

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani Expressed Sympathy With the Kazakh Government and Nation Over the Forest Fire Incident That Left Several Killed and Wounded

IRAN NEWS

All Forces of Iran's Army Have Dominance Beyond Iran's Borders, The Deputy Chief of the Iranian Army For Coordination Said, Adding This Measure Is Done Without Violating The Borders of Other Countries

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Countries Seeking Iran's Heavy Water

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Many customers are looking for Iranian heavy water and the world countries are queuing to purchase this product, according to the spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI).

Behrouz Kamanvandi made the remarks speaking to reporters after a meeting between Iranian nuclear scientists and officials which took place on the sidelines of a visit by Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to an exhibition in Tehran where Iran's latest nuclear achievements were put on display. **See Page 7**

Iran Never Left Negotiating Table; Ready to Achieve Outcome



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry spokesman said that Tehran has never left the negotiating table and the country has always shown its readiness to hold talks to achieve outcomes in order to secure maximum national interest.

Iran attaches importance to how the other side acts, not to what it says in media, Nasser Kanaani told reporters at his weekly press briefing in Tehran on Monday.

Referring to speculation about the exchange of messages between Iran and the United States to continue talks on the removal of the sanctions, the spokesman said the Islamic Republic has adopted a clear and fundamental approach to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the process of the talks. **See Page 7**

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Ukraine Reports Village Retaken, First Gain of Offensive



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8 SPORTS

Djokovic Clinches Record 23rd Grand Slam Title in Paris



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Iran Flag-Bearer of Narcotics Confiscation in World

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's Secretary General of Drug Control Headquarters has said that Iran is the flag-bearer of confiscating narcotics in the world.

Addressing an expert meeting of deputies, advisors, general managers, and secretaries of the Drug Control Headquarters of provinces across the country, Eskandar Momeni said that Iran is the flag-bearer of seizing narcotics in the world, while drug production and trafficking has increased by 50% over the past two decades. Calling drug addictions one of the major harms in the world today, he highlighted that according to the United Nations, there are 300 million drug addicts in the world and about 500,000 deaths are attributable to drug use in the world. **See Page 7**

Fundamentals of an Open, Pragmatic and Peaceful Foreign Policy of the New Uzbekistan



The Afghan Direction of International Politics

Since 2016, Uzbekistan has significantly stepped up its efforts to resolve the Afghan issue. The high-level Tashkent International Conference on Afghanistan "Peace process, security cooperation and regional interaction" held in 2018 at the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan was a landmark event. The Tashkent Declaration adopted as a result of the event for the first time enshrined a universal consensus on the need for a political settlement of the situation in Afghanistan, which gave a tangible impetus to the resumption of the peace process and the cessation of the armed conflict.

An important contribution to international efforts to promote peace in Afghanistan was the High-Level International Conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity" organized on July 15-16, 2021 in Uzbekistan. Challenges and Opportunities", where the leader of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev pointed to the historical, cultural and civilizational commonality of the peoples living in these territories, called for joint efforts to turn this vast region and the entire Eurasian continent into a stable, economically developed and prosperous space.

As a result of the event last year, the UN General Assembly unanimously approved a resolution developed at the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan on strengthening the interconnectedness of Central and South Asia.

In 2022, the head of Uzbekistan initiated an international conference "Afghanistan: Security and Economic Development". Then, on one platform, special representatives for Afghanistan (more than 20 states directly involved in the Afghan settlement), heads and specialists of a dozen

international and regional organizations formulated a coordinated approach to building a pragmatic dialogue with the new Afghan authorities.

In his speech at the VI summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the President of Uzbekistan suggested that Asian countries apply to the UN General Assembly with the initiative to form a high-level international negotiating group for negotiations with the Afghan authorities.

International initiatives to address the issues of the Aral Sea region

At the initiative of Uzbekistan, a special high-level meeting of the United Nations "Promoting regional and international cooperation towards comprehensive strategies in support of sustainable development" was held at the UN Headquarters in New York in November 2018. Based on its results, the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Human Security for the Aral Sea region was created. And already on May 18, 2021, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a special resolution proposed by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev "On declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of environmental innovations and technologies."

Obviously, the processes taking place in the world, as well as the high dynamics of the transformation of Uzbekistan, have updated the revision of the concept of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. The priority tasks today are the consolidation and mobilization of all internal and external resources for the unconditional achievement of national development goals, the effective promotion of the interests of the people of the republic in the international arena and the progressive increase in the



To date, Uzbekistan has established diplomatic relations with 142 states of the world, is a member of over a hundred such authoritative organizations as the UN, OIC, OSCE, SCO, CIS, ECO, and others, as well as a participant in more than 200 international multilateral treaties. The country is active in shaping not only the regional but also the global agenda, building collective mechanisms to counter challenges and threats that directly affect the security, prosperity and sustainable development of the global community.

A clear evidence of this can be called the productive participation of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in events taking place at international venues. For example, the important initiatives put forward by the head of the republic during the meeting of the 75th UN General Assembly have become a solid contribution of the state to the development of mutually beneficial international cooperation.

Among them are proposals for the development of an International Code of Voluntary Commitments of States during Pandemics and the adoption of a UNGA resolution "On strengthening the role of parliaments in accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". By decision of the President, the Global Forum "Human Rights Education" and the World Conference on Youth Rights "Engaging Youth in Global Actions" were held in 2022.

Another significant event in this regard was the election of the country for the first time in its history as a member of the UN Human Rights Council. At the same time, the republic began an active dialogue on joining the World Trade Organization in order to find its rightful place in the world trading system, corresponding to the resource and economic opportunities of Uzbekistan and human potential.

Since 2016, at the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, four UN resolutions have been adopted to improve the foundations and mechanisms for international cooperation in the field of tourism, regional cooperation, interfaith understanding and sustainable development.



competitiveness of the country's economy in the world market based on the principles of proactivity, pragmatism, constructivism, economization, openness, humanization activities.

In order to constitutionally consolidate the priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, the new edition of the country's Constitution confirms loyalty to the ideals of democracy, freedom and equality, social justice and solidarity. It is also indicated that foreign policy activities are carried out on the basis of generally recognized principles and norms of international law, the country seeks to strengthen and develop friendly relations with the world community, primarily with neighboring states, on the basis of cooperation, mutual support, peace and harmony.

In addition to correcting the priorities of foreign policy, the Constitution of the country in a new edition (Article 13) determines that democracy in the Republic of Uzbekistan is based on universal principles, according to which the highest value is a person, his life, freedom, honor, dignity and other inalienable rights.

In accordance with Article 15, international treaties of the Republic of Uzbekistan, along with the generally recognized principles and norms of international law, are an integral part of the legal system.

Article 17 determines that Uzbekistan is a full-fledged subject of international relations, and its foreign policy is based on the principles of sovereign equality of states, non-use of force or threat of force, inviolability of borders, territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and other generally recognized principles and norms of international law.

Article 18 establishes: Uzbekistan pursues a peaceful foreign policy aimed at the comprehensive development of bilateral and multilateral relations with states and international organizations; the republic can enter into alliances, join commonwealths and other interstate formations, and also withdraw from them based on the highest interests of the state, the people, its welfare and security.

IRGC Tests Arbaeen, Multirotor Bomber Drone Successfully

TEHRAN (IP) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Ground Force conducted a successful test flight of the new multirotor bomber drone, called "Arbaeen".

IRGC test successfully a multi-rotor bomber drone that is capable of carrying a 7 kg aerial weapon and dropping it on the target from a height of 500 meters.

The multi-copter was designed, developed, and produced by experts

from the Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organization of the IRGC. Als, the new IRGC drone can simultaneously carry and launch 10 small missiles, targeting various objectives.

This vertical takeoff and landing aircraft is an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) equipped with more than two engines for vertical ascent. Such aircraft are suitable options for special operations units due to their ability to operate in any terrain and their ease of use.

Raisi Describes Relations With Latin American States as Strategic

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi has said that the Islamic Republic's relations with independent Latin American states are strategic.

Raisi made the remarks prior to his departure on Sunday for a visit to three Latin American countries of Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba.

Today, there are many countries in Latin America that are willing to live independently [from the United States], the president said.

He went on to say that good relations have been developed between the Islamic Republic of Iran and those three countries during recent years.

Further, he referred to politics, energy, technology, medicine, industry, agriculture, and economy as the fields of cooperation between Iran and those countries.

Pointing to resistance against arrogance and unilateralism as a common stance adopted by Iran and the three Latin American nations, the Iranian president said today's trip will be a turning point in upgrading "our ties with the Latin American countries."

Raisi said Iran's relations with those countries have been consistently cordial during past years, as they have common views with Tehran on major international issues.



"Our common position with these three countries is opposition to the [world's] hegemonic system and unilateralism," the president said, adding that Iran cooperates with those countries in numerous areas.

"Export of technical and engineering manpower is among our important cooperation areas," Raisi said, adding, "We also cooperate with Latin American countries in the fields of politics, energy, science and technology, medicine and economy."

He said his trip comes at the invitation of the presidents of the three countries, adding that it would be a turning point in developing Tehran's ties with Caracas, Managua and Havana.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iran's president stated that making the most of the potentialities that exist in Iran and the three Latin American states can lead to further expansion of their "strategic relations."

Caracas, Venezuela, is the first stop on Raisi's Latin America tour.

Raisi is also scheduled to meet with Iranian businesspeople and economic actors in those countries.

Iran has close ties with many Latin American states in different domains and seeks to further deepen its relations with those nations.

The visit is the thirteenth foreign trip by the Iranian president since he took office in August 2021.

Iran-U.S. Negotiations Only Held Through Mediators

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian senior political analyst and the advisor to the Iranian negotiating delegation in the nuclear talks Mohammad Marandi rejected the alleged reports on direct and secret negotiations between Tehran and Washington.

In an interview with an Arab media outlet, Marandi stressed that negotiations between Iran and the US are conducted indirectly through mediators such as Oman or the United Nations.

He emphasized that all the negotiations are about swapping prisoners and releasing Iran's assets that are frozen due to US sanctions.

Iranian and American sides do not hold meetings in the same room during these negotiations, he added.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said that Tehran is exchanging messages with Washington through various channels during the talks on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal and the removal of sanctions.

Iran, Qatar Foreign Ministers Urge Expanded Ties

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The foreign ministers of Iran and Qatar have discussed an array of topics ranging from improving relations to the latest developments in the region.

In a telephone conversation Sunday with Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, who is also the prime minister of Qatar, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said Tehran and Doha need to work on the enhancement of cordial relations.

Amirabdollahian said Qatar plays a positive and constructive role in bilateral and regional relations.

The Qatari minister, for his part, hailed his country's friendly relations with Iran.

The administration of President Ebrahim Raisi is pursuing a good-neighborliness policy and seeks to cement ties with the nations in the region.

