Iran's Crude Oil Production Increased 61,000 Barrels Per Day (bpd) in May Compared to the Previous Month to Reach 2.679m bpd. According to OPEC's Latest Monthly Report Published





Banking System Has paid 5.151 Quadrillion rials (About \$10.85b) of Facilities in the First Two Months of The Current Year, Registering a 26.2-Percent Rise From the Figure in The Same Period of the Previous Year

THURSDAY JUNE 15, 2023 - KHORDAD 25, 1402



Sanctions Undermine Efforts To Combat Climate Change

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations says unilateral sanctions act as barriers to the targeted countries' contributions to global efforts aimed at tackling climate change problems, demanding an immediate stop to the coercive measures.

Amir Saeid Iravani made the remarks in an address to the United Nations Security Council session entitled "Climate Change, Peace and Security" in New York on Tuesday.

"Iran, like other nations, confronts environmental challenges and climate change impacts such as pollution, water scarcity, sand and dust storms, desertification, and biodiversity degradation.

"These challenges are worsened by restrictions on accessing foreign goods and services due to unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States," he said. Iravani highlighted that illegal US sanctions impede international funding, hinder renewable energy investments as well as access to environmentally sound technology, and restrict joint environmental research and educational opportunities. See Page 7

Tehran Denies Replicating China's Internet Controls

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's telecoms minister Issa Zarepour has denied suggestions that the country is replicating China's model of internet controls, saying the country has its own system and model of expanding the internet.

"In China, a special project has been implemented and it has its own home-grown platforms but we have our own expansion model and of course we are seeking to cooperate and interact with all countries including China," Zarepour was quoted as saying in a report by the Iranian telecoms ministry.

The minister made the remarks in response to a journalist who asked him whether Iran's internet expansion model is based on the current Chinese system.

However, the minister said the Iran's cooperation with China will mostly focus on the expansion of the communication infrastructure in the country as he said that the Chinese are global pioneers in the field. See Page 7

Tehran, Managua Bolster Ties **Against Arrogant Powers**



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says the Iranian nation has succeeded in turning the United States' sanctions and threats into opportunities.

"The U.S. sought to stop our nation through sanctions and threats, but not only our nation did not give in, it created an opportunity out of threats and sanctions and made progress," Raisi said after he was officially welcomed by his Nicaraguan counterpart, Daniel Ortega, upon arrival in Managua on Tuesday evening local time.

He argued that the Nicaraguan people's resistance against excessive demands and hegemonic powers led to their victory, adding that the two nations share a common desire for independence, freedom and justice.

He rejected "false" claims by Western powers about their advocacy for democracy and human rights and urged the West, especially the U.S., to respect the governments that are based on people's votes. "but they do the opposite," he said.

Raisi compared the U.S. role in creating Daesh to the Islamic Republic's support for the fight against terrorism, saying, "They claim to fight terrorism but they martyred [Iran's] anti-terror hero General Qassem Soleimani." The Iranian president further noted that Tehran and Managua enjoy "strategic" relations. He expressed the

Islamic Republic's readiness to improve mutual ties in various sectors, particularly science and technology. Ortega, for his part, said the Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions have deep roots in the fight against the dominance of arrogant powers, especially the United States.

He said imperial powers intrinsically seek to dominate other countries, and they exert pressure on independent countries under the pretext of human rights and democracy.

The President of Nicaragua described hegemony as part of the nature of imperialism and added, "The arrogant put pressure on independent countries under the pretext of human rights and democracy, but we will stand against them with strength.'

Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Raisi arrived in Nicaragua on the second leg of his three-nation tour of Latin America. Earlier, he visited Venezuela and will set off for Cuba later.

Upon the arrival of President Raisi to Nicaragua, attendance observed one-minute silence for the late commander of the IRGC Quds forces commander, Lt. Gen Soleimani.

At the official ceremony attended by Daniel Ortega, the President of Nicaragua, senior officials and the people of Managua the capital city of the country invited and hosted President Raisi and Iranian high-ranking officials. attendance observed a one-minute silence to honor Iranian Martyr Lt. General Soleimani, Late commander of the IRGC Quds Forces commander and the hero of the fight against terrorism.

Verw Point China Now a Game Changer In Middle East, World

In recent years, major impartial and fair analysts had claimed that China would soon replace the U.S. as the world economy number one and they have claimed that the U.S. was declining and China would be the world superpower but many people used to laugh at it and even the Chinese themselves had doubt on this prediction but recent developments in the world have made the Chinese more determined to replace the U.S. as world superpower in all fields and not only in the economic sphere.

The Chinese government in recent decades has tried to improve the economy and to have dominance in the world economy to topple the U.S. from the top spot but Beijing has realized that it would not be possible unless it boosts its political influence along with its economic one and for this reason Beijing has adopted new policies to play more influential roles in the world in terms of politics and in recent months Beijing has become a political game changer and it has acted as a mediator between some countries to improve its political influence.

