive function, emotional states, motor function, and sensory issues using more than 50 tests. In addition, the app's developers claim that the tests take less time than other assessments. For example, tests that typically take two to three hours to complete can be done in less than 30 minutes with the Toolbox app. Moreover, individual tests can take seven minutes or less to finish.

Healthcare providers can use the app to assess children's cognitive abilities before entering school, a person's level of brain fog associated with long COVID, and cognitive functioning in people with early signs of dementia. Healthcare providers can also screen for depression and anxiety, which may contribute to declining cognitive function.

Gut Microbiome May Be Source of Dangerous Infections in Premature Infants



LONDON (Dispatches) - About half of extremely preterm babies have at least one life-threatening bacterial infection in their bloodstream after 72 hours of life.

Now, new research points to the babies' own gut microbiomes as the source.

Knowing that the most common bacteria in bloodstream infections are also commonly found to colonize the gut without causing disease at first, researchers set out to test whether the bloodstream infections came from the gut or from external transmission.

"This is a vulnerable population," said senior study author Gautam Dantas, a professor of pathology & immunology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. "This is also a time when the composition of the gut microbiome is first developing. These early exposures to bacteria shape the gut microbiome in ways that will probably stay with these babies for the rest of their lives."

The investigators studied this in newborns admitted to the neonatal intensive care units (NICU) at St. Louis Children's Hospital, Children's Hospital at Oklahoma University Medical Center and Norton Children's Hospital in Louisville, Ky.

This included doing whole genome sequencing on the bacterial strain that was causing the bloodstream infection.

The researchers used computational profiling to precisely track the identical strain within feces so that they could also identify the strains of bacteria that had colonized the infants' guts prior to their bloodstream infections.

The researchers found this theory that the bloodstream infections started in the gut to be true in 58% of cases, seeing a nearly identical disease-causing bacterial strain in the gut right before a bloodstream infection was diagnosed.

Some of the strains of bacteria that caused bloodstream infections were shared among the NICU infants, the study found.

Even in controlled environments there still could be an exchange of microbes, shared by hospital staff or transferred from NICU surfaces, the study authors explained.

Yet those who had bloodstream infections had dramatically more of the species causing it in their guts in the two weeks before the infection than did NICU infants who did not have infections, the study findings showed.

"We also have studied the gut microbiomes of infants born at full term, and we know that such babies do not have as many problems, but it's clear that the type of bugs that colonize the gut in the first few months to three years of life will determine what the microbiome looks like later on. Our study also suggests that an early look at the gut microbiome in preemies may allow us to identify those at high risk of dangerous bloodstream infections," Dantas said in a university news release.

Fall Time Change Associated With Rise in Sleep Disorders



LONDON (Dispatches) - Changing the clocks every spring and fall might seem challenging, but a new study reveals that only one of those changes had a tendency to increase sleep disorders.

The transition from daylight saving time to standard time in the fall -- when people gain one hour overnight -- was associated with a brief rise in sleep disorders, including difficulty going to sleep or staying asleep.

Surprisingly, that wasn't seen when switching back to daylight saving time in the spring.

"Previous research has linked the transitions to and from daylight saving time with higher rates of accidents as well as an increased risk of stroke and heart attack," said study author Dr. Ron Postuma, a neurologist and researcher at McGill University in Montreal. "Future studies are needed that follow individuals over time, including people living in areas with different light exposure and seasonal changes."

In the study, published online Wednesday in Neurology, his team did find a small difference in the amount of sleep people get depending on the season.

Postuma noted that sleep plays an essential role in maintaining good health, mood, cognition, job performance and social activity.

"It is influenced by the circadian rhythm, the internal clock that regulates body processes," he said in a journal news release. "The good news is that the sleep disruptions we observed following the change to standard time were brief and no longer evident two weeks after the shift."

For the study, more than 30,000 people were surveyed, ages 45 to 85.

Turkish Factory Activity Contracted 1.45% in March

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's industrial production index is expected to have contracted 1.45% year-on-year in March, extending its decline, a Reuters poll showed on Friday, as the impact of February's earthquakes continued to impact the manufacturing sector.

Industrial activity bounced back strongly after the initial coronavirus wave in April 2020 and expanded for more than two years straight. The index dropped 8.2% in February as the earthquakes devastated the country. Although annual growth has slowed significantly since the summer, with demand declining due to the wider global slowdown, especially in Turkey's main trading partners.



India Considering Allowing Foreign Investment in Nuclear Power

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India is considering overturning a ban on foreign investment in its nuclear power industry and allowing greater participation by domestic private firms, two government sources told Reuters, as part of a push for cleaner energy.

The measures have been recommended by a government panel, set up by think-tank Niti Aayog which is headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Under India's Atomic Energy Act 1962, the government plays a central role in developing and running nuclear power stations. Domestic private companies are allowed to participate as "junior equity partners" by supplying components and helping build them.