During the Iranian president's visit to Doha in February 2022, Iran and Qatar inked 14 major economic cooperation agreements, including a deal on cancelling visa requirements for passengers travelling between the two countries.

The deals will cover close cooperation between Iran and Qatar in various fields of economy, including in trade, shipping, aviation and electricity.

Expansion of China-Iran Deal to Improve Both Nations' Livelihood



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Chinese ambassador to Iran says the expansion of a 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership agreement between the two countries will be beneficial to the livelihood of both nations.

In an interview with Fars news agency published on Sunday, Chang Hua described as "very proper" the current state of Beijing-Tehran relations.

"Two years ago, we signed the 25-year agreement with Iran, which includes political, economic, cultural, tourism, and health ties, among others. Since then, the pact has developed well through bilateral cooperation and deals," he said.

The envoy also referred to February's visit by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Beijing, where he met with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. It marked the first state visit to China by an Iranian president in the past two decades.

During the trip, the two heads of state "held very important talks and reached a consensus to still develop the 25-year agreement. This issue will be beneficial to the livelihood of the people of both states," he added.

China is Iran's largest trade partner. Both countries are subject to different levels of illegal sanctions imposed by the US.

They have enjoyed close ties in recent years, particularly after the United States reinstated sanctions on the Iranian economy in 2018 after unilaterally withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal.

The two countries signed the landmark 25-year partnership agreement in March 2021 in an attempt to strengthen their long-standing economic and political alliance.

The deal was announced during President Xi's visit to Tehran back in 2016. It sets the outlines of China-Iran cooperation in political, cultural, security, defense, regional, and international domains for the next 25 years.

President Vows Support for Iran's Nuclear Industry

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says his administration will continue supporting the nuclear industry within the framework of Iran's national interests.

Addressing a cabinet session, Raisi said the nuclear industry is among driving industries in the country. He hailed grand achievements made by young Iranian scientists in this sector.

"In line with serving national interests, the administration considers itself duty-bound to support the nuclear industry," he declared.

Pointing to a visit earlier in the day by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to an exhibition of Iran's latest achievements in the nuclear industry, the president said the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) would continue the path towards further success based on the Leader's guidelines.

After a 1.5-hour visit to the exhibition, Ayatollah Khamenei met with a group of nuclear experts and officials in Tehran. Meanwhile, Head of the AEOI Mohammad Eslami said efforts to sustain and grow the power of Iran's nuclear industry remains high on the organization's agenda.

FM Underscores Enhancing Economic Cooperation With China

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says it is imperative that Iran and China enhance relations in various sectors, not least economy.

The Iranian minister was meeting with Ali Mohammadi, the new consul general of the Islamic Republic to the Chinese city of Shanghai, on Sunday ahead of the diplomat's departure.

Relations between Tehran and Shanghai and East China go back a long time, Amirabdollahian said.

The Iranian minister placed a premium on cementing interactions between Iran's private sector and Chinese partners by making use of the capacity of Iranians living overseas.

Mohammadi previously served as Iran's consul general to the Indian city of Mumbai and the Russian city of Astrakhan. He has also been an assistant to the director general of economic coordination in the Foreign Ministry.

On Sunday, the top Iranian diplomat also received Iran's new consul general to the Pakistani city of Peshawar Ali Banafsheh Khah. He has previously served as Iran's consul general to South Korea, New Zealand and Austria.

Amirabdollahian said Iran and Pakistan need to enhance cooperation with a focus on Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in line with the Islamic Republic's good-neighborliness policy.

Iran, Saudi Arabia to Go Towards Military Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) - A Russian newspaper has claimed in a report that Tehran-Riyadh relations will develop towards military cooperation after the formation of a joint naval alliance.

The Russian newspaper "Izvestia" published an analytical report on the progress in the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and wrote that the future of relations between Tehran and Riyadh will include military cooperation, despite the regional alliances that the United States has forged in that region.

The "Raialyoum" newspaper website, quoting Izvestia wrote that Tehran and Riyadh have agreed on the formation of a joint coalition in the region to ensure maritime security, despite the fact that currently, a maritime security coalition led by the United States is in place in the Middle East.

The report by the Russian newspaper, also reads, "Nevertheless, as an alternative to the American guarantees, Tehran proposes to ensure the safety of navigation in the region in cooperation with its neighbors."

A political commentator told the Russian daily that, "As long as the normalization process of Iran and Saudi Arabia is moving forward, it will bring positive results."

"Iran and Saudi Arabia finally realized that they have shared interests. Thus, the agreement to normalize diplomatic relations was announced, and then soon more unexpected news about possible military cooperation will come out. This case can be called 'passing the habits'; However, most experts and analysts expect this issue to be materialized in the medium term," the paper further quoted the Russian observer as saying.

"Such initiatives would be beneficial for Russia as they would lead to a reduction in the role of non-regional actors in West Asia, most notably the United States and the United Kingdom," the report further read.

The Russian Middle Eastern commentator further noted that, "When relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia got tense, Russia, which has good relations with both sides, had to create an atmosphere of balance between the two countries with its positions.

When they seek to strike a balance and take real steps, such as creating a joint naval fleet, they will at least reduce Moscow's responsibility to use its influence by the Russian diplomatic apparatus."

Iran, Tajikistan Sign Judicial Cooperation Document

TEHRAN (MNA) - A cooperation document in the field of judiciary issues was signed between Iran and Tajikistan on Monday.

The document was signed following the recent visit of Iran's Prosecutor-General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri to Dushanbe.

Ali Akbar Bakhtiari, the head of the Attorney General's Office, signed the document with Tajikistan's deputy prosecutor general. The document stresses the implementation of other

parts of the MoU earlier reached between the Iranian and Tajik Prosecutor Generals.

Joint and continued bilateral cooperation in the judiciary field, exchanging experiences, training specialists, and exchanging information are also included in the document's clauses.

Mohammad Jafar Montazeri paid a visit to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, at the invitation of his Tjik counterpart on Thursday.

Tehran to Host Int'l Meeting On Environment in August



TEHRAN (IP) - The Head of Iran Department of Environment said on Sunday evening that fifty countries would be present in an international meeting on environment due to be held on August 23-24.

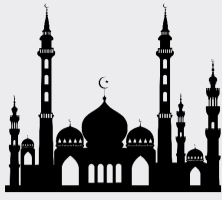
Ali Salajagheh noted the meeting would be held at the ministerial level.

Speaking at the meeting attended by environment ambassadors, which was held on the occasion of the Environment Week in Tehran on Sunday evening, Salajagheh once again emphasized the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, saying: "The priority of the current government of Iran is to establish strong relations with neighboring and Muslim countries."

He added: "We believe that environment-related issues as the main commonalities of human society can bring all ideas and civilizations together to solve problems."

The Head of Iran Department of Environment stressed: "We should all be together and think of an effective solution."

Referring to the previous year's meeting, which was held with the active presence of ambassadors and representatives of international organizations, he added: "During last year's meeting, we had important achievements, and today, when we came together with the Persian Gulf and West Asian countries, we showed that all Political, economic and military issues can be solved this way."



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:04
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:42
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:01
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:48

65. But no, by the Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against Thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.

66. If We had ordered them to sacrifice their lives or to leave their homes, very few of them would have done it: But if they had done what they were (actually) told, it would have been best for them, and would have gone furthest to strengthen their (faith);

Surah 4. Women (65 - 66)

Easing Visa Process to Boost Trade Between Iran and the Netherlands

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The caretaker of international affairs department of Iran chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Ms. Homeira Asadi in meeting with the Commercial Attache of Embassy of the Netherlands said that easing visa issuance for the businessmen who are introduced by the chamber will help the trade between the two countries to boost.

In the meeting, both sides explored ways for boosting bilateral trade and easing visa process was mentioned as one way for enhancing trade between the two countries.

Asadi said that ICCIMA is keen to expand its trade relation with key countries and in this line they can cooperate with the Netherlands in the humanitarian fields. She added that increasing traders in the markets of both countries, acquaintance of traders with capacities and potentials of Iran and the Netherlands, holding webinar in collaboration with the embassies of both sides and the joint chamber of commerce should be prioritized.

Reacting to the anti-Iran media propagation, Asadi said that ICCIMA wants to introduce the potentials and capacities of Iran in cooperation with the Iran-Netherlands Joint Chamber and to hold specialized meetings with presence of specialized unions and groups.

Then Dutch Commercial Attache Mr. Paulsen, for his part, said that in case Iranian businessmen get valid invitations from the Dutch companies and completing the required documents, letter of introduction by the ICCIMA will ease visa process for them.



He added that despite attraction of Iran market, the trade volume of Iran and the Netherlands has declined in the past three years and companies just are working to maintain their positions, adding that they have long been waiting for positive changes and he is sure that in case of change in the current condition, the Dutch companies will return to Iran.

He added that Europe's sanctions are limited but the U.S. sanctions are effective because all Dutch banks are present in the U.S. and there is a financial problem for the Dutch in Iran. He then pointed to holding exhibitions in the fields of water treatment, agriculture and other fields by the Dutch companies but unfortunately they were not welcomed by Iranian counterparts.

Then Chairman of Iran-Netherlands Joint Chamber Mr. Shahin Sheisi, for his part, blamed the fluctuation in the forex rate and its high cost as the main reason for lack of enthusiasm for partaking in those exhibitions by Iranians and added that despite such problems, both sides should keep the doors for trade open by holding webinars and B2B meetings in order that both countries can expand trade in the future.

He then called for preparing a roadmap for cooperation between Iran and the Netherlands which was welcomed by the Dutch diplomat.

Meanwhile head of Europe Office of the ICCIMA Farkhondehnejad stresses easing the visa process for Iranian traders and called it an effective way for enhancing the trade between the two states.

CBI Holds Over \$100b of Foreign Currency Reserves

TEHRAN (MNA) - Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Mohammadreza Farzin has said the bank is currently holding more than \$100 billion of foreign currency reserves.

Speaking at the CBI's 30th annual monetary and exchange policy conference on Monday, Farzin said: "We must be able to use all the resources we have in other countries and the government has taken good measures in this regard."

He underlined some of the measures that are going to be taken in the future for the management of the forex market, including the development of the currency and gold exchange center; establishing the stabilization fund, and reforming foreign currency purchase and sale policies, saying that the CBI has also prepared new programs for managing the gold market but now the focus is on the forex market.

Referring to the economic stabilization and executive policies of the central bank and government, the official said: "The monetary policies of the government and the central bank should be able to return stability to the economy and the instability of economic indicators should be resolved."

Also speaking at the conference, Head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) Davoud Manzour mentioned the negative impacts of the free foreign currency market on the country's economy, saying that based on a wrong policy over the last 10 years, the economy has been conditioned to the free foreign currency and dollar market, and the country's economy is affected by this market.

Stating that the most important factor for economic growth is creating economic stability and curbing inflation, Manzour said: "In a joint program between the Central Bank of Iran, the Planning and Budget Organization, and the Ministry of Economy, we announced 19 programs for ensuring economic stability and curbing inflation, based on which the duties of each institution is clear."