Since the Middle East is an important and crucial region, Beijing has started its political activities and roles from this region and expanded it to Honduras in recent days. The mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia was an outstanding political initiative of Beijing which stunned the world and China has succeeded in bringing Tehran and Riyadh together while for years the U.S. had failed and Israel had been trying to keep the rift between Tehran and Riyadh.

Now it is reported that China is boosting its relation with Saudi Arabia which was once the close ally of Washington. According to reports, the senior officials of Saudi Arabia and China participated in a two-day Arab-China Business Conference in Riyadh, agreeing to advance ties amid changing regional and global dynamics.

Hosted by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Investment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the forum aimed to strengthen trade relations between China and Arab countries and marked another significant step towards the end of American monopoly in the Arab world.

It was described as the largest Arab-Chinese business event with more than 3,000 attendees, including governmental officials, traders, investors, and political and economic experts from China and two dozen Arabian countries, who explored mutually beneficial investment opportunities across key economic sectors. See Page 7

Iran, Bahrain Likely to



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U.S. Bid to Isolate Iran, Russia With Sanctions Impossible

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Russian Ambassador to Tehran Alexey Yurievich Dedov says it is "impossible" for the United States and its allies to succeed in isolating Iran and Russia through sanctions.

During an exclusive interview with Press TV on Tuesday, Dedov spoke about a host of issues, including sanctions targeting the two countries as well as Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine.

Asked about U.S. attempts to isolate Iran and Russia, he quipped: "I am afraid they are too sure of themselves." "You are right that they tried to isolate Russia, [and] they tried to isolate Iran," he said, adding, however, 'the task is impossible.'

It is not possible to isolate Russia or Iran, and "we can see it," he added.

The Russian envoy further explained that Russia's trade exchanges with India and China have grown significantly despite the U.S.-led sanctions, adding that his country's trade with Iran is also growing at a good pace.

The United States and its European allies have been spearheading tough economic sanctions against Russia ever since it launched what it calls a special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022.

Iran has also been hit by unilateral sanctions imposed by Washington after former president Donald Trump declared an unprovoked withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran deal, in May 2018.

Russia and Iran - the first and second most-sanctioned countries in the world - have been cooperating to neutralize the sanctions by finding alternative ways to trade with other nations.

The Russian diplomat also said Moscow's ongoing special operation in Ukraine is not in fact an operation against Kiev, but "against forces of the West which try to impose their will over the whole territory of the world." See Page 7

Restore Diplomatic Ties Soon

TEHRAN (MNA) - Bahrain is likely to resume diplomatic ties with Iran "sometime soon," the top US diplomat for the Middle East said.

Speaking about the possibility of Bahrain restoring diplomatic ties with Iran, US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf told lawmakers, "I think it will happen sometime soon."

Bahrain followed Saudi Arabia's decision by severing diplomatic relations with Iran on January 4, 2016, after Iranian protesters, enraged by the execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr by the Saudi government, stormed its diplomatic mission in Iran.

Iran and Saudi Arabia announced in March they would restore diplomatic ties and Iran reopened its embassy in Rivadh on June 6.

Bahrain welcomed the agreement formed between Saudi Arabia and Iran under the auspices of China to resume diplomatic relations between the two countries. Earlier on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kan'ani said that Bahrain officials announced their readiness to restore ties and Iran is also interested in expanding and developing relations with all Islamic, Arab, and neighboring countries.

He also expressed hope to see a positive trend in relations with Bahrain.

DOMESTIC

Iran Seeks Road Transits With Qatar, UAE

TEHRAN (IP) - The Spokesman of Iran's Government reported the administration's permission for road transportation to and from UAE and Qatar.

On the sidelines of the cabinet session on Wednesday, June 14, The Spokesman of Iran's Government told reporters about two other ratifications in the session, besides the transport with UAE and Qatar.

Ali Bahadori said that the cabinet also approved Iran's judicial cooperation with Vietnam and Zimbabwe as one of the other international approvals of the administration.

VP Reports Release of Iran's Blocked Money

TEHRAN (IP) - First Vice President says the Iranian-blocked money has been released in some countries.

On the sidelines of the cabinet session on Wednesday, Mohammad Mokhber told reporters that the grounds are being prepared for the release of the rest of the country's money blocked elsewhere.

Mokhber pointed to the issue of inflation in the country and said the administration has put some measures on its agenda to curb it.

He referred to issues such as the Ukrainian war, the omission of preferential currency, and the recent unrest in 2022 and said that despite these problems, the administration managed to control inflation in the country.

Unrest and brawls were instigated under the pretext of Mahsa Amini, 22, who died due to a sudden heart attack in a police center in Tehran on Tuesday, September 13, after being taken there for violation of dress codes along with some other women.