The panel has recommended changes to the act and to India's foreign investment policies so that both domestic and foreign private companies can complement nuclear power generation by public companies.

The aim is to reduce carbon emissions and nuclear is in focus because it can supply energy 24/7, unlike solar energy, said the officials, who declined to be named as they were not authorized to talk to the media.

The Department of Atomic Energy has said previously that several foreign companies including Westinghouse Electric, GE-Hitachi, Electricite de France and Rosatom were interested in participating in the country's nuclear power projects as technology partners, suppliers, contractors and service providers. India does not allow foreign investment in the nuclear power sector.

The officials said the emphasis was on private participation through small modular reactors (SMRs) to fast-track nuclear energy generation, which accounts for 3% of India's total power production. Coal fires three quarters of it.

The Department of Atomic Energy, which works directly under the prime minister, and Niti Aayog did not respond to emails and messages seeking comment.

Factory-built and ready-to-shift, each SMR produces up to 300 megawatts (MW) and requires less capital, time and land than conventional reactors. They can also safely be deployed in populated areas, the officials said.

State-run Nuclear Power Corp of India Ltd. and Bharatiya Nabhikya Vidyut Nigam are the only two nuclear power generators in India. Thermal power company NTPC and oil marketing firm Indian Oil Corp, both government-controlled, have formed partnerships with NPCIL for nuclear power.

An Indian minister overseeing atomic energy, Jitendra Singh, said in November the country should explore private players' participation in developing SMRs. In the same month, the atomic energy department held closed-door consultations with domestic and global industry players who showed significant interest, one of the officials said.

"With the right policy push, we see private sector taking up significant deployment in the country," said the official. The recommendations will next be submitted to Modi's office, said the officials, without giving a timeline.

The government panel has also recommended replacing old coal-based plants with SMRs, amid a proposal to amend its electricity policy to not add any new coal-fired power plants, sources have told Reuters.

China's Services Activity Grows But at Slower Pace

BEIJING (Dispatches)- China's service activity grew for a fourth month in April, a private-sector survey showed on Friday, as businesses benefitted from a return toward pre-pandemic levels of demand and output, although the momentum slowed.

The Caixin/S&P Global services purchasing managers' index (PMI) stood at 56.4 in April, above the 50-point mark that separates expansion and contraction in activity on a monthly basis, down from 57.8 the month prior.

The numbers echoed the official PMI released on Sunday which showed also a smaller pace of expansion.

Analysts warn that the momentum could further ease as domestic consumption has yet to fully recover, and that more policy support is needed.

Consumption will require more policy support and stimulus, as growth in corporate profits, people's income and fiscal revenue all lagged behind economic growth in the first quarter, said Bruce Pang, chief economist at Jones Lang LaSalle.

China's economy grew at a faster-than-expected clip in the first quarter, as businesses and consumers shook off the chill of strict COVID curbs that were lifted in December.

But the world's second-biggest economy is facing an uneven recovery and persistent headwinds, with strong activity in services and a contraction in manufacturing.

China's tourism rebounded to pre-COVID levels in the five-day May Day holidays as domestic travel rose by more than two-thirds from a year earlier, government data showed.

The economy will continue to recover in the second quarter but at a slower pace, clearly evidenced by the holiday data - the number of tourists exceeded 2019 levels but total consumption by value was still short of the pre-COVID level, said Nie Wen, an economist at Hwabao Trust.

China's yuan firmed within a narrow range on Friday, buoyed by a weaker dollar, but its strength was capped by the latest data showing a slower pace of economic recovery.

Chinese stocks were slightly weaker.

Surveyed services firms' production activity and new orders including new export order expanded for the fourth consecutive month in April.

Caixin group attributed the rise in activity to the return to more normal operating conditions as the impact of COVID-19 continued to fade.



U.S. Job Growth Accelerates in April

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. job growth accelerated in April while wage gains increased solidly, pointing to sustained labor market strength that could compel the Federal Reserve to keep interest rates higher for longer as it fights to bring inflation under control.

The Labor Department's closely watched employment report also showed the unemployment rate falling back to more than a 50-year low of 3.4%. Though data for February and March were revised sharply lower, the labor market is slowing only marginally.

The U.S. central bank raised its benchmark overnight interest rate by another 25 basis points to the 5.00%-5.25% range on Wednesday, and signaled it may pause its fastest monetary policy tightening campaign since the 1980s, though it kept a hawkish bias.

"The Fed may have been wrong to hint they were pausing their rate hikes, as there is absolutely zero evidence that the bank crisis is doing the work of monetary policy tightening that two or three more rate hikes could do," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWDBONDS in New York.

Nonfarm payrolls rose by 253,000 jobs last month, but the economy created 149,000 fewer jobs in February and March than previously reported. Job growth has averaged 290,000 jobs per month over the prior six months.