Transfer of Dinar Resources of Iran in Iraq Now Possible

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of the Iran-Iraq chamber of commerce says now the condition has been provided for Iran to transfer its dinar resources in Iraq.

Speaking to ILNA, Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi said that during the imposition of sanctions against Iran by the U.S., the U.S. Federal Reserve acted in a way that Iran would be unable to change its Iraqi currency dinar into dollar and this created some problem, adding that but during recent talks between Iraq and the U.S., both sides reached an agreement which lets Iran use some part of its fund in Iraq for importing non-sanctioned goods from any part of the world.

He added that Iraq after getting sanctions waiver from the U.S. Federal Reserve in the first step agreed to pay \$2.7b of its debt to Iran, adding that now it is possible for Iran to transfer its dinar resources in Iraq.

He reiterated that Iraq's debt to Iran in the field of energy is around \$8b, adding that Iraq's debt to Iran is more than this figure and if this amount of forex is given to Iran, it will have positive impact on the forex market and it will meet some part of market demands and in the upcoming months we will see its positive impact in the forex market.



Sanjabi noted that this agreement will let Iran provide its non-sanctioned goods like medicine and machineries through this forex opening. He noted that Iraqi government in cooperation with the U.S. has started controlling dollar distribution and this has led to fluctuation of the forex rate in Iraq but the government with new decisions have tried to bring discipline to its financial system.

He then pointed to the amount of trade between the two countries and said that after the first month of the year that the trade had declined it has bounced back in the second month and bilateral trade will increase.

He noted that of course they expect a decline in trade during the lunar month of Muharram and it has been always the same and he predicts the trade to decline by 10%.

Sanjabi reiterated that considering considerable revenues of Iraq through oil sales, he expects the trade between Iran and Iraq to surge considerably mainly because of the rise in the global prices of the goods.

On Saturday the chairman of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce said the Arab country has released \$2.7 billion worth of Iranian funds.

Yahya Al-e Es'hagh said that neighboring Iraq has released \$2.7 billion worth of Iranian assets left with banks of the country.

Regarding the latest news on the release of a part of Iranian frozen assets in Iraq, the official added that a part of Iran's frozen assets in Iraq has been allocated for the provision of funds needed by Iranian Hajj pilgrims.

Also, another part of the assets has been used to pay for the provision of staples, Al-e Es'hagh added.

National Simorgh On Thetran Shoulder

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - Maskan Tehran Investment Company (Thetran) shone in the national conference on national selection project and ranked first in quality of implementing the project.

According to Managing Director of the public relations of the public relations of Maskan Tehran Investment Company Mr. Shoeibi, the company achieved success during the fifth conference on project of national selection which is the biggest conference on strategies of developing services, productions, and exports of the top Iranian companies. Thetran after the evaluation conducted by the organizers of the event was ranked first for quality of implementation and unique building in the industry and mass construction field and received the award, he said.

Maskan Tehran Investment Company as one of the biggest subsidiary companies of Maskan Investment Group has started its activities since 1990 in Tehran, Karaj and Qazvin and it is trying to use innovation in construction and using skillful and expert human capital in the field of mass construction to create a competitive market for building good and high quality houses in the domestic market, Shoeibi noted.

Shoeibi reiterated that the group was one of the bodies in charge of organizing this event which is aimed at supporting the greatness of Iran's industry and economy in the form of the biggest conference on the strategies of developing services, productions and exports.

The achievement of Thetran shows that the group is on right track in the industry and organizations have realized the good performance and quality of the group.

Simorgh means phoenix in Persian given to the award.

Iran Eyes \$15b in Trade With Turkey by 2025

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A senior official in Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) says trade with Turkey will easily reach \$15 billion in the calendar year 1404 (early March 2025 to late March 2026).

Addressing an Iran-Turkey Business Forum, Head of Trade Promotion Organization's West Asia Farzad Piltan said, "We have set a target for at least \$15 billion in trade with Turkey until 1404 which can be met through cooperation with the private sector."

Piltan said U.S. sanctions on Iran have hampered the trade of certain items on a list of nearly 500 goods and products that can enjoy lower tariffs under a preferential trade agreement (PTA) between Iran and Turkey.

"Some of these commodities are subject to the sanctions and we have to carry out more negotiations for the PTA agreement to become more effective," said the official in a forum in Tehran that was focused on trade between Iran and Turkey.

Piltan said Iran and Turkey have also a great potential to increase the amount of international transit of cargo that passes through their territories.

Annual trade between Iran and Turkey reached a total of \$13.558 billion in the calendar year to late March 2023, according to figures released in April by the Iranian customs authority (IRICA).

Turkey was the third largest customer of Iranian non-oil exports over the year to late March with some \$7.459 billion worth of purchases, an increase of 23% compared with the year before, IRICA figures showed.

He also said that Iranian companies are ready to reconstruct cities in Turkey destroyed by recent devastating quakes which claimed the lives of many people in this country.

Piltan said that bolstering amicable ties with the neighboring and regional countries is the main approach of the Iranian administration.

Accordingly, senior Iranian officials have placed special emphasis on developing trade-economic cooperation with neighboring Turkey, he added.

The two countries have high potentials to promote bilateral ties in trade and

economic fields, he said, adding, "Given that Turkey has a similar culture, economy and history with Iran, these potentials can be used optimally for the development of trade and economic relations."

Meanwhile Head of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce Mehrdad Saadat proposed that Iran's trade with Turkey should be handed to the private sector, saying: "The government cannot be a good businessman. But the real private sector has already come to work and can operate with the support of the government."

Pointing out that Iran was not able to realize its potential of \$15 billion dollar exchanges from Turkey's 500-billion-dollar trade volume last year, he continued: "Although our exports to Turkey are growing, they are not satisfactory."

He noted that the government must trust the private sector in order to realize the trade potential with Turkey.

"Over 85 percent of Turkey's economy is in the hands of the private sector and they are more inclined to interact with the private sector of Iran," the official said.

He emphasized that the preferential trade between Iran and Turkey should be operational as soon as possible and the meeting of the two countries' joint economic committee should be held after a long break.

Meanwhile addressing the event, Commercial Counselor of the Turkish Embassy in Tehran Bulent Orhan said that neighborhood of Turkey with Europe is the advantage of Turkey, and blamed the cumbersome regulations which increase the cost of trade and called for accelerating business with using modern technology and avoiding traditional actions. He also called for transparency in trade, reiterating that the more colorful role of chambers of commerce, the more transparency will be in the trade.



Oil Minister Accompanies President On Latin America Tour

TEHRAN - Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji has accompanied President Ebrahim Raisi on his tour of the Islamic Republic's Latin American allies with the aim of expanding energy ties with the mentioned countries, Shana reported.

Along with a delegation of energy officials, Owji left Tehran for the Venezuelan capital Caracas on Monday.

During the visit to Venezuela, the oil minister will meet and hold talks with Venezuelan political and economic officials to explore ways of developing new fields of cooperation.

As reported, the development of Venezuela's oil and gas fields, improvement and modernization of the country's refineries and utilization of refinery capacities, training of manpower in oil, gas, and petrochemical industries, providing technical engineering services and technology transfer and development of export markets for crude oil and gas condensates and petroleum products are going to be the focus of negotiations.

Scottish Ex-leader Sturgeon Arrested in Finance Probe



LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon was arrested as part of an investigation into financial irregularities, according to police.

Her detention marks the third arrest in the probe, which has sent shockwaves through Scotland's political system, long dominated by the Scottish National Party (SNP).

"A 52-year-old woman has today... been arrested as a suspect in connection with the ongoing investigation into the funding and finances of the Scottish National Party," Police Scotland said in a statement.

A spokesperson for Sturgeon said the former SNP leader voluntarily attended an interview with police.

Ukraine Reports Village Retaken, First Gain of Offensive



KYIV (Dispatches) - Kyiv announced that Ukrainian forces have retaken a village in the war-torn country's southeast, the first reported gain of the offensive.

After months of building expectations, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Saturday that a counteroffensive against Russian forces was underway but refused to provide any details.

Ukraine's ground forces said in a statement on Sunday that soldiers of the 68th separate ranger brigade had "liberated the settlement of Blagodatne" in the eastern region of Donetsk.

The ground forces released a video showing soldiers hoisting a Ukrainian flag over a destroyed building.

Another military spokesman, Valeriy Shershen, said in televised remarks that the retaken village was located on the border of the eastern region of Donetsk and the southern region of Zaporizhzhia where Moscow has reported heavy Ukrainian assaults over the past week.

He said Ukraine's forces captured several Russian and pro-Russian troops.

Big Ukrainian military successes in the Zaporizhzhia region could potentially enable its forces to break through the land bridge that connects Russia with the Crimean peninsula it annexed from Ukraine. This would be a major reversal for Moscow.

Ukraine has largely been silent on the offensive, but Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday said Kyiv's fightback had already begun but was already failing.

Washington-based think tank the Institute for the Study of War said Saturday that Kyiv's forces conducted counteroffensive operations in at least four front-line areas.

Kyiv reported the first gain of the long-awaited offensive as thirty five people, including seven children, were still missing in southern Ukraine following a devastating flood prosecutors called the "worst environmental catastrophe since Chernobyl."

The Russian-controlled Kakhovka dam along the front line in the Kherson region was destroyed on Tuesday, forcing thousands to flee and sparking fears of humanitarian as well as environmental disasters.

Ukraine accuses Russia of blowing up the dam on the Dnipro River, while Moscow says Kyiv fired upon the structure.

Ukrainian Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said that 77 towns and villages had been flooded in the southern regions of Kherson and Mykolaiv.

Klymenko said that in the Kherson region 35 people were missing, including seven children.

As a result of the flood, five people died in the region of Kherson and one person was dead in the region of Mykolaiv, he said.

A total of 3,700 people have been evacuated from their homes in the two regions, the minister added.

In the city of Kherson, the largest population centre near the dam, the water began to subside and locals began to return to their homes to assess the damage, an AFP correspondent at the scene said.

Ukrainian rescuers in orange boats continued their efforts to evacuate people from the city's most affected areas and nearby islands.

An employee at Kherson's meteorological agency, Lora Musiyani, said the level of water dropped by 1.7 meters (5.5 feet) from the peak measurements recorded this week.

Oleksiy Gesin visited his grocery store in central Kherson for the first time in six days. Armed with a shovel and wearing rubber boots and a jacket, he cleared up debris in pouring rain. He said he sustained "significant" losses.

Winds and Heavy Rains Kill At Least 27 in Pakistan



PESHAWAR (Dispatches) - Heavy rains followed by strong winds killed at least 27 people, including eight children, in northwest Pakistan, officials said.

The storms hit four districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province late Saturday, with five siblings aged between two and 11 among the dead.

"At least 12 people were buried alive after the roofs and walls of their houses collapsed," Taimur Ali Khan, a spokesman for the provincial disaster management authority, told AFP.