During the unrest, the foreign-baked media, U.S. politicians, and some European leaders spared no effort to exploit the pretext in support of the rioters in the name of the Iranians. At the same time, millions of people in Iran came out to condemn the rioters and support the Islamic Republic.

MPs Warn of Humanitarian Disaster in East Due To Water Shortage

TEHRAN (IFP)- Over 200 Iranian lawmakers have backed the government's efforts to secure the country's share of water from the Helmand River, warning of a "humanitarian catastrophe" in Iran's eastern regions if no water reaches there in three months.

In a statement, the Iranian lawmakers said the Iranian and Afghan nations, which share one civilization and culture, have always stood by one another throughout history, ups and downs, and abundance and scarcity of water.

"Currently, the situation is so difficult for the honorable people of Sistan-and-Baluchestan that if water does not reach the region in three months, we have to wait for a humanitarian disaster in the east of the country," the statement read.

The lawmakers also voiced support for the government's firm stance against the Taliban government's refusal to allow Iran's access to its share of water from the Helmand River.

Tensions have been escalating between Iran and Afghanistan over the Taliban's violations of the 1973 treaty on shared water resources.

As per the provisions of the treaty, Afghanistan is bound to release 820 million cubic meters of water from the Helmand River annually, but Iranian authorities have repeatedly said that Kabul has been withholding its share.

Iran has warned the Taliban that it will not hesitate to use pressure to make them respect the water rights of Iran.

Political Will of Countries in Region Created Bridge of Friendship

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs has emphasized that the bridge of friendship and brotherhood that has been created through the political will of the countries in the south and north of the Persian Gulf has formed a clear vision of stability and development for the people of the region.

Ali Bagheri Kani made the remarks in a meeting with Anwar Mohammed Gargash, senior diplomatic advisor to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) President, and Khalifa Shaheen Almarar, Minister of State within the UAE Minister of State of Foreign Affairs in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

Stressing that Iran considers no limit to enhancing its ties with neighbors, Bagheri Kani called the continuous political consultation between the officials of the two countries' foreign ministries to be the significant factor in bolstering the relations between Tehran and Abu Dhabi.

He reiterated that regional security and stability depend on the cooperation of all countries in the region for development and progress.

Emphasizing the efficiency of the neighborhood policy adopted by President Raisi's administration, he noted that the bridge of friendship and brotherhood that has been created through the political will of the countries in the south and north of the Persian Gulf has created a clear vision of stability and development for the people of the region.

Bagheri Kani underlined that the consolidation of mutual political trust between the two countries is the key to the stability of relations between Iran and the UAE in the new era.

The senior Emirati officials, for their part, emphasized the determination of their country's government to comprehensively improve ties with Iran and considered the deepening of economic relations as a priority.

Iran, Armenia Discuss Regional Security Issues **IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK**

TEHRAN - Armenian Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan received the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Iran to Armenia, Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri, who is completing his diplomatic mission in Armenia.

During the meeting, the parties discussed the progress and prospects of Armenian-Iranian cooperation, exchanged views on regional security issues.

At the end of the meeting, Minister Papikyan thanked Ambassador Zohouri for strengthening Armenian-Iranian relations and increasing the effectiveness of cooperation during his tenure in Armenia, wishing him success in his future work.



Iran's New Envoy to China Starts Mission

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's new ambassador to China Mohsen Bakhtiar met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian on the eve of leaving for Beijing to start his



Iran and Chinas, he also called for the implementation of agreements made between the two countries during President Ebrahim Raisi's March visit to China.

IRGC Busts Terror team in Sistan and Baluchestan

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force has managed to smash a team of terrorists in the country's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan close to the border with Pakistan.

The IRGC Ground Force's Quds Base said in a statement on Wednesday that the team had been busted before carrying out its plans for terrorist operations in the southern part of the province.

The statement added that the IRGC servicemen ambushed the terrorist team and disbanded it in cooperation with the Intelligence Ministry forces.

Two terrorists were killed and a third one was arrested in the operation, which also resulted in the confiscation of ammunition, weapons and explosives, it said.

Sistan and Baluchestan province, which borders Pakistan, has witnessed several terror attacks targeting both civilians and security forces over the past years.

Terrorist groups carrying out attacks against Iranian interests in the southeastern and southwestern parts of the country have known links to a number of repressive regimes in the Persian Gulf region.

Iran's security forces have invariably protected the border areas and managed to repel almost all terrorist attacks by foreign-backed anti-revolution elements across the country.

IRGC Holds War Game West of Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Ground Force has staged a military exercise in Iran's western province of Kurdistan, one of whose purposes is to cleanse the mountainous areas in Sarvabad city of the forces affiliated with anti-Revolution groups.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the war game on Wednesday, Commander of the IRGC's Hamze Sayyid al-Shohada Base said the Kusalan heights in Sarvabad city of Kurdistan Province have been totally cleansed of the elements linked with the anti-Revolution hostile groups.