The economy needs to create 70,000-100,000 jobs each month to keep up with growth in the working-age population.

The service-providing sector accounted for most of the job gains in April, with professional and business services adding 43,000 positions. But temporary help services employment, seen as a harbinger for future hiring, dropped by just over 23,000 positions and is down by 174,000 since its peak in March 2022.

Healthcare payrolls increased by 40,000 in April. Employment in the leisure and hospitality industry rose by 31,000 jobs, mostly concentrated at restaurants and bars. Hiring in the sector, which has been the main job growth driver, is slowing.

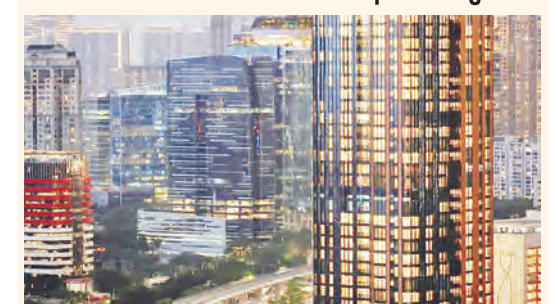
Employment in the industry remains 402,000 jobs below its pre-pandemic level.

Financial activities payrolls rose by 23,000, as did the government jobs category. Government employment remains 301,000 positions below its pre-pandemic level. Manufacturing and construction payrolls rebounded after declining in March.

The Fed has hiked its policy rate by 500 basis points since March 2022.

U.S. stocks opened higher. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices fell.

Indonesia's Economy Beats Forecasts On Consumer, Gov't Spending



JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Indonesia's economic growth held steady in the first quarter as improving consumption and government spending offset a slowdown in exports and investment in South East Asia's largest economy.

Gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by 5.03 percent in the January to March quarter from a year earlier, data from Statistics Indonesia showed on Friday. That was quicker than the 4.95 percent median forecast in a Reuters news agency poll and compared with 5.01 percent growth in the fourth quarter.

Indonesia's post-pandemic recovery has been helped by a commodities-led export boom, though analysts expect economic momentum to cool as commodity prices ease and monetary policy tightening around the world hits global demand.

Bank Indonesia's (BI) monetary tightening, including interest rate hikes totalling 225 basis points between August and January to fight inflation, could also hit domestic demand.

The central bank has paused tightening since and some economists expect it to keep interest rates unchanged for the rest of the year, although others argued concerns over growth may push BI to ease later this year.

In January to March, growth in household consumption, which accounts for more than half of GDP, picked up slightly to 4.54 percent, compared with 4.48 percent in the previous three months, while government spending rose 4 percent against a contraction previously.

Meanwhile, export growth softened to 11.68 percent from nearly 15 percent in the fourth quarter. The statistics bureau said exports of Indonesia's main products such as coal, palm oil and metals had remained strong.

Investment also slowed.

"We think the economy is set to struggle over the coming quarters," Capital Economics' analyst Gareth Leather said in a note on the data, underlining weakening exports and the effect of BI's tightening on demand.

Australia to Predict Lower Unemployment, Higher Wages in Looming Budget

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australia's government is set to cut its forecasts for inflation while also predicting lower unemployment for longer in 2023/24 budget next week, a mix that it hopes will generate much-needed growth in real wages.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers will now forecast unemployment of 3.5% for the June quarter of this year and 4.25% for the same period in 2025, both a quarter point lower than in the last budget in October, according to an extract of next Tuesday's budget seen by Reuters.

Treasury also sees half a million new jobs being created by the middle of 2026, up from a previous forecast of 300,000. The budget is expected to forecast real wages growth of 0.75% over the year to June 2024, up by half a percentage point from October, with inflation seen slightly lower and nominal wages growing faster.

That sits in contrast to the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) which on Friday lowered its forecasts for wage growth for June 2024 to 3.9%, from 4.1%, while keeping its inflation estimate at 3.6%.

Chalmers has repeatedly stated his budget would be restrained on spending so as not to add to inflationary pressures, while also giving some targeted relief for cost of living pressures.

"While low national unemployment is one of our best defences against the headwinds that are intensifying in the global economy right now, Australia will not be immune from these challenges," says Chalmers in the budget extract.

"The May Budget will be focused on targeted cost-of-living relief that doesn't add to inflation."

Euro Zone Inflation Could Hold Above Target

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - Euro zone inflation could be lower in the coming years than previously expected but may stay above the European Central Bank's 2% target further out, the bank's Survey of Professional Forecasters showed.

The ECB has raised rates at each of its past seven meetings and promised even more tightening to combat runaway price growth with policymakers increasingly concerned that rising underlying price pressures could keep inflation sticky for years to come.

The ECB's quarterly Survey of Professional Forecasters, a key input in policy deliberations, now sees 2023 inflation at 5.6%, down from 5.9% expected three months ago, while the 2024 projection was cut to 2.6% from 2.7%.