More than 140 people were injured and more than 200 livestock died, he said.

Taiwan Sends Fighter Jets After Chinese Warplanes Crossing Strait's Median Line

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan's air force scrambled into action after spotting 10 Chinese warplanes crossing the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait, as the island's defence ministry said four Chinese warships also carried out combat patrols.

This is the second time in less than a week that Taiwan has reported renewed Chinese military activity, after 37 Chinese military aircraft on Thursday flew into the island's air defence zone, some of which then flew into the western Pacific.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, has over the past three years regularly flown its air force into the skies near the island, though not into Taiwan's territorial air space.

In a short statement, Taiwan's defence ministry said that as of 2 p.m. (0600 GMT) on Sunday it had detected 24 Chinese air force planes, including J-10, J-11, J-16 and Su-30 fighters, as well as H-6 bombers.

It did not specify where the aircraft flew but said 10 had crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, which separates the two sides and had previously served as an unofficial barrier. China says it does not recognise that and has been routinely crossing it since last year.

Four Chinese naval ships were also engaged in "joint combat readiness patrols", the ministry added, without giving details.

Taiwan sent up its own fighters and deployed ships and land-based missile systems to keep watch, it said, using typical wording for how it responds to such Chinese activities.

China's defence ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. It has not commented on Thursday's flights.

China has previously said such missions are to protect the country's sovereignty and aimed at "collusion" between Taiwan and the United States, the island's most important international backer and arms seller.

In April, China held war games around Taiwan following a trip to the United States by Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.

Taiwan's government rejects China's sovereignty claims and says only the island's people can decide their future.

China has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan, which is gearing up for presidential and parliamentary elections in January, under its control.

Honduras Opens Embassy in China

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Honduras opened an embassy in Beijing on Sunday, Chinese state media reported, months after the Central American nation broke off relations with Taiwan to establish diplomatic ties with China.

China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang and his Honduran counterpart Enrique Reina took part in the inauguration of the embassy on Sunday morning, China's official CCTV said. The report said Honduras still needed to determine the embassy's permanent location and would increase its number of staff.

Qin pledged that China would establish a new model with Honduras of "friendly cooperation" between countries with different sizes and systems, according to a statement from China's Foreign Ministry.

The symbol of the two sides' strengthening diplomatic ties came during Honduran President Xiomara Castro's six-day visit to China.

Honduras established formal relations with China in March, becoming the latest in a string of countries to break diplomatic ties with Taiwan. China sees self-governed Taiwan as a breakaway province, to be retaken by force if necessary, and prohibits its own diplomatic partners from having formal ties with Taipei.

The island also faces increasing military threats from Beijing. Its defense ministry on Sunday reported that 10 Chinese warplanes crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial boundary once tacitly accepted by both sides. In response, Taiwan deployed aircraft, naval vessels, and land-based missile systems.

Castro arrived in Shanghai on Friday on her first visit since the establishment of relations. During her stay in Shanghai, she visited the headquarters of the New Development Bank, a bank established by the BRICS nations, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Honduras requested admission to the bank, Castro's office tweeted Saturday.

The president also visited a research center for technology giant Huawei before arriving in Beijing on Saturday night, China's official Global Times newspaper reported.

Fighting Rages in Khartoum After 24-Hour Truce Expires

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Heavy clashes and artillery fire erupted across Sudan's capital Khartoum on Sunday and residents reported air strikes soon after the end of a 24-hour ceasefire that had brought a brief lull to eight weeks of fighting between rival military factions.

Witnesses said the fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) was some of the heaviest for weeks, and included ground battles in the densely populated neighbourhood of Haj Youssef in Bahri, one of three adjoining cities, along with Khartoum and Omdurman, that make up the capital around the confluence of the River Nile.

Just after the ceasefire expired at 6 a.m. (0400 GMT) witnesses said clashes and artillery fire resumed in the north of Omdurman. They also reported clashes in southern and central Khartoum, and in Shambat along the Nile in Bahri up to the strategic Halfiya bridge, which crosses to Omdurman.

"The truce made us relax a bit, but the war and fear are returning today," said Musab Saleh, a 38-year-old resident of southern Khartoum.

War between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke out on April 15 over tensions linked to an internationally backed plan for a transition towards civilian rule.

The conflict has displaced more than 1.9 million people, triggering a major humanitarian crisis that threatens to spill across a volatile region.

Fighting has been concentrated in the capital, much of which has become a war zone plagued by looting and clashes. But unrest has also flared elsewhere including the western region of Darfur, already suffering from a conflict that peaked in the early 2000s.

Residents and activists have reported a further deterioration in recent days in El Geneina, near the border with Chad, and new waves of attacks by Arab nomadic tribes with ties to the RSF.

Among those killed were a number of human rights activists, lawyers and doctors, according to the Darfur Bar Association, which monitors the conflict in the region.

The city has been largely cut off from telephone networks for several weeks.

Another affected city is El Obeid, capital of North Kordofan State southwest of Khartoum and on a major route to Darfur. Residents say it is effectively under a state of siege due to the conflict, with supplies of food and medicine cut off.

The wider Kordofan region is an important agricultural area and source of livestock, oilseeds and gum arabic.



Taliban Slams UN Report Calling Afghan Gov't Exclusionary



KABUL (Dispatches) - The Taliban has condemned as "baseless and biased" a United Nations Security Council report that called the Afghan administration "highly exclusionary" and "repressive".

The report, released earlier in June by the UNSC's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, said the Taliban governance structures remain "highly exclusionary, Pashtun-centred and repressive" towards all forms of opposition.

It also said Kandahar's return as the seat of power - like it was during the Taliban's rule of Afghanistan in the 1990s - circumvents senior Taliban ministers in Kabul, the centre of the current government, because of the way decisions are made.

The report also said the group was battling internal conflict over key policies, the centralisation of power and the control of financial and natural resources in Afghanistan.

Ongoing power struggles are further destabilising the situation, to the point where an outbreak of armed conflict between rival factions is a manifest risk, the report added.

In recent months at least two spokespersons based in Kabul were asked to shift to the southern city of Kandahar, raising speculations about the shift of power from the capital to the southern city of Kandahar, where the supreme leader Haibatullah Akhundzada is based.

In April, Taliban's main spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid was asked to work from both places while Innamullah Samangani, another deputy spokesman of the interim government, was transferred to Kandahar. Taliban's information ministry did not give any reasons for the transfer.

Mujahid rejected the report's "accusations" of strife, saying they were baseless and demonstrated "obvious hostility" to Afghans.

Rumors of disagreement between the group's leaders are a continuation of the propaganda of the past 20 years, he said, referring to the 20 years of US war and occupation.

"The publication of such biased and baseless reports by the Security Council does not help Afghanistan and international peace and security, rather, it increases worry among the people [Afghans]."

Poor Heart Health Linked To 17-Fold Risk of Musculoskeletal Disorders

LONDON (Dispatches) - Researchers investigated the link between cardiovascular risk and the development of musculoskeletal conditions.

They found that those with higher cardiovascular risk are 17 times more likely to develop four or more musculoskeletal conditions, such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tennis elbow, than those with low risk.

They noted that further research is needed to confirm their findings.

Musculoskeletal conditions are characterized by muscle, bone, joint, and connective tissue impairment that affects movement. Around 1.71 billion people have musculoskeletal conditions globally.

Studies also show that conditions including diabetes, obesity, and metabolic syndrome increase the risk of developing musculoskeletal conditions. Research has also shown that cardiovascular disease risk is linked to the development of musculoskeletal conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS)—when a major nerve in the hand is squeezed or compressed as it travels to the wrist.

Understanding more about the risk factors underlying musculoskeletal conditions could aid the development of treatment and prevention strategies.

Recently, researchers analyzed epidemiological data to identify a link between cardiovascular disease risk and the development of four common musculoskeletal conditions.

They found that cardiovascular factors are strongly linked to the development of common musculoskeletal disorders.

Medical News Today spoke with Dr. Sameer Chaudhari, a cardiologist with Novant Health Heart & Vascular Institute in Monroe, North Carolina, who was not involved in the study.

“Cardiovascular health generally is indicative of overall health as it does correlate inflammation, physical activity, stress and other diseases. They can contribute or accelerate the development of each other,” he said.

The study was published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

For the study, the researchers analyzed healthcare data from 1,224 workers in fields including manufacturing, healthcare, office jobs, and food processing. Participants were 42 years old on average, and 66% were female.

Data included physical examinations, structured interviews, anthropometric measurements, and nerve conduction studies that assessed for four common musculoskeletal conditions:

Other data included individualized measurements of job-related physical factors and questionnaires assessing demographic variables such as medical conditions, hobbies, and exercise habits.

The researchers also assessed participants’ cardiovascular risk from variables including:

Age, tobacco use, diabetes, treated and untreated hypertension.

Cardiovascular risk scores did not include cholesterol or BMI.

Participants were followed for the development of musculoskeletal symptoms on a monthly basis for nine years.

Ultimately, the researchers found that participants at a 15% higher than average risk of cardiovascular disease were four times more likely to develop one or musculoskeletal disorder than those with lower risk.

The same participants were also 17 times more likely to develop four or more musculoskeletal disorders than those with lower risk.

MNT asked Dr. Chaudhari why increased cardiovascular risk may increase the risk of musculoskeletal disorders. He said:



Scientists Document How Space Travel Messes With the Human Brain

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Space can be an unfriendly place for the human body, with microgravity conditions and other factors tampering with our physiology, from head to toe - head, of course, being a primary concern.

A new NASA-funded study provides a deeper understanding of the issue. Researchers said on Thursday that astronauts who traveled on the International Space Station (ISS) or NASA space shuttles on missions lasting at least six months experienced significant expansion of the cerebral ventricles - spaces in the middle of the brain containing cerebrospinal fluid.

This colorless and watery fluid flows in and around the brain and spinal cord. It cushions the brain to help protect against sudden impact and removes waste products.

Based on brain scans of 30 astronauts, the researchers found that it took three years for the ventricles to fully recover after such journeys, suggesting that an interval of at least that duration would be advisable between longer space missions.

“If the ventricles don’t have sufficient time to recover between back-to-back missions, this may impact the brain’s ability to cope with fluid shifts in microgravity. For example, if the ventricles are already enlarged from a previous mission, they may be less compliant and/or have less space to expand and accommodate fluid shifts during the next mission,” said University of Florida neuroscientist Heather McGregor, lead author of the study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

Age-related ventricular enlargement - caused not by microgravity but by brain atrophy - can be associated with cognitive decline.

“The impact of ventricular expansion in space travelers is not currently known. More long-term health follow-up is needed. This ventricular expansion likely compresses the surrounding brain tissue,” University of Florida applied physiology and kinesiology professor and study senior author Rachael Seidler said.

The absence of Earth’s gravity modifies the brain.