Denouncing the anti-Revolution forces for upsetting security in the region, General Mohammad Taqi Osanlou said the IRGC servicemen have cleansed the area while the remaining hostile elements hiding in the zone are being removed.

The general noted that the anti-Revolution elements had been harassing local residents and upsetting the security of the region which has a pristine nature and is suitable for livestock raising.

The commander added that restoration of security to the region would help restore calm and allow the local people to resume their economic activities without the presence of terrorists.

Last year, the IRGC launched several rounds of

diplomatic mission in the East Asian country.

In the meeting with Bakhtiar late on Tuesday, Amirabdollahian said developing relations with Asian countries is a priority for Iran.

Amirabdollahian also stressed the need to make maximum use of the potentials that exist in bilateral, regional, and international cooperation with China.

Emphasizing the need for the full implementation of the 25-year comprehensive cooperation program between the

Former Iranian ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarzzadeh had announced the end of his "successful" mission in the country in a Twitter post earlier this week.

The diplomat said his achievements during his time as ambassador to China included the delivery of some 120 million doses of coronavirus vaccine from China to Iran, finalizing a 25-year strategic partnership deal between the two countries, and an agreement reached between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Beijing in March to restore their diplomatic ties.

military strikes on the positions of separatist groups in Iraq's Kurdistan Region.

The first stage of the attacks began on September 24, after terrorists' move to ignite riots and unrest along border cities west of Iran.

The move by IRGC Ground Force to hit Iraqi-based Komalah and Democrat terrorist groups came after illegal entry by these groups' armed teams into the Iranian border cities.

Sweden-Held Iranian Prisoner Allowed to Call Family After a Year Iran Close Partner of Kazakhstan in Islamic World

TEHRAN (MNA)- Iran is a close partner of Kazakhstan in the Islamic world and the two countries enjoy all-embracing cooperation, Kazakh Senate Speaker Maulen Ashimbayey said

Maulen Ashimbayev made the remarks in the meeting with Iran's ambassador to Kazakhstan Ali Akbar Jokar to discuss further deepening of cooperation and partnership between the two nations, according to Kaz Inform.

Ashimbayev noted that bilateral relations have been gaining momentum between Astana and Tehran ever since President Tokavey's visit to Iran in 2022.

The Kazakh official went on to express keen interest of the Kazakh side to further develop relations between Kazakh and Iranian parliaments.

He also filled in the Iranian ambassador on the progress in ambitious reforms in Kazakhstan spearheaded by the Head of State.

The Senate Speaker paid utmost attention to the activity of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions and invited the Iranian religious leaders to take part in the jubilee session of the Secretariat of the Congress this fall.

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A former Iranian judiciary official, life imprisonment. who has been illegally imprisoned in Sweden since late 2019, has been allowed to call his family after an entire year, his son has revealed.

"By God's grace and [thanks to] our friends' prayers as well as political and media pressures, Sweden finally stopped one instance of its inhumane behaviors, and my father [was allowed to] call after a year," his son, Majid, tweeted on Tuesday.

"I am glad that we [got to] talk to my father," he added.

Nouri was arrested immediately upon arrival at the Arlanda Airport in Stockholm more than three years ago.

Swedish authorities alleged that he had been involved in the execution and torture of members of the anti-Iran terrorist Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) cult back in 1988.

On July 14, 2022, a Swedish court sentenced Nouri to

The court, which has been described by Iranian officials as illegal, convicted Nouri of so-called war crimes and crimes against humanity, based on allegations leveled against him by the MKO.

Nouri has been put in solitary confinement since his illegal arrest.

Speaking to his family, he partially recounted his ordeal.

"[Being in] prison already has its own concomitant adversities. If you are held in solitary confinement, it is like you are being held in a prison, [which is located] inside another prison," he said, adding, "I have been truly subjected to too much oppression... I am innocent."

"We are still pursuing cessation of his unjust trial so he is freed from the thralldom of incarceration," added the tweet by his son.

THURSDAY JUNE 15, 2023

DOMESTIC

12:04

19:42

03:01

04:48



Noon (Zonr)	
Evoning (Mogh	ob)

- Evening (Maghreb)
- Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)
- Tomorrow's Sunrise

Rise in Transit, Direct Flights and Trade Between Tehran and Moscow

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Minister of Roads and Urban Development says the relation between Iran and Russia in trade is positive and expressing hope the volume of transit, number of flights and surge in trade would continue through sharing experiences and economic capacities.

Speaking in a ceremony marking Russia's National Day which was held in Tehran, Mehrdad Bazrpash felicitated the day to Russian government and nation and said that relation of Tehran-Moscow is very old with many ups and downs, adding that today relation of the two countries in the political, economic, cultural and scientific fields are upward trend.

He then pointed to the exchange of high-ranking government and private sector officials, rise in the volume of trade exchanges, rise in the reciprocal investment, diversity in the exporting and importing goods baskets, rise in the volume of transit and joint economic projects and rise in the number of direct flights between different cities of the two countries are considerable issues.