But the 2025 figure, the last year in the ECB's own projections, was lifted to 2.2% from 2.1% and the "longer term" figure, which refers to 2027, was kept at 2.1%.

Expectations for underlying inflation were only lifted for 2023, however, and all future projections remained unchanged, including the 2% reading in the "longer term".

Speaking after the ECB raised rates by 25 basis points to 3.25% on Thursday, ECB President Christine Lagarde said that even if most measures of longer-term inflation expectations stand around 2%, some indicators have edged up and warrant continued monitoring.

The survey's 2023 growth projection was lifted to 0.6% but that remains far below the ECB's own 1% expectation, while the 2024 projection was actually cut to 1.2% from 1.4%, suggesting lukewarm growth for years to come.

The survey also sees a faster decline in unemployment than the previous survey with the rate falling to 6.8% this year versus 7% seen previously.

At 6.5%, unemployment is already far below this reading, however, and ECB policymakers are concerned that the labour market is getting overheated, prolonging high inflation.

Meanwhile retail sales in the euro zone fell more than expected in March, Eurostat said on Friday, as rapid inflation and rising interest rates ate deep into disposable incomes to limit households' purchasing power.

Retail sales volumes in the 20 nations sharing the euro currency fell by 1.2% in March from the previous month, outpacing the 0.1% drop seen in a Reuters poll of economists.

Consumption has been weak all year as real incomes fall and households are now spending a larger part of their incomes on expensive energy, eroding demand for others goods.

Iran Voices Readiness to Reconstruct Syrian Airports

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran has expressed its readiness to reconstruct Syrian airports, including Damascus Airport, the head of the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran (CAOI) said.

Referring to the country's plan to transfer 50 thousand pilgrims to Syria annually, Mohammad Mohammadi Bakhsh said that the issues related to this plan were discussed between Iranian and Syrian officials.

He also noted that Iran has expressed its readiness to reconstruct Syria's airports, including Damascus Airport.

Some agreements have been reached regarding the training of the personnel of the Syrian air force, the CAO head said.

A new chapter of relations can be established between Iran and Syria with the increase in mutual flights, he concluded.



Major European Cities See Record Rent Hikes Due to Housing Shortage

LONDON (Dispatches) - The rising construction costs due to high inflation and interest rates are worsening the situation in major European countries amid an imbalance in housing supply and demand leading to soaring rental payments.

Although governments try to find solutions such as limiting the rise in rents in the European continent, where half of the population lives in rent in some countries, it is predicted that high inflation will continue to suppress the rent and housing prices.

According to research by Eurofound, an institution affiliated with the EU, while especially private sector tenants are experiencing housing insecurity, high inflation, rising interest rates, and increasing construction costs exacerbating the housing shortage.

The expenditures of families on housing and heating exceed 50% of their monthly income in some provinces.

As the pressure on rents has increased tremendously in recent months with immigration from Ukraine, those looking for flats to rent in big cities, such as the German capital Berlin, need should be prepared for a months-long stress test.

In many European cities, from Berlin to London, families see buying a house as "impossible."

Germany

In Germany, which has a population of 84 million, around 700,000 new residences are needed to ease the pressure on the real estate market.

The housing shortage in the country is at its highest level in 20 years due to rising construction costs, high-interest rates, and an influx of refugees.

According to experts, construction investments are less attractive in many areas and the sharp increases in construction prices and interest rates in recent months have negatively affected many construction projects, causing the housing shortage to reach its highest level in 20 years.

The arrival of Ukrainians to Germany, after the start of the Moscow-Kyiv war on Feb. 24, 2022, caused an additional demand for 200,000 housing units.

In Berlin, the state government held a referendum to expropriate thousands of houses from real estate companies due to protests against rent increases. Some 56.4% of the voters said "yes" to the expropriation of more than 240,000 apartments.

The companies own over 550,000 residences worth 100 billion euros in Germany, where half of the population lives on rent.

Average rents in the capital Berlin have increased by over 100% since 2010, while new apartments are being rented for at least 26 euros per square meter.

Austria

In the Austrian capital Vienna, where rents have risen sharply because of the increase in housing demand, the rental cost per square meter for an apartment varies between 17 euros and 20 euros.

While many low incomers live in state-backed council housing in Vienna, registrations for these housing units with increasingly long waiting times have increased by 26% in the last three years.

Denmark

Denmark amended its laws to make it harder for institutional investors to significantly increase rents when purchasing real estate, while the government passed the so-called "Blackstone Act" three years ago, aimed at curbing rent rises.

The US real estate giant Blackstone had bought tens of thousands of apartments in Denmark in previous years, while tenants complained about the lack of repairs and heavy rent increases of over 100%.

The group also tried to persuade tenants to end the lease by paying severance pay. The Blackstone Act now prohibits landlords from increasing the rent for five years after purchasing the property.