“This seems to be a mechanical effect,” Seidler said. “On Earth, our vascular systems have valves that prevent all of our fluids from pooling at our feet due to gravity. In microgravity, the opposite occurs - fluids shift toward the head. This headward fluid shift likely results in ventricular expansion, and the brain sits higher within the skull.”

The study involved 23 male and seven female astronauts - average age around 47 - from the U.S., Canadian and European space agencies. Eight traveled on space shuttle missions of about two weeks. Eighteen were on ISS missions of about six months and four on ISS missions of about a year.

Little to no ventricular volume change occurred in astronauts after short missions. Enlargement occurred in astronauts after missions of six months or longer, though there was no difference in those who flew for six months compared to those who did so for a year.

“This suggests that the majority of ventricle enlargement happens during the first six months in space, then begins to taper off around the one-year mark,” McGregor said.

The fact that enlargement did not worsen after six months could be good news for future Mars missions on which astronauts may spend two years in microgravity during the journey.

“This preliminary finding is promising for astronaut brain health during long-duration missions, but it’s still important that we examine MRI data from a larger group of astronauts and following even longer missions,” McGregor said.



Long Space Flights Could Have Greater Effects on Astronauts' Brains

LONDON (Dispatches) - Astronauts spending six months or longer in space should stretch their time between trips to three years, warns new research on the impact of space travel on the brain.

To study this, researchers examined the brain scans of 30 astronauts, looking at scans that depicted their brains both before and after their missions.

The research team included missions that were two weeks long, six months long and a full year. Eight of the astronauts were on the shortest missions, four on the longest and the remaining 18 were gone for six months.

“We found that the more time people spent in space, the larger their ventricles became,” said study author Rachael Seidler, a professor of applied physiology and kinesiology at the University of Florida (UF). “Many astronauts travel to space more than one time, and our study shows it takes about three years between flights for the ventricles to fully recover.”

The ventricles are cavities in the brain filled with cerebrospinal fluid. This offers protection, nourishment and waste removal for the brain.

While fluids typically are distributed throughout the body, without gravity that fluid shifts upward. This pushes the brain



higher within the skull and causes the ventricles to expand, the researchers explained.

This ventricular expansion is the most enduring change seen in the brain resulting from spaceflight, said Seidler, who is also a

member of the Norman Fixel Institute for Neurological Diseases at UF Health.

“We don’t yet know for sure what the long-term consequence of this is on the health and behavioral health of space travelers, so allowing the brain time to recover seems like a good idea,” she said in a university news release.

“The biggest jump comes when you go from two weeks to six months in space,” Seidler added. “There is no measurable change in the ventricles’ volume after only two weeks.”

The researchers said it’s positive that shorter space trips appear to change the brain little, given the interest in space tourism.

It’s also good to know that it appears ventricular expansion levels off after six months, Seidler noted.

“We were happy to see that the changes don’t increase exponentially, considering we will eventually have people in space for longer periods,” she said.

This study could impact future decision-making regarding crew travel and mission planning, Seidler suggested.

The research was funded by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The findings were published online Thursday in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

Staying Socially Active May Help Seniors Maintain Optimal Health

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The benefits of friendships and activity aren’t just for the young.

Staying socially active can also help older adults age their best, according to new research that pinpoints volunteering and recreational activities as important for seniors.

“Although the study’s observational nature prohibits the determination of causality, it makes intuitive sense that social activity is associated with successful aging,” said study co-author Mabel Ho, a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto’s Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and the Institute of Life Course and Aging.

“Being socially active is important no matter how old we are. Feeling connected and engaged can boost our mood, reduce our sense of loneliness and isolation, and improve our mental health and overall health,” Ho added in a university news release.

To study this, the researchers analyzed data from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging of more than 7,000 Canadians aged 60 and older, following them for three years. The investigators only included those in excellent health at baseline, which was about 45% of the respondents.

The findings showed that those who participated in volunteer work and recreational activities were more likely to maintain excellent health. They also were less likely to develop physical, cognitive (“thinking”), mental or emotional problems.

Successful aging was freedom from any serious physical, cognitive, mental or emotional conditions that prevent daily activities. It also meant having high levels of self-reported happiness, and good physical and mental health.

The researchers took a broader view of successful aging than some studies have. Respondents could still be considered to be aging successfully if they had a chronic illness, as long as they were free from disabling chronic pain and could engage in everyday activities. The definition also included subjective

perception from the participants. Subjective perception means that it is based on personal opinions and feelings rather than on facts.

The study found that 72% of respondents who participated in volunteer or recreational activities at the start of the study were still aging successfully three years later. That compared with just two-thirds of those not participating in these activities.

The researchers then considered a wide range of sociodemographic characteristics, finding that respondents who participated in recreational activities and volunteer or charity work were 15% and 17% more likely to maintain excellent health by the end of the study.

Doctors can “prescribe” social activities for their patients to encourage them to engage in these activities, the authors suggested. The study was published online recently in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

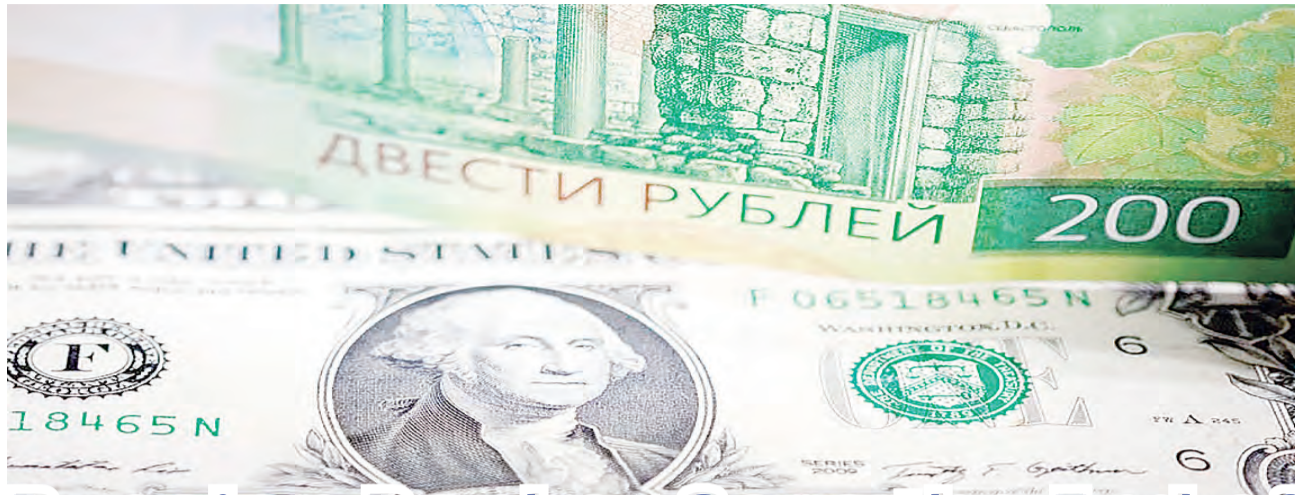


France Plans to Close Tax Loophole

PARIS (Dispatches) - France's finance ministry is working on plans to close a tax loophole benefiting short-term furnished rentals such as Airbnb, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said.

Many big French cities are facing housing shortages and renting flats to tourists on platforms such as Airbnb is often blamed for reducing the supply of housing.

A trio of cross-party lawmakers last month called for rules regulating such rentals to be tightened and for an end to the more favourable tax treatment such rentals receive vis a vis normal long-term rentals. "I have a hard time understanding the very favourable tax treatment for Airbnb. We are going to reform the tax rules and I will make proposals," Le Maire said on BFM TV.



Russian Banker Says the End of U.S. Dollar Dominance Is Nigh

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The end of the dominance of the U.S. dollar is nigh as the Chinese yuan rises and the rest of the world sees the peril of the West's failed attempt to bring Russia to its knees over Ukraine, one of Moscow's most powerful bankers told Reuters.

Andrei Kostin, the CEO of state-controlled VTB, Russia's second largest bank, said the crisis was ushering in sweeping changes to the world economy, undermining globalization just as China was taking on the mantle of a top global economic power.

Asked if he thought the world was in a new Cold War, Kostin said that it was now a "hot war" that was more dangerous than the Cold War.

The United States and the European Union, he said, would lose from moves to freeze hundreds of billions of dollars of Russian sovereign assets as many countries were moving to settling payments outside the U.S. currency and the euro while China was moving towards a removal of currency restrictions.

"The long historical era of the dominance of the American dollar is coming to an end," Kostin, 66, told Reuters on the 59th floor of the gleaming VTB (VTBR.MM) skyscraper overlooking southern Moscow. "I think that the time has come when China will gradually remove currency restrictions."

"China understands that they will not become world economic power Number 1 if they keep their yuan as a non-convertible currency," Kostin said, adding that it was dangerous for China to keep reserves invested in U.S. sovereign bonds.

The U.S. dollar has been dominant since the early 20th Century when it overtook the pound sterling as the global reserve currency, though JPMorgan said this month that signs of de-dollarisation are unfolding in the global economy.

China's spectacular economic rise over the past 40 years, the fallout from the war in Ukraine and wrangling over the U.S. debt ceiling have put the dollar's status under fresh scrutiny.

VTB, Kostin said, was discussing using yuan in settlements with third countries.

A former diplomat who served in Australia and Britain and went into banking just after the Soviet Union collapsed, Kostin is one of Moscow's most powerful and experienced bankers, having served previously as head of Vneshekbank, known now as VEB.

After President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February last year, the West unfurled what it said were the toughest sanctions ever imposed in an attempt to weaken the Russian economy and punish Putin for the war.

Kostin was sanctioned by the United States in 2018 over what it called Russia's malign activity around the world. After the war, he was sanctioned by the EU and by Britain which called him "a close associate of Putin".

He said the sanctions were unfair and a political decision that would "backfire" on the West, quipping that he had read interesting articles about the laundering of drug money through major Western banks. "We have already entered into a hot war," Kostin said of the crisis with Ukraine. "It is not cold when there are so many Western weapons and a lot of Western services and military advisers involved. The situation is worse than in the Cold War, it is very difficult and alarming."

Mexican and Russian Oil Shipments Ease Cuban Fuel Crisis

HOUSTON (Dispatches) - With oil tankers docking from Mexico and Russia in recent days, Cuba could see its severe fuel shortage ease for the near future.

Since the end of March, endless lines of cars queuing for gasoline have been a common sight on the Communist Party-ruled island, and service stations have created WhatsApp groups to organize customers.

Cuba, under US embargo, is going through its worst economic crisis in three decades. It only produces a third of the fuel it needs each day, while residents navigate blackouts and food shortages.

According to shipping tracker Vessel Finder, Mexican tanker Bicentenario, with an estimated cargo of 265,000 barrels of oil, arrived at the port of Havana on Tuesday. The ship was anchored at the Nico Lopez refinery in the capital, AFP confirmed.