He added that they prospect a growing future for reinforcing transport infrastructures, road, rail, sea and air transit as well as creating a financial and banking connection.

Bazrpash further said that some major and effective actions are underway for harmonizing standards, easing and increasing trade of goods and services, using experiences and economic capacities of both countries for meeting the demands of their markets and presence in the third party markets as well as new businesses based on the modern technology and these relations have a bright future ahead.



He reiterated that Iran and Russia beside their close relation have close views on the regional and international issues. He added that two countries have close cooperation for restoring peace and broadening economic cooperation in SCO, EAEU as well as in the Caspian Sea.

He went on to say that free trade agreement between Iran and the EAEU is of the main factors for easing economic relation between Iran and Russia and expressed hope by using those capacities, the grounds for broadening trade exchanges as well as investment for joint production would be paved.

Bazrpash then pointed to the determination of Tehran for broadening friendly relation with friendly and neighboring countries and wished Russia peace, welfare, tranquility and development.

Then Ambassador of Russia to Tehran Alexey Dedov, for his part, welcome Bazrpash to the event and said that his country has set its relation with all countries based on mutual respect and the best example for his claim is friendly relation with Iran that despite sanctions against both countries, Russia's exchanges with Iran are broadening in all fields.

He said this year so far presidents of both countries four times have talked on phone and they have met each other in international events and supported each other.

He then pointed to the importance of the North-South Corridor and said that Russia welcomes cooperation with Iran in this project.

ICCIMA to Hold Forum On Trade Opportunities In Bangladesh

TEHRAN – Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on June 20 will hold a forum on introducing trade opportunities in Bangladesh with the presence of Bangladesh Ambassador and commercial attache.

According to the ICCIMA news portal, the forum will be held on June 20 at the ICCIMA and during the forum Iranian businessmen will be acquainted with Bangladesh market, needs and capacities of Bangladesh market and trade and investment advantages of this country and regulations off trade and investment in this country will be the top issues of the forum.

Bangladesh in recent years has boosted its

Iran, Qatar Chief Bankers Discuss Expansion of Monetary Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) - The governors of the central banks of Iran and Qatar have emphasized the necessity of increasing monetary, banking, and financial cooperation between the two countries, the portal of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) reported. CBI Governor Mohammadreza

Farzin, who has traveled to Doha, in a meeting with his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Bandar bin Mohammed bin Saoud Al-Thani stressed that the

increase in monetary, banking, and financial cooperation would be the basis for the development of trade exchanges between Iran and Qatar.

"Considering the existing economic capacities of the two countries, strengthening bilateral and multilateral banking relations is on our agenda," Farzin said.

He further noted that with the development of monetary and banking relations between Tehran and Doha, the volume of trade between the two countries will also grow significantly.

Accordingly, relevant cooperation should be increased more rapidly to realize this goal, he added.

The Qatari central bank governor, for his part,



referred to Tehran-Doha joint cooperation in various economic and commercial fields, saying: "There are many opportunities to increase trade exchanges between Iran and Qatar, which should be benefited from by using the monetary and banking relations of the two countries to realize the mutual economic capacities."

In this meeting, the governors of the central banks also emphasized the facilitation of

the activity of financial platforms and the use of private sector companies in the monetary and banking spheres in order to achieve the economic and commercial goals of both sides.

As announced by an official with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), the value of trade between Iran and Qatar is estimated to reach \$3 billion by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (begins on March 2025).

Farzad Piltan, the director-general of TPO's Office of West Asian Countries, said such amount of trade will include export, import, joint investment, transit, re-export, and joint production.

PGSOC's Laboratory Gets Certificate of Accreditation IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Surah 4. Women (70 - 72)

TEHRAN – The ceremony for granting the certificate competency to the laboratory of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) was held and the refinery could get the

0. Such is the bounty from Allah. And sufficient is it that Allah knoweth all.

Allah) did favour us in that we were not present among them.

71. O ye who believe! Take your precautions, and either go forth in parties or go forth all together. 72. There are certainly among you men who would tarry behind: If a misfortune befalls you, they say



highest international standard certificate ISO17025. According to the public relations of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company, the CEO of the company addressing the ceremony said that the laboratory of the company was endorsed by the National Accreditation Center of Iran (NACI), adding that it could get international standard ISO17025 certificate.

Alireza Jafarpoor said that ISO17025 is the latest version of international standards which eases exports and can secure the validity of results of standard. He added that this refinery is the biggest exporter of the oil products and getting this certificate will definitely help internationalization of productions of the company.

He noted that this certificate considering high risk-taking which exists in the lab management eases the presence in the international markets. He also pointed to improving the production capacity of refinery to 480,000 barrels per day while currently the refinery is working with production capacity of 455,000 barrels per day.