The law was celebrated as a "landmark" against excessive rental costs in Denmark, while Blackstone said the company makes up only 0.5% of Copenhagen's rental market. Despite this move, the housing constraint in the city did not disappear.

In Denmark, a quota for affordable housing is also planned, and 25% of apartments in new buildings are planned to be rented at reasonable prices.

France

Rent is the most important monthly expenditure of the French people.

Increasing housing prices in the capital Paris have pushed low- and middle-income families to the suburbs over the years, making it difficult to find rental housing.

The report, published on Feb. 1 by the France-based charity Abbe Pierre Foundation, revealed that as of 2022, 4.15 million people in the country were struggling with housing problems or living in inhumane conditions.

According to the report, the number of homeless people in France has increased to 300,000 and this rate has increased by 140% in 10 years.



French President Elisabeth Borne said last week that she wants to make it easier for all citizens to access housing in areas where supplies are short by easing financing facilities, even with a 0% interest rate.

The Netherlands

The housing shortage in cities such as Amsterdam, Utrecht, The Hague and Rotterdam, which receives the most immigrants and is populated by students and tourists, continues.

The government's inability to meet the increasing housing needs causes protests every year. In Amsterdam, where large-scale protests were made against the housing restriction, the demand for room rentals increased rapidly, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The rent for a room in the city is around 800-900 euros.

UK

In the U.K., one of the countries with the highest housing constraints and rent increases in Europe, the average rent of a house increased by 9.4% in the first quarter of this year, reaching 1,190 pounds (\$1,494).

According to data from the British online real estate company Rightmove, the average rent in the capital London hit an all-time high at £2,501 per month, up 14% over the same period.

The number of rentable houses in the U.K. real estate market is 46% below the 2019 level.

Spain

In Spain, the government seeks measures against the increasing housing problem every year, intervening in the rent increases for the first time in the country's democratic history.

According to the housing bill adopted in the parliament, the rent increases will be limited to 2% in 2023 and 3% in 2024 instead of inflation.

In addition, property taxes for residences that have been vacant for more than two years will be increased by up to 150%.

Also, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez promised to build a total of 113,000 houses in three separate projects for affordable renting for young people and families in financial difficulties.

The housing problem in Spain is experienced in the cities of Madrid and Barcelona, which host the highest number of immigrants, students, and tourists.

It is calculated that only one room's rent is between 500-600 euros in these cities and the demand for room rents has increased by 40% compared to last year.

Greece

With the economic crisis in Greece after 2009, a serious decrease was observed in real estate sales prices and rents in the 2010s, but this situation has been reversed in recent years.

The increase in rental prices in the country in the last five years has exceeded 30%, and this increase will continue in 2023 and will be between 3% and 7%.

The short-term rental method is seen as one of the reasons for the increase in rental prices in Greece.

Especially in the crisis period, the short-term rental of houses for tourism purposes, which are bought cheaply from the central regions, especially the capital Athens, and renovated, causes a decrease in the supply and an increase in rents.

EU Strongly Supports Revival of Iran Nuclear Deal

TEHRAN (IFP) - Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic-Radman says the European Union (EU) strongly supports the potential revival of the Iran nuclear deal.

During an event to mark the end of Iran's Ambassador to Croatia Parviz Esmaili's tenure, Grlic-Radman also said that Croatia and Iran had friendly and traditional relations and said he was glad about the development of those ties over the past years.

He also expressed hope that trade ties between Zagreb and Tehran would further enhance given the available capacities.

The Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, was concluded after years of negotiations



between Iran and six world powers — including the United States — in 2015.

Three years later, however, former U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew Washington from the deal and attempted to stymie other signatories' implementation of the deal as well.

Since 2021, when Trump was voted out of office, U.S. President Joe Biden has been inclined to return to the Iran deal. Recently, however, the U.S. administration has said the issue is no more on its agenda.

Other signatories to the deal, namely France, China, Russia, the UK, and Germany, meanwhile, are willing to see the deal revived.

Iran has time and again reiterated it is ready for the revival of a good and lasting deal provided that there is a political will on the side of the U.S.

Iran Committed to...

FROM PAGE 1

Raisi said Syria is at the forefront of resistance against Israeli greed and aggression, adding that restoration of Syrian sovereignty over all its territories would alleviate the concerns of Syria's neighboring countries.

"There should not be any presence of Turkish troops in any Syrian territory," Raisi said.

Pointing to relations between Iran and Syria, Raisi said the two countries opened a new chapter in mutual ties after the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. Tehran and Damascus, he said, have been steadily developing ties, as "the axis of evil", led by the Zionist entity and the United

States, weaved various conspiracies against Syria.

Resistance against Israel and support for the Palestinians, Raisi said, has become the hallmark of Iran's foreign policy. As declared by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the late founder of the Islamic Republic, the Iranian president said, Palestine is the top priority of the Muslim world.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Raisi pointed to the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and said the restoration of relations between the two countries will tip the balance in the region.