At the end of May, Cameroonian-flagged supertanker Limo, en route from Russia, arrived at the port of Matanzas with some 800,000 barrels.

Vicente de la O Levy, minister of energy and mines, had in recent weeks declared "there will be a recovery" from fuel shortages, "and a decrease in uncomfortable queues."

With a processing capacity of 22,000 barrels per day at the Havana refinery, the capital could be supplied for up to three weeks, said Jorge Pinon, director of the Latin America and Caribbean Energy and Environmental Program at the University of Texas.

Tuesday's arrival of the Bicentenario is the third such shipment this year, said Pinon. State-owned Petroleos Mexicanos did not respond to a request for comment.

Mexico, led by leftist President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, is pursuing a policy of both pushing for an end to US sanctions on Cuba while also maintaining a dialogue with Washington and cordial hemispheric relations, said Arturo Lopez-Levy, a visiting professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid.

Relations between Moscow and Havana, meanwhile, have intensified in recent months, with an uptick in bilateral projects and visits between senior officials.

But it can be difficult for Cuba to pay for the oil. Sometimes, countries ship the oil on credit, or in exchange for Cuban doctors coming to work in the country shipping the oil.

"Cuba does not have money and I doubt that it will pay for that oil," said Pinon. "I assume that Mexico, instead of paying in cash for the shipment of Cuban doctors, is doing it with oil, as Venezuela does."



BOJ Set to Keep Ultra-Low Rates, May Signal Inflation Overshoot

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The Bank of Japan (BOJ) is expected to maintain ultra-loose monetary policy this week and its forecast for a moderate economic recovery, as robust corporate and household spending cushion the blow from slowing overseas demand, sources said.

The central bank also may signal that inflation is overshooting its forecasts, which would heighten the chance of an upgrade in its price projections at a quarterly review of its estimates due in July, they said.

But any upgrade in its inflation view is unlikely to automatically trigger an interest rate hike, as BOJ Governor Kazuo Ueda has stressed the need to maintain ultra-loose policy until durable wage growth accompanies the price rises.

Ueda told parliament on Friday that corporate price-setting behaviour was showing changes that could work to push up inflation more than expected.

"Consumption appears to be holding up and underpinning the economy," said one source familiar with the BOJ's thinking.

"But the BOJ must support the economy to ensure recent positive signs are sustained, and help Japan sustainably achieve 2% inflation," the source said, a view echoed by two more sources.

At a two-day policy meeting ending on June 16, the BOJ is likely to maintain its -0.1% short-term interest rate target and a 0% cap on the 10-year bond yield set under its yield curve control (YCC) policy, the sources said.

Reflecting soft U.S. and Chinese demand, the BOJ may offer a slightly bleaker view on exports and output than at the previous meeting in April, the sources said. In April, it said exports and output were moving sideways.



But the BOJ will stick to its view the world's third largest economy is headed for a moderate recovery as a post-pandemic pickup in consumption offsets soft exports, they said.

While the BOJ will not produce fresh inflation forecasts next week, it may signal that inflation is overshooting initial projections - possibly at Ueda's post-meeting briefing, the sources said.

Japan's economy expanded a stronger-than-expected 2.7% in the first quarter on robust capital expenditure and solid domestic demand.

Core consumer inflation hit 3.4% in April as companies continued to hike prices, casting doubt on the BOJ's view that inflation will slowly move back below 2% toward the latter half of the current fiscal year ending in March 2024.

Russian Central Bank Flags Rising Inflation Risks in Rate Hold



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's central bank held its key interest rate at 7.5% as expected on Friday, but issued a more hawkish signal in warning of growing inflation pressure and promising to keep rate hikes on the table at upcoming meetings.

Annual inflation, which spiked to over 20-year highs in 2022, has slowed to below the bank's 4% target in recent months as last year's base effect took hold. But it is expected to pick up, with consumer prices rising 0.21% in the week to June 5.

Friday's decision to hold the rate at current levels was in line with a Reuters poll and analysts had said that Wednesday's inflation data could lead the bank to issue a tighter signal.

The Bank of Russia forecasts year-end inflation at 4.5-6.5% in 2023, returning to the 4% target in 2024.

"Given gradually rising inflationary pressures, the Bank of Russia holds open the prospect of increasing the key rate at its next meetings to stabilise inflation close to 4% in 2024 and further on," the central bank said in a statement.

In a series of rate cuts last year, the bank gradually reversed an emergency hike that took the rate to 20% in late February 2022. That jump followed Russia's launch of what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine, and the imposition of wide-ranging Western sanctions in response.

The central bank has now held rates steady at 7.5% for six meetings in a row since the last cut in September.

The bank has maintained a hawkish stance this year, unable to find room to ease monetary policy. On Friday it said the overall balance of inflation risks has "tilted even more to the upside".

"Accelerating fiscal spending, deteriorating terms of foreign trade and the situation in the labour market remain pro-inflationary risk drivers," the bank said.

Pakistan Lays Out Budget But May Not Satisfy IMF

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan's government will target a budget deficit of 6.54 percent of economic output in the fiscal year starting on July 1, the finance minister said on Friday, slightly below the current year's revised estimate of 7 percent.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar announced the target during his budget speech to the national legislature.

The deficit target for the fiscal year ending this month had been revised higher, from a previous projection of 4.9 percent. The budget needs to satisfy the IMF to secure the release of stuck bailout money for the crisis-struck country, which is due to hold a general election by November.

The government had prepared "a responsible budget, not an election budget", Dar said.

The total spending target would be 14.46 trillion rupees (\$50.45bn), Dar said, with 1.8 trillion rupees (\$6.2bn) going to defence. It would target debt servicing of 7.3 trillion rupees (\$25.4bn).

Dar reiterated that the government hoped to get an agreement with the IMF soon, echoing comments made earlier in the day by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as he addressed his cabinet.

Sharif's government is hoping to persuade the IMF to unlock at least some of the \$2.5bn left in a \$6.5bn programme that Pakistan entered in 2019 and which expires at the end of this month.

Some analysts said the budget was unlikely to impress the IMF.

"It is a plain vanilla budget with no path to structural reforms," said Shahbaz Ashraf, chief investment officer at Karachi-based investment firm FRIM Ventures. On Thursday, the IMF said it has been discussing the budget with Pakistan with a focus on balancing debt sustainability while creating space to increase social spending.

Mustafa Pasha, chief investment officer at Lakson Investments, said the IMF would likely ask for more measures around revenue collection.

"The budget is unlikely to improve chances of a staff-level agreement [with the IMF] in June," he said.

The budget would target total tax revenue of 9.2 trillion rupees (\$32bn), said Dar, who added there would be no new tax on the industrial sector.

Sri Lanka Lifts Import Limits on 286 Items as Crisis Eases

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka lifted import restrictions on 286 items, the Finance Ministry said, a fresh sign the South Asian nation is starting to emerge from its worst economic crisis in decades.

The island off India's southern coast plunged into crisis last year as its foreign exchange reserves ran out. The government limited imports on more than 3,200 items, including seafood, electronics, and even musical instruments.

Its fortunes have improved over the past nine months as Sri Lanka secured a \$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), moderated its onerous inflation and embarked on rebuilding its foreign exchange reserves.

Sri Lanka's reserves grew 26% to a 17-month high of \$3.5 billion in May, helped by stronger remittances and tourism earnings. The currency has risen about 24% this year, central bank data showed.

"With the economy stabilising, import restrictions on 286 items have been lifted from Friday midnight," the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

Restrictions on 928 items will continue, including vehicle imports, which were banned in March 2020, the statement said.

A wide range of items from railway carriages to radio broadcasting receivers are included in the latest list released from restrictions.

Sri Lanka will also slash prices of 60 essential drugs by 16% from this week.

Despite the easing of the crisis, the country still needs to complete debt talks with creditors by September, in time for its first IMF program review, and implement key economic reforms to put its recovery on a sustainable path.

The IMF expects Sri Lanka's economy to shrink about 3% this year after a 7.8% contraction last year, but the government forecasts a return to growth next year.

Iran Ranked World's 2nd Largest Sponge Iron Producer in 2022

TEHRAN (MNA) - The World Steel Association (WSA), in its latest annual report, has ranked Iran second among the world's top sponge iron-producing countries in 2022, IRNA reported.

Based on the WSA data, the Islamic Republic managed to produce 32.9 million tons of sponge iron in 2022 to stand at second place after India with 42.3 million tons of production.

According to WSA, Iran also kept its place as the world's 10th largest steel producer last year, with 30.6 million tons of crude steel output.

Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) was also reported to be the world's 20th largest company based on the WSA ranking.



UK Politics Reels From Ex-PM Johnson's Shock Exit

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's departure from parliament over COVID lockdown-breaking parties has sparked fevered speculation about his and the current government's future.

Johnson announced that he was quitting as a member of parliament on Friday, claiming he had been forced out in a stitch-up by his political opponents.

The 58-year-old populist politician has been under investigation by a cross-party committee about whether he deliberately lied to parliament over parties when he was in office.

In evidence earlier this year, he insisted he had not.

But as the committee prepares to make public its findings, he said they had contacted him "making it clear... they are determined to use the proceedings against me to drive me out of parliament".

The privileges committee, which has a majority of MPs from his own Conservative Party, has powers to impose sanctions for misleading parliament, including suspension.

Ordinarily, suspension of more than 10 working days leads to a by-election in the politician's constituency.

By quitting, Johnson avoids the consequences of a humiliating fight to remain an MP in his Uxbridge and South Ruislip seat in northwest London where he holds a slim majority of just over 7,000.

He denounced the committee, chaired by veteran opposition Labour MP Harriet Harman, as a "kangaroo court".

"It is very sad to be leaving parliament - at least for now - but above all I am bewildered and appalled that I can be forced out, anti-democratically... with such egregious bias," he said.

He claimed the committee's report, which has not been published, was "riddled with inaccuracies and reeks of prejudice", adding he had "no formal ability to challenge anything they say".

Their "purpose from the beginning has been to find me guilty, regardless of the facts", he said.

Responding to the resignation, the privileges committee said Johnson "impugned the integrity of the House by his statement".

Al Jazeera's Rory Challands, reporting from Westminster, said Johnson, with his move, threw a grenade right into the heart of Rishi Sunak's government, "sending shards of political shrapnel in all directions".

"Speculation at the moment is about how much damage this is going to do to the Conservative Party," he said.

"The government of [Prime Minister] Rishi Sunak is staying at the moment very quiet about it. No official statement or any ministers going on the record."

Former British Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak leaves his home in London, Britain 24 October 2022. Sunak looks set to succeed outgoing Liz Truss as Britain's prime minister after former premier Boris Johnson pulled out of the race for the Conservative Party leadership. Penny Mordaunt is Sunak's only challenger but trails way behind him in the MP vote. EPA-EFE/ANDY RAIN

Johnson loyalist Nadine Dorries also quit as an MP, meaning current Prime Minister Sunak, whom Johnson partly blames for his downfall, faces two by-elections as his party languishes in the polls.