Jafarpoor noted that the refinery produces 40% of total gasoline consumption of the company and this share has been decreased in the country due to the rise in consumption. He added that when the gasoline consumption in the country is 100m liters per day, Persian Gulf Star Refinery produces 40m liters of 100m liters of gasoline consumption of the country per day but last spring the gasoline consumption surpassed 130m liters and for this reason the share of the refinery declined to 38%.

Jafarpoor reiterated that15% of gas oil, 15% of liquefied gas and 20% of kerosene of the country ae produced in Persian Gulf Star Oil Refinery, adding that gasoline is the most strategic production of this refinery which has its own effect in the country and if some disrupt happens in gasoline production, the whole country will be affected.

He said that the Supreme Leader has termed the refinery as the pride and reputation of the Islamic establishment and if this refinery were not, the country would have problems for gasoline supply as well as gas condensates problem.

National Phoenix Award of Top Construction Brand for Thetran IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Maskan Tehran Investment Company (Thetran) won the National Simorgh (Phoenix) Award of the top construction brand during the conference



on Strategies of developing services, productions and exports of top Iranian companies.

According to the reports, Thetran as one of the affiliate firms of Maskan Tehran Investment Group which has been active in Tehran, Karaj and Qazvin since 2001 and in the field of mass construction it is trying to create competitive market for good and high quality house construction in the domestic market with innovation in construction and properly using of the expert and experienced human capital. The event was held in collaboration of several organizations and companies and Thetran was one of them and choosing Thetran as the top construction brand bespeaks of proper understanding from the talents of the organization in the field of urban and mass construction fields and it will help customers to have safer investment with full and correct awareness. The CEO of Maskan Tehran Investment Company had earlier said in the media that the company was trying to remove hurdles for making profits for shareholders and it has been materialized to some extent till now. Thetran after the evaluation conducted by the organizers of the event won the national phoenix award as the top construction brand and for quality of implementation and unique building in the industry and mass construction field. Maskan Tehran Investment Company as one of the biggest subsidiary companies of Maskan Investment Group has started its activities since 1990 in Tehran. Karai 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. 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.



economic cooperation with Iran and it is determined to deepen this relation.

Iran Exports Over 2.8m Refinery Installation Parts to Venezuela

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Iran has exported more than 2.8 million refinery installation parts to Venezuela to revitalize the refineries in the Latin American country, according to Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji. Owji made the comments few hours after the two

countries signed several oil contracts in Venezuela on Tuesday which happened simultaneous with a visit to Caracas by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his accompanying delegation.

With 17.5% of the total world oil reserves, Venezuela sits on the largest oil reserves of the world, the minister said.

He added that Venezuela has four refineries with a capacity of 1.4 million barrels per day which have been lying idle due to the sanctions and withdrawal of specialized workforce.

The minister also said that Venezuela has a 12 million mt of installed capacity of ammonia, urea, and poly ethylene which paves the ground for cooperation in the area of petrochemical industry between the two nations.

Iran Export to Venezuela Exceeds \$3.5b

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Economic Diplomacy says that Iran's exports to Venezuela have increased to more than \$3.5 billion.

Referring to the recent visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Caracas, Mehdi Safari said that the \$3.6 billion contract between Iran and Venezuela which was signed during Raisi's visit to Latin America is considered as the starting point for the transformation of Iran's political and economic relations with Latin America.

He pointed to Iran's serious will to re-establish commercial and economic relations with Latin America, saying that 27 agreements were reached in different fields including energy, telecommunication, nanotechnology, and automobile and tractor manufacturing.

Stone, gold, and iron mines in this region will be exploited with the participation of Iran, and the drug production line and nanotechnology are also among Iran's other programs in Latin America, especially in Venezuela, he added. During President Raisi's visit to Caracas, Iran and Venezuela announced their decision to increase the volume of bilateral trade to 20 billion dollars, as the two countries signed a total of 19 cooperation agreements and memorandums of understanding. Tehran and Caracas also signed several contracts to cooperate in the oil sector.

Head of DoE Says Iranian Cheetah Cubs Observed

TEHRAN (IP) - The Head of Iran's Department of Environment said that a cheetah with four cubs was seen in the Turan region last week.

Earlier in May, the Head of Iran's Department of Environment Ali Salajegheh announced the observation of a male cheetah in Isfahan, central Iran, and said that enjoys a number of cheetahs.

On the sidelines of the cabinet session on Wednesday, June 14, Salajegheh told reporters about environmental diplomacy, saying that the issue in line with the political and economic goals of the government has been successful. He also told IranPress about Shadegan Ponds in Khuzestan Province, Southwestern Iran, to boost tourism: "Good things have been done on the order of President, and we will use the capacities of this region." The Shadegan International Wetland is among of Ramsar Convention wetlands. It covers about 400,000 hectares in Khuzestan Province. The ponds and surrounding marshes are fed by the Karun River and are connected to the Persian Gulf.