Iran Navy...

FROM PAGE 1

The Iranian Navy has seized a Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker in the Sea of Oman after it collided with an Iranian fishing craft in the Persian Gulf.

The U.S. media reported that the American Navy is looking to deploy 100 various USVs to better monitor the waters around southern Iran, including farther east and west.

"It's mind-boggling, your entire economy and national survival depends on your export of oil yet you do not have the maritime capabilities to secure your waters," said Bilal Saab, director of the Defense and Security Program at the Washington-based Middle East Institute. The rich Arab Persian Gulf states "have always relied on us" Americans for maintaining security for their regimes, he said.

Commander Tim Hawkins, a spokesman for U.S. and coalition naval forces in Bahrain, said Bahrain and Kuwait had agreed to buy USVs from the US weapons manufacturers and allied factories.

Saildrone is a type of USV using AI with multiple military and scientific applications and can be used to send and receive data at sea for long periods without needing physical maintenance and repair by human operators. Military applications for USVs include high-speed surveillance and reconnaissance, area or sea denial, and strike operations.

The price of USVs ranges from \$800,000 to \$3 million and depends on their speed, size and capabilities.

Reacting to this decision of the U.S., Commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said the force has furnished its destroyers with domestically designed and manufactured 'Abu Mahdi' cruise missiles, which feature state-of-the-art technologies suitable for electronic warfare.

The missile has been named after the former deputy head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units who was assassinated along with top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in a US drone strike ordered by former President Donald Trump near the Baghdad International Airport in early January 2020.

Abu Mahdi naval cruise missile has reportedly been developed by military experts at Aerospace Industries Organization (AIO), a subordinate of the Iranian Defense Ministry and a leading high-tech complex headquartered in Tehran. It is said to have a range of over one thousand kilometers, and can destroy any designated target. The missile is also capable to be launched by diverse types of sea, land and air platforms towards targets.

This is another achievement of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of its Navy which will be deterrent and will stop enemies from having any ill-intention against Islamic Iran and as the Supreme Leader has advised, Iran's Army should strengthen its defensive and offensive power to punish offenders with iron fist.

So with new achievements in the Navy, the U.S. is better to forget any ill-intention against Islamic Iran or else it should wait for a crushing response because Iran has not revealed all of its progresses in its military industry yet and every moment it can unveil some new achievement.

Iran, EAEU...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran and EEU emphasized the prospect of signing a protocol between central customs authorities of the EEU member states and the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration on the procedure of electronic information exchange, it said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has historically been a significant partner of EEU member states, interaction with which we attach particular importance to. Iran's role in the union's trade and economic ties has been growing steadily ... and it is the task of customs services to maximize facilitation of trade between our countries while exercising a proper level of customs control," Alisherov said.

"Mohammad Rezvaniyar underlined the role of EEU in the development of international economic cooperation and assumed that trade turnover between Iran and the union member states would more than double [to \$10 billion per year] once the free trade agreement is signed," the press service said.

Iran traded 6.37 million tons of goods (excluding crude oil) worth \$3.25 billion with the Eurasian Economic Union's member states in fiscal 2022-23, registering a 51.44% and 42.27% drop in terms of weight and value respectively compared to the year before, latest data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration show.



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Evenepoel Wins Giro d'Italia Opening Time Trial

ORTONA (Dispatches) - Remco Evenepoel won the first stage of the Giro d'Italia on Saturday, speeding over the 19.6km run along the Adriatic coast in 21min 18sec and leaving key rival Primož Roglič 43 seconds adrift in sixth. Italy's Filippo Ganna was second at 22sec and Joao Almeida of Portugal was third at 29sec on the long straight route that rarely left the shoreline on the first of 21 stages in the three-week race. The 23-year-old Soudal-Quick Step rider Evenepoel opted to ride the Giro rather than the Tour de France as it features three individual time-trials at which he excels.

Mladenovic Banned For Three Months

WARSAW (Dispatches) - Serbia's Legia Warsaw defender Filip Mladenovic has been suspended for three months, the Polish football association (PZPN) said on Friday, after he hit three opposing players following their Polish Cup final victory. Legia lifted their 20th Polish Cup trophy on Tuesday with a 6-5 penalty shootout win over league leaders Rakow Czestochowa, after the game had finished goalless.

Man City Close in on Premier League Coronation

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City moved a step closer to being crowned Premier League champions with a 2-1 win against Leeds as Chelsea finally won for the first time under caretaker boss Frank Lampard.

Just hours after the pomp and ceremony of the coronation of King Charles III in London's Westminster Abbey, City underlined their desire to extend their own reign as they chase a fifth Premier League title in six seasons.

Ilkay Gundogan scored City's goals in the first half, before missing a late penalty that set up a tense finale when Rodrigo got one back for Leeds.

City held on to climb four points clear of second placed Arsenal.