Johnson's ability to generate strong feelings of admiration or hate was reflected in the reactions to his shock announcement.

Labour's Deputy Leader Angela Rayner said the public - battling a cost-of-living crisis - had had enough of the "never-ending Tory soap opera" while her opposite



number with the smaller Liberal Democrats, Daisy Cooper, said it was "good riddance".

Patrick Diamond, a former policy adviser to the Labour Party, said that Johnson's statement indicated that he may be laying the ground for a future comeback, particularly if the Conservatives are heavily defeated at the next election.

"But we shouldn't be surprised that Boris Johnson attempts to reinsert himself as a leadership contender," Diamond, professor in public policy at Queen Mary University of London, told Al Jazeera.

"The privileges committee report contains some damning findings, which may well indeed prevent Boris Johnson from making a return in British politics.

Diamond added, "But it is also, I think, important to remember that Boris Johnson remains relatively popular within the Conservative Party and to some degree, among conservative voters."

Johnson led the Conservatives to a thumping 80-seat majority in the December 2019 general election on a promise to "get Brexit done".

That allowed him to railroad through parliament his split with the European Union, unblocking years of political paralysis.

But he was undone by his handling of the COVID pandemic, "Partygate" and a succession of other scandals that led to a ministerial rebellion in July last year.

He quit as prime minister and left office last September, though rumours persisted that he wanted another shot at the top job.

Sunak, who was one of Johnson's top team who quit, has been trying to steady the ship since becoming prime minister in October, after the turbulent tenure of his former boss and the short-lived premiership of Liz Truss.

Johnson's resignation will likely be seen as his revenge on Sunak, whose Conservatives are well down in the polls with a general election looming next year.

"When I left office last year the government was only a handful of points behind in the polls. That gap has now massively widened," Johnson said in his letter, lashing out at Sunak.

Johnson became an MP in 2001 until 2008, then quit to serve two four-year terms as London's mayor. He became an MP again in 2015, going on to be foreign secretary under Theresa May's government.

Iran Never Left...

FROM PAGE 1

Also, Iran has put on the agenda the policy of foiling the sanctions by relying on domestic capacities and relations with neighbors; meanwhile, the country has not left diplomatic procedure for the purpose of lifting unjust sanctions, Kanaani said.

The spokesman went on to say that exchange of messages and diplomatic consultations with the other sides via neighboring and friendly states continue.

Iran continues negotiating based on Supreme Leader's views, national interest, and Majlis' (Iranian Parliament) action plan for the nuclear talks, he said, adding that Tehran does ignore the Islamic Republic's red lines.

As to Iran-Libya ties and determining a new Iranian ambassador to the African country, Kanaani said that this state is of importance for the Islamic Republic and that a diplomat has been selected to go to Tripoli and is waiting for the administrative procedure, so we hope to establish an official relationship with Libya soon.

The spokesman said that the Islamic Republic and the caretaker government in Kabul have had good negotiations and have reached a consensus, which urges the Afghan side to take positive and new steps regarding Iran's rights for the water of Helmand (Hirmand) River, and that technical measures should be done.

Kanaani also pointed to the neighborliness policy and the necessity of maintaining a positive atmosphere between the two nations as well as the existing contract between Afghanistan and Iran concerning Iranians' water rights, saying that we expect the Afghan party to abide by their commitments in this respect and show their good faith because the water is the rights of the Iranian people especially residents of Sistan and Baluchestan, so implementing the contract can pave the way for enhancing cooperation in issues of mutual interests.

On the issue of prisoner swap between Iran and the United States, Kanaani said an agreement is within reach if the other side is serious.

"We hope to witness the exchange of prisoners because we have made all the necessary efforts regarding the humanitarian aspects of the issue," he added.

He explained that negotiations are continuing through mediators, adding that "everything depends on the will of the other party."

Asked about the latest developments in Iran's relations with Egypt and Libya, Kanaani said, "Regarding Egypt, the clear position of the government and diplomatic institutions was clearly stated, and the Supreme Leader also expressed his position in the meeting with the Sultan of Oman."

He said that President Ebrahim Raisi's administration's priority is to develop relations with Islamic and neighboring countries.

Concerning Egypt, he added, Iran welcomes restoration of ties of the Egyptian side is willing.

Touching upon the latest developments concerning Iran-Saudi ties, Kanaani said that the implementation of consensus between the two states has had a proper pace and there have not been any obstacles in the way of carrying out their mutual agreement.

The spokesman also noted that Saudi Arabia's foreign minister is to visit Iran in the near future, adding that the Saudi embassy and consulate in Iran will probably open.

On the resumption of ties between Iran and Bahrain, he stated that Manama has declared its readiness to this end and that Iran is keen on developing ties with all Islamic and regional nations.

Commenting on Iran's maritime coalition with some of the Persian Gulf states, he said that Iran's principle in the Persian Gulf is collective cooperation aiming at safeguarding the regional states.

Iran believes that security should be provided by the regional countries, and the presence of trans-regional forces is a security threat to the region, Kanaani said.

Iran has always been against the presence of trans-regional forces in regional waterways, he stressed.

Regarding the repayment of part of Iraq's arrears to Iran, Kanaani said Iran expected the debt to be repaid according to the agreement reached between the two countries, but unfortunately, that did not happen.

"On many occasions, we treated the Iraqi side, as a friendly and brotherly country, with tolerance," he said. "One should know that adherence to agreements is necessary for the establishment and continuity of constructive relations between the two sides."

He also said that Iran believes in focusing on mutual interests in its relations with European countries and opposes any move by European governments to make the interests of the Zionist regime a precondition for relations with Iran.

"We are ready to develop our relations with any European country that wants to have relations with us based on mutual respect," he asserted.

Regarding Iran and Russia's drone cooperation, he said the two countries cooperate in various fields, including defense, and these cooperations preceded the Ukraine war.

He dismissed claims targeting the cooperation between Tehran and Moscow, saying, "We once again reject the claims that are made with political motives."

Countries Seeking...

FROM PAGE 1

On the talks for the purchase of Iranian heavy water, he said that the customers propose more than 1,000 dollar per liter.

The AEOI spokesman said that Leader had instructed them that they should convey the nuclear achievements to the people so that they know that nuclear energy is effective in their lives.

Kamalvandi also pointed to the fields that the Iranian nuclear industry is used to flourish other sectors in the economy including radiation drugs, agriculture etc., and emphasized, "20% purity fuel production and heavy water derivatives and pharmaceutical achievements that are more effective than other drugs show that Iran is ahead of other countries in the world."

He asserted that the Iranian nuclear industry is for peaceful purposes in contrast to what the Western states claim.

The spokesman further noted that the nuclear industry generates a lot of money in the country's economy, noting, "The world is looking for the purchase of Iranian heavy water and its customers are queuing up."

He noted that the number of inspection visits that the IAEA inspectors have had to Iranian nuclear sites shows the transparency of the Iranian nuclear program, stressing that as the Leader reiterated earlier today, Iran will not go towards nuclear weapons based on its religious values and beliefs.

Iran Flag-Bearer of...

FROM PAGE 1

Referring to a 50 percent increase in the cultivation and trafficking of narcotics in Afghanistan with NATO-backed support, he added that Afghanistan ranks first in opium cultivation and second place in industrial drug production.

He noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran has made good achievements to deal with addiction with all its power and capacities.

Pointing to the key role of Iran in countering narcotics trafficking in the world, he said that 90% of opium confiscation, 50% of morphine confiscation, and 27% of heroin confiscation were done by Iran. Iran is at the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking and thousands of Iranian forces have been so far martyred to protect the world from the danger of drugs. Despite high economic and human costs, the Islamic Republic has been actively fighting drug trafficking over the past decades.

Iran has spent more than \$700 million on sealing its borders and preventing the transit of narcotics destined for European, Arab, and Central Asian countries.

What Are Governments Doing to Ease Inflation Pain?

LONDON (Dispatches) - Pandemic-related disruptions to global supply chains and the effects of Russia's war in Ukraine have driven up prices of energy, commodities and other necessities.

Here's how governments are trying to help hard-hit consumers and companies:

* U.S. President Joe Biden's drug pricing reform, part of the Inflation Reduction Act,

penalises drugmakers for excessive prices, aiming to reduce out-of-pocket costs for Medicare recipients. The program has been challenged in court by drugmaker Merck & Co.

* Brazil's state oil company Petrobras in May approved a new fuel pricing policy for gasoline and diesel that will sharply lower costs for motorists. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has pledged to introduce a bill making the annual minimum wage adjustment above inflation a permanent rule.

* Mexico has raised the minimum wage by 20% for 2023. In March it opened the door to imported Brazilian bovine products for the first time as it looks to diversify its food supply to try to curb inflation.

* Colombia raised the minimum wage by 16% for 2023.

* The European Commission extended its gas price cap system to all trading hubs in the European Union from May. EU countries agreed on the cap in December.

* French finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said 75 big food industry players had pledged to lower prices on hundreds of products starting next month. The government has been urging food retailers and manufacturers to cut prices to help households.

* Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban earlier in June imposed mandatory price cuts on some basic food items by large retailers.

* Poland plans to raise the minimum wage twice more in 2024. It was increased from January 2023 and will be lifted again from July.

* Germany is launching a program that will make available tens of billions of euros for firms facing substantial



energy costs. The government last year introduced electricity and gas price caps.

* Most British households can expect cheaper energy bills from July after regulator Ofgem slashed its price cap to reflect a slump in wholesale costs. The new cap marks a near 40% fall compared with the previous level.

* The Greek government in May extended to the end

of September some of the measures it took last year to help households and businesses with soaring energy bills.

* Italy in March approved measures worth almost 5 billion euros (\$5.38 billion) to cut energy bills for families and firms.

* Portugal in March announced a package to help low-income families, including scrapping value added tax on essential food products.

* Spain raised the minimum wage from January by 8%.

* Australia will raise the minimum wage by 5.75% from July 1. In May, the government said it would include A\$14.6 billion (\$9.79 billion) over four years in the federal budget for cost of living relief.

* South Korea has cut tariffs from June on higher-priced edible products, including pork and sugar.

* Pakistan in April capped the retail price rise in essential drugs at 14%.

* India in March lifted the inflation-adjusted allowance for federal government employees by 4%.

* Top Japanese companies in March agreed to their largest pay increases in a quarter of a century at annual labour talks, heeding Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's call for higher wages.

* Japan has allocated more than 2 trillion yen (\$14.33 billion) from reserve funds to try to limit inflation.

* Thailand in March agreed to extend an excise tax cut on diesel to July 20.

* The Philippines in December extended lower tariff rates on rice and other food items to the end of 2023.

Villa Take Tielemans From Relegated Leicester

LONDON (dispatches) - Aston Villa said they had agreed a deal to sign Belgium international midfielder Youri Tielemans as the exodus of players from relegated Leicester begins.