IRAN NEWS

INTERNATIONAL

Six Dead in Cuba Flooding

HAVANA (Dispatches) - The death toll from heavy rains and flooding in east and central Cuba has risen to six, official media reported Tuesday as thousands of evacuees started returning home amid widespread property damage.

Heavy rains that began last Thursday have weakened and water levels were now subsiding, the Granma government mouthpiece said.

Four people have died in the eastern provinces of Granma, Las Tunas and Santiago de Cuba, while two perished in central Camaguey, it added.

Trump Pleads Not Guilty to Federal Charges

MIAMI (Dispatches) - Donald Trump became the first former president to face a judge on federal charges as he pleaded not guilty in a Miami courtroom Tuesday to dozens of felony counts that he hoarded classified documents and refused government demands to give them back.

The history-making arraignment, centering on charges that Trump mishandled government secrets that as commander-in-chief he was entrusted to protect, kickstarts a legal process that will

unfold at the height of the 2024 presidential campaign and carry profound consequences not only for his political future but also for his own personal liberty.

Trump approached his arraignment with characteristic bravado, posting social media broadsides against the prosecution from inside his motorcade and insisting as he has through years of legal woes that he has done nothing wrong and was being persecuted for political purposes. But he sat scowling inside the courtroom with his arms crossed as a lawyer entered a not guilty plea on his behalf in a brief arraignment that ended without him having to surrender his passport or otherwise restrict his travel.

But the gravity of the moment was unmistakable as he answered to 37 felony counts that accuse him of willfully retaining classified records that prosecutors say could have jeopardized national security if exposed, and the trying to hide them from investigators who demanded them back.

The case is loaded with political implications for the 76-year-old Trump, who currently holds the dominant spot in the early days of the 2024 Republican presidential primary. Beyond that, it carries the prospect of a years-long prison sentence. Even for a defendant whose post-presidential life has been dominated by investigations, the documents probe has stood out for both the apparent volume of evidence amassed by prosecutors and the severity of the allegations.

It's also a watershed moment for a Justice Department that until last week had never before brought charges against a former president. Attorney General Merrick Garland, an appointee of President Joe Biden, sought to insulate the department from political attacks by handing ownership of the case to a special counsel, Jack Smith, who on Friday declared, "We have one set of laws in this country, and they apply to everyone."

The arraignment, though largely procedural in nature, is the latest in an unprecedented public reckoning this year for Trump, who faces charges in New York arising from hush money payments during his 2016 presidential campaign as well as ongoing investigations in Washington and Atlanta into efforts to undo the results of the 2020 race. He's sought to project confidence in the face of unmistakable legal peril, attacking Smith as "a Trump hater," pledging to remain in the race and scheduling a speech and fundraiser for Tuesday night at his Bedminster, New Jersey, club.

"They're using this because they can't win the election fairly and squarely," Trump said Monday in an interview with Americano Media.

The court appearance is also unfolding against the backdrop of potential protests. Some high-profile backers have used barbed rhetoric to voice support. Trump himself has encouraged supporters to join a planned protest Tuesday at the courthouse.

Some Trump supporters headed to Miami by bus from other parts of Florida, raising concerns for law enforcement officials preparing for possible unrest around the courthouse. Miami Police Chief Manuel A. Morales said downtown could see anywhere from a few thousand up to 50,000 protesters. But heading into the court appearance, there were no reports of major chaos.

Among those present were the father-son duo of Florencio and Kevin Rodriguez, who came to the U.S. fifteen vears ago as asylum seekers fleeing

Amnesty Condemns Possible "War Crimes" in Gaza Conflict

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Amnesty International said that Israeli strikes on Gaza last month could amount to a "war crime", and Palestinian militant groups should be investigated on the same charge for their rocket fire.

Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza, including Islamic Jihad, traded heavy fire in the May 9-13 flare-up that claimed 35 lives, including civilians and combatants.

The London-based human rights group charged that Israeli strikes carried out "without military necessity" amount to "a form of collective punishment against the civilian population".

It also accused Palestinian militant groups of "indiscriminate" rocket fire aimed at Israel that "should also be investigated as war crimes' Amnesty said Israel "conducted apparently disproportionate air strikes which killed and injured Palestinian civilians, including children," and said that "intentionally launching disproportionate attacks... is a war crime".

The army accused Islamic Jihad of locating its "operational centers in civilian residential buildings" and of using civilians "as a human shield".

It added that it "made numerous efforts" to minimize harm to civilians in Gaza, such as by delaying and even cancelling planned attacks, and by phoning to ensure buildings were evacuated "several hours prior to strikes". Israel and militant groups in Gaza have fought several wars since the Islamist movement Hamas seized control of the coastal enclave in 2007.

According to the Israeli army, more than 1,230 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel from May 10-13 before a ceasefire came into effect.