In tribute to the King, the national anthem was played before kick-off at all four afternoon Premier League games.

But it is Pep Guardiola who lords it over the Premier League and the City boss is on the brink of a leading his team to a third successive title.

However, Guardiola's men will have a game in hand on Arsenal after that fixture and need three wins from their last four matches to be certain of retaining the title.

Relentless City have won their last 10 league games and are unbeaten in 20 matches in all competitions.

Defeat in Sam Allardyce's first match in charge left Leeds one place above the relegation zone on goal difference.

With Tuesday's Champions League semi-final first leg at Real Madrid on Tuesday in mind, Guardiola made seven changes to his starting line-up.

City went ahead in the 19th minute after pinning Leeds deep inside their own half in a blistering start.

Riyad Mahrez was the catalyst with an incisive pass that picked out Gundogan and the German midfielder netted with a fine low finish from just inside the penalty area.

It was the same pair at the heart of City's second goal eight minutes later.

Mahrez cut his pass back to Gundogan, who took a touch before sweeping a clinical strike into the far corner from 20 yards.

After Gundogan hit the post with a penalty awarded for Pascal Struijk's foul on Phil Foden, Guardiola was furious that Erling Haaland did not take the spot-kick.



Guardiola's angst grew when Rodrigo punished a mistake from Manuel Akanji to slot home in the 85th minute, but Leeds couldn't complete the comeback.

Chelsea won for first time in Lampard's second spell in charge, beating Bournemouth 3-1 to end a six-match losing streak.

Conor Gallagher headed Chelsea into a ninth minute lead, diverting N'Golo Kante's cross beyond Neto.

Chelsea's fans responded with ironic chants of 'we are staying up' in reference to their unusually low league position.

Matias Vina equalised with a 21st minute curler, but Benoit Badiashile volleyed in Hakim Ziyech's free-kick for his first Chelsea goal in the 82nd minute.

Joao Felix's 86th-minute strike wrapped up Chelsea's first victory in 10 matches in all competitions.

Chelsea are up to 11th place but are still in danger of finishing in the bottom half of the table for the first time since 1996.

Harry Kane moved into second place in the Premier League's all-time scoring list as his goal sealed a 1-0 win against Crystal Palace.

The England captain broke the deadlock in first half stoppage-time with a powerful header from Pedro Porro's cross.

Kane climbed ahead of Wayne Rooney onto 209 Premier League goals, with Alan Shearer's record of 260 in his sights next.

Sixth placed Tottenham are six points adrift of the top four after winning for the first time in five games.

Toti Gomes' first goal for Wolves -- a ninth minute header from Ruben Neves' corner -- sealed a 1-0 win against Aston Villa.

Struff Reaches Madrid Open Final



MADRID (Dispatches) - Jan-Lennard Struff is relishing his bid for a first ATP title following his "incredible journey" at the Madrid Open which has seen the German become the first lucky loser to reach the final of a Masters 1000 event.

Struff claimed a 4-6 6-3 6-4 semi-final victory over Russia's Aslan Karatsev, days after losing to the same opponent in the final round of qualifying. Despite his defeat in the qualifier, Struff was added to the main draw after a late withdrawal and has since enjoyed a fine run, ousting world number five Stefanos Tsitsipas in the quarter-final.

Asked if he had expected to be in the final in Madrid, Struff told reporters: "No, of course not."

"(I) was very happy that I got chosen for Lucky Loser, that I had been drawn two out of three. This is just a crazy story, I would say. I couldn't have imagined this ..."

"It's an incredible journey and story, here in Madrid, and very, very happy. You should not give up and try again always."

In final, Struff will face defending champion Carlos Alcaraz, who beat Borna Coric 6-4 6-3 on his 20th birthday.

The pair have met twice before, with Struff defeating world number two Alcaraz at the French Open in 2021 before the Spaniard got his revenge in a marathon five-setter at Wimbledon the following year.

Australia, Thailand, Sweden LPGA International Crown Semifinal Spots

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - Sweden, Thailand and Australia secured their semifinal berths at the LPGA International Crown as the United States edged close with two wins over England.

Sweden and Thailand remained perfect with another pair of wins each. Madelene Sagstrom and Maya Stark defeated China's Yin Ruoning and Lin Xiyu 2&1 and Anna Nordqvist and Caroline Hedwall defeated Liu Yu and Liu Ruixin by the same score to put the Swedes a point clear of the United States atop Pool A.

Thailand top Pool B with four points after Patty Tavatanakit and Atthaya Thitikul beat South Koreans Ko Jin-young and Kim Hyo-joo 3&2 while sisters Moriya and Ariya Jutanugarn downed Choi Hye-jin and Chun In-gee 2&1.

"I love this course," Tavatanakit said. "I feel like it is a really tight course, but it doesn't seem tight for me just because I really love this course and I feel like I can really get it going with a lot of confidence."