Villa said the 26-year-old will join them on July 1 after four years at Leicester, who are facing life in the Championship next season.

A statement on the club's website said: "Aston Villa is delighted to announce that the club has reached an agreement to sign Youri Tielemans.

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Ferrari Make Triumphant Return to Le Mans

LE MANS (Dispatches) - Ferrari made a triumphant return to the 24 Hours of Le Mans after a 50-year absence on Sunday. The celebrated Italian constructor won the centenary edition to foil Toyota's hunt for a sixth successive win in motorsport's fabled endurance classic. Alessandro Pier Guidi was at the wheel of Ferrari's No.51 car to take the chequered flag of a race first run in 1923 in front of a sell-out 300,000 crowd at the Bugatti circuit. Italian Pier Guidi shared driving duties with his compatriot Antonio Giovinazzi and Briton James Calado.

Djokovic Clinches Record 23rd Grand Slam Title in Paris

PARIS (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic of Serbia defeated Norway's Casper Ruud in a lopsided French Open final, clinching a record-breaking 23rd Grand Slam title to become the most successful singles player in the history of the men's game.

Djokovic overcame a wobbly start on Court Philippe Chatrier to beat Ruud in straight sets, 7-6 (7-1), 6-3, 7-5, breaking the 22-Slam tie he shared with Rafael Nadal, the "King of Clay", on the Spaniard's favourite court. The only player to have reached seven finals at each Grand Slam tournament, he is now the first man to win three titles at each - a feat only Margaret Court, Steffi Graf and Serena Williams have achieved in the women's game.

Djokovic won his first Grand Slam title 15 years ago at the Australian Open in Melbourne, which he went on to win nine more times. He's collected seven at Wimbledon, three at the US Open and now three at the French Open, too.

His victory over Ruud means the Serb will return to the world number one ranking for an extraordinary 388th week, replacing 20-year-old Carlos Alcaraz, whom the bookmakers had imprudently labelled the hot favourite ahead of their semi-final on Friday.

At 36, Djokovic is chasing down the few records he has yet to set or equal. He has made it clear that the quest for further Grand Slam glory is what powers him on at an age when tennis stars are normally retired or well past their prime.

"That's basically what still drives me when I wake up in the morning and think about the season and think about things I want to achieve," he said after his defeat of a cramping Alcaraz - an unfinished tussle that proved Djokovic can still outmuscle, outsmart and outlast all others.

Ruud, 24, was playing in his third Grand Slam final, a year after he was soundly beaten here by his hero and mentor Nadal, whose absence due to injury weighed heavily on the tournament this year.

Taking on Djokovic - a 34-time Grand Slam finalist - was an equally daunting task for the No. 4 seed, who went into the final having failed to win a single set against the Serb in their four previous meetings, two of them on clay.



Still, the Norwegian could point to his prowess on the surface, having won more matches (87) and titles (9) than any other player on clay since 2020. He enjoyed a smooth run into the final at Roland Garros, capped off by a methodical straight-sets demolition of Alexander Zverev in the semis.

Ahead of the final, Ruud said he would strive to put feelings aside and "just try to enjoy" himself. He showed no sign of jitters when play began on Court Philippe Chatrier, holding for love in the opening game before breaking the Djokovic serve in the next, when the Serb bundled an overhead shot.

It would be the Norwegian's only break of serve throughout the final.

Just three games later, it was Ruud's turn to surrender his serve by hitting an easy smash into the net after a gruelling 28-stroke rally. The two players then slogged their way to a tie-breaker, in which the Serb was always favored to prevail.

As so often in the 34 Grand Slam finals he has played, Djokovic pressed his foot on the pedal when it mattered, racing to a 6-1 lead in the decider before closing out the set with a backhand winner.



Saudi's Al-Ettifaq Bidding to Appoint Gerrard as Coach

LONDON (Dispatches) - Steven Gerrard is considering an offer to become coach of Saudi club Al-Ettifaq, a source familiar with the matter said.

"Al-Ettifaq made an offer to Gerrard. He welcomed the idea, but asked for time to study the offer," the source told Reuters late on Saturday.

The former Liverpool captain, 43, left his role as coach of Aston Villa last October after a run of bad results.

Prior to that, Gerrard led Rangers to the Scottish Premier League title in 2020-2021 season, finishing the season without any defeats.

Al-Ettifaq finished seventh in the top-tier Saudi Pro League last season.

The Saudi league has been in the news after Al-Nassr signed Cristiano Ronaldo for an enormous sum at the end of last December, and Karim Benzema, the former Real Madrid captain, joined Al-Ittihad last week.

Man City Treble Winners Stake Claim as England's Greatest Club Side

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City's class of 2022/23 have staked their claim to be ranked as English football's greatest ever team after the treble winners' historic Champions League triumph against Inter Milan.

City's tense 1-0 victory in Istanbul on Saturday made them only the second English club after Manchester United to win the Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League in a single season.

But Pep Guardiola's stars are not the only team with a strong case to take that prestigious honour.

United's own treble winners, Arsenal's 'Invincibles' and Liverpool's legends of the 1980s all have deserving cases in a fascinating debate.

Stating City's credentials comes with a barrage of jaw-dropping statistics. They won 44 of their 60 games in all competitions this term, completing a hat-trick of Premier League titles and claiming a fifth in six seasons.

Arsenal's eight-point lead in the title race in early April was reeled in with contemptuous ease as City sealed the title with three games to spare, eventually finishing five clear of the Gunners on 89 points.

Guardiola's men plundered 150 goals in all competitions, the most of any team in Europe's top five leagues this season.

Erling Haaland grabbed the headlines for his 52-goal haul in his debut season, that included setting a single-season Premier League record of 36 goals. But City's brilliance comes from a collective effort.

Rodri was the unlikely goalscoring hero against Inter in Istanbul and City needed goalkeeper Ederson to produce a series of important saves to conquer Europe for the first time.

Last weekend, Ilkay Gundogan's double delivered the FA Cup, while Kevin De Bruyne has been the standout individual of Guardiola's glorious seven years in charge.

So how do the other contenders stack up against City in the battle to be the best of the best?

Powered by 'Class of 92' youth academy graduates David Beckham, Paul Scholes and Gary Neville, United could also call on Roy Keane, Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole and Jaap Stam.

Bagnaia Leads Ducati Clean Sweep in Italian GP



Marini was fourth, as four Ducatis finished in the top four in their home race in Mugello.

With title rival Marco Bezzecchi finishing eighth, Bagnaia's lead is now 21 points and the race winner celebrated his victory with an impromptu barbecue in front of the crowd, wolfing down a hot dog as the fans chanted his name.

ROME (Dispatches) - Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia extended his lead at the top of the MotoGP world championship after he rode to victory at his home Italian Grand Prix for his second sprint-race double of the season.

Bagnaia was joined on the podium by the two Pramac Racing riders Jorge Martin and Johann Zarco while VR46 Racing's Luca

"The perfect weekend. I wasn't expecting a race like this... This is one of the best weekends of my life," said Bagnaia, who had the Italian flag draped around his neck.

"Job done and let's move on to next week in Sachsenring (German Grand Prix)."

Red Bull KTM's Jack Miller had a blistering start from the line to surge ahead before tumbling one but his former team mate Bagnaia was quick to pick him off and retake the lead on the opening lap.

Martin soon moved up to second, however, while Marini confidently took his place behind the leading pair to make it three Ducatis in the top three.

Miller dropped down the standings when Alex Marquez sped past three riders on his Gresini Ducati, making contact with the angry Australian in a risky overtaking manoeuvre that nearly led to a wipeout.

Alex's brother Marc Marquez started second on the grid but fell to fourth before crashing on lap six to go four consecutive races without finishing for the first time in his career.

Ruthless Australia Thrash India in WTC Final

LONDON (Dispatches) - Scott Boland sparked a dramatic collapse as a dominant Australia hammered India by 209 runs to win the World Test Championship final at The Oval on Sunday.

India, set a record 444 to win, resumed on 164-3. But they slumped to 234 all out before lunch on the fifth day, losing their last five wickets for a mere 22 runs.

Boland did the initial damage with two wickets in Sunday's seventh over, including the prize scalp of Virat Kohli, on his way to figures of 3-46 in 16 overs.

Off-spinner Nathan Lyon (4-41) then polished off the tail.

Victory meant Australia had now captured the one major men's cricket title that had previously eluded them.

Boland might not have been in the side but for an injury to Josh Hazlewood.

The 34-year-old seamer now looks to have assured himself of a place in Australia's XI for the first Ashes Test against England at Edgbaston starting on Friday.

"It felt pretty good to get Kohli out," said Boland, who has now taken 33 wickets in eight Tests at the remarkably low average of 14.57.

"I have been playing state cricket for Victoria for 12 years," he added. "I have done some hard work and it is nice to play international cricket and get some wickets."

Defeat left India, beaten by New Zealand in the inaugural 2021 WTC final in Southampton, still searching for their first piece of global silverware in a decade.

Had India reached a target of 444, it would have surpassed the West Indies' 418-7 against Australia at St John's in 2003 as the highest winning fourth-innings chase in Test history.

India were also attempting to top the corresponding Oval record of 263 posted by England in a one-wicket win over Australia way back in 1902.

Yet even though the odds were heavily against their side, scores of India fans, the key component in a cumulative crowd in excess of 100,000 across the five days, still streamed into the ground.

Australia, who had lost their last four Test series against India, were in charge from early on in this match after being sent into bat.



Ederson Is Manchester City's Unlikely European Hero

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Manchester City scorer Rodri was named UEFA's man-of-the-match, but goalkeeper Ederson made a strong case for the award after his inspired saves kept Inter Milan at bay in the Champions League final.

Rodri's cool finish in the 68th minute earned City their long-awaited first Champions League title, but only after Brazilian Ederson kept them in the match with a brilliant point-blank save to deny Lautaro Martinez.

"The defeat teaches a lot, it was five years of disappointments, we were shattered, but we picked up the pieces and rebuilt ourselves. And the new pieces that arrived helped a lot too," Ederson told Brazilian TV channel TNT Sports.

Inter were starting to cause trouble for a nervous City when Manuel Akanji delivered a hospital pass intended for Bernardo Silva and Lautaro anticipated it to go one-on-one with Ederson.

The Brazilian keeper, however, made himself big to limit Lautaro's angles and blocked the Argentine's strike with his body.

After Rodri scored, Inter pressed for a late equaliser and Ederson made two brilliant stops at the death.

In the 88th minute, he kept out a point-blank header from substitute Romelu Lukaku and in the last play of the match, Ederson shone again as a corner was taken to the near post where Francesco Acerbi flicked the ball into the box and Ederson made a diving save moments before the final whistle.

"This year I dedicated myself a lot, worked hard, gave up a lot of things to be rewarded," Ederson said.

"I am still in a state of ecstasy, I want to enjoy it now, enjoy it, enjoy it with my family too. Now it's time to celebrate."