"That really helped with my flow, too. That's why I really hit it well."

Australia secured their spot from Pool B with a win and one tie against Japan on Friday.

Minjee Lee and Stephanie Kyriacou beat Japan's Nasa Hataoka and Ayaka Furue 2-up while Hannah Green and Sarah Kemp tied their match with Hinako Shibuno and Yuka Saso.

The event at TPC Harding Park is the fourth edition of the eight-team tournament featuring four-woman teams from eight nations.

Four-ball (best ball) matches continue through Saturday, and the top two teams in each will play semi-finals consisting of two singles and foursomes match on Sunday, to be followed by a final in the same format.

"I feel like we've had a lot of fun this week, and I feel like that's been working to our advantage," Nordqvist said.

She and Hedwall birdied five of the first six holes to go 3-up on the way to victory over Liu and Liu.

Japan was the only team that made a switch to their partnerships from the first day, but they were still unable to get a win that would keep them in the hunt.



Messi Apologizes to PSG for Saudi Trip

PARIS (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi apologized to Paris St Germain and his team mates after being suspended for making a trip to Saudi Arabia earlier this week and missing a training session as a result.

French media reported that Messi was suspended for two weeks after an unauthorised trip to Saudi Arabia when he was supposed to train with the squad the day after the Ligue 1 leaders' 3-1 defeat at home to Lorient.

"I sincerely believed that I would have the day off after the game as had been happening in previous weeks. I had this trip organized and I couldn't cancel it, I had already

cancelled it before," Messi said in a video on Instagram. "I apologize to my team mates and I'm waiting for what the club wants to do with me," added the Argentina forward.

PSG boss Christophe Galtier said earlier that he had nothing to do with the club's decision to suspend Messi, who is set to miss the next two matches at Troyes and home to Ajaccio as they look to keep their Ligue 1 lead intact.

"We'll see when Leo returns, we'll see what happens. Obviously there will be discussions with the entire club, but also with Leo," Galtier had said at a press conference.

PSG are five points clear of Olympique de Marseille with five matches left in the season. Messi has received a formal offer to join Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal next season, a source close to Argentina's captain told Reuters, with a contract renewal at PSG not on the cards for the World Cup winner who turns 36 next month.

Infantino Urges Kyrgyzstan to Build a Stadium

BISHKEK (Dispatches) - FIFA President Gianni Infantino urged Kyrgyzstan to build a national football stadium to host international games and address the lack of infrastructure.

The former Soviet republic has no modern stadiums built to international standards that can host FIFA-level matches, and its national team's FIFA ranking has fluctuated between positions 201 and 75, currently standing at 96th.

On the day of Infantino's visit, the mountainous nation of 7 million inaugurated the new, FIFA-sponsored headquarters of the Kyrgyz Football Union which has previously resided in an old, small building on the outskirts of the capital, Bishkek. "I spoke to the (Kyrgyz) president (Sadyr Japarov) about the national stadium of football," Infantino said.

"It is very important, symbolic, but crucial for the development, so, we will bring more international games to Kyrgyzstan, and you will shine on the Asian stage and on the global stage."

Japarov, whose team made up of senior public servants won a friendly game against that of FIFA officials, said football was the most popular sport in Kyrgyzstan and the country had ambitious goals.

"Kyrgyzstan has great, great talents. The men's football team qualified two times in a row for the Asian cup. In 2019, excellent tournament..." Infantino said. "Now again, qualified with very little infrastructure and football development."

FIFA has deployed a talent development team in Kyrgyzstan this year and is investing in a football academy there, as well as programmes to promote the sport at schools and among women.



Nadal Skips Italian Open to Cast Doubts Over Roland Garros

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rafa Nadal will miss next week's Italian Open as he has yet to regain full fitness from the hip injury he sustained at January's Australian Open, casting further doubt over his participation in the French Open.

Nadal, a 14-times Roland Garros champion, skipped the ongoing Madrid Open and has also missed tournaments at Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo and Barcelona. "I'm very sorry to announce that I will not be able to be in Rome," the 36-year-old Spaniard, a 10-times champion in Rome, said in a statement. "You all know how much it hurts to miss another one of the tournaments that have marked my professional and personal career for all the love and support of the Italian tifosi."

"Despite having noticed an improvement in recent days, there have been many months without having been able to train at a high level and the readaptation process has its times and I have no choice but to accept them and continue working."

Nadal, who has dominated the claycourt season for years, has competed at Roland Garros every year since winning the first of his men's record 22 major titles in Paris in 2005. The French Open begins on May 28. He was initially set to miss up to eight weeks after suffering the hip flexor injury in January in his second-round match against Mackenzie McDonald that effectively ended his Melbourne Park title defence.

But a setback in his recovery ahead of the Madrid tournament and his subsequent withdrawal from Rome means that if he is fit in time, Nadal would be heading to Roland Garros without having played any competitive matches.