"Israel's impunity for the war crimes it repe commits against Palestinians, and for its cruel ongoing 16-year illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, emboldens further violations and makes injustice chronic," said Heba Morayef, Middle East and North Africa Regional Director at Amnesty International. A spokesperson for Palestinian Islamic Jihad -- considered a terrorist group by Israel, the United States and the European Union -- said the group "welcomes" the report. "We are doing our part to defend ourselves against the crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people," it added in a statement.

Belarus to Get Russian Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Days

LONDON (Dispatches) - Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said that Russian tactical nuclear weapons would be physically deployed on the territory of Belarus "in several days" and that he had the facilities to host longer-range missiles too if ever needed.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that Russia, which will retain control of the tactical nuclear weapons, would start deploying them in close ally Belarus after special storage facilities to house them were made ready on July 7-8. The deployment will be Moscow's first move of such warheads - shorter-range less powerful nuclear weapons that could potentially be used on the battlefield - outside Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union.



that Ukraine's casualties in its much-anticipated counteroffensive were ten times higher than Moscow's even as Kyiv said it was making gains and "moving forward".

UN Secures Insurance to Pump Oil From Decaying Tanker Off Yemen

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The UN has secured insurance coverage allowing it to

pump more than one million barrels of oil from a decaying tanker anchored off

The rusting FSO Safer, abandoned off the rebel-held port of Hodeida, has not

been serviced since the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country plunged into civil

On Monday David Gressly, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator

for Yemen, said salvage teams are "very close" to starting a ship-to-ship

A spill in the Red Sea, a major shipping lane, could cost up to \$20 billion to

clear up, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has warned,

In a statement on Monday, UK-based insurance broker Howden announced the

successful binding of insurance coverage that enables the UN to proceed with

SO Safer Ship-to-Ship transfer". Howden said it was appointed by the UNDP

via a public tender process to identify the insurable risks and arrange coverage.

"Insurance became a critical element of enabling this salvage operation to

"Without it, the mission cannot go forward," he said in a UNDP statement.

The operation will see private company SMIT Salvage pump the oil from the

"I think we are getting very close to the point where we can start the ship-to-ship

ransfer which will be the next and perhaps most important phase," Gressly said on

Peter Berdowski, CEO of SMIT Salvage's parent company Boskalis, said

go ahead. "After two weeks of

inspection, our crew are convinced

that the Safer is strong enough for

such an operation," said Berdowski,

who also spoke in The Hague.

workers had spent a fortnight at the Safer checking whether the operation can

Safer to the Nautica, a super-tanker the UN purchased for the operation.

transfer of the vessel's cargo -- a move intended to avert a major oil leak.

var-torn Yemen that poses the risk of a catastrophic spillage.

and would mark one of the world's worst ecological disasters.

Monday, ahead of the Yemen International Forum in The Hague.

proceed," said UNDP administrator Achim Steiner.

conflict more than eight years ago.

His assessment came hours after Russia claimed it had captured Western armored vehicles from Kyiv's forces on the battlefield. "Their losses are approaching a level that could be described as catastrophic," Putin said during a meeting in the Kremlin with Russian journalists and bloggers covering the conflict

"We have 10 times fewer losses than those of the armed forces of Ukraine," he noted, citing a ratio that could not be independently confirmed.

But Kyiv quickly fired back insisting Ukraine's push, bolstered with Western weapons and training, had "certain gains, implementing our plans, moving forward".

"Both defensive and offensive fierce fighting is ongoing in the east and south of our nation," the chief of the Ukrainian armed forces Valery Zaluzhny said on social media.

In recent days, Kyiv has claimed to have re-captured a series of villages in its eastern Donetsk region.

Putin conceded during the Kremlin meeting that Russian forces were suffering from diminishing stockpiles of some military equipment, pointing in particular to attack drones and missiles.

He acknowledged that authorities could have better anticipated recent cross-border attacks into Russia from Ukraine that forced Moscow to deploy artillery and fighter jets on its own territory.

Putin also said that he was "thinking about" exiting the landmark Ukraine grain deal that allows grain from conflicttorn Ukraine to reach the global market.

Putin's televised comments came hours after Russian missile strikes on the hometown of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky killed 11 people.

The strikes overnight hit multiple sites and smashed into a five-storey apartment building in the central city of Kryvyi Rig.



streamlining a decade-old peacekeeping mission in troubled Mali, whose military leaders have clashed with the West and turned to Russia. In a report to the United Nations Security Council, which will



been arrested on suspicion of murder after three people were found dead on the street in the central English city of Nottingham on Tuesday and three were injured after an attempt to run them over with a van.

dictatorship in Cuba

President Joe Biden.

Wearing a shirt that reads "Jesus is my

savior, Trump my president," the younger

Rodriguez, Kevin, said it was possible

Trump was guilty of illegally retaining

classified documents. But he questioned

the fairness of the proceedings in light of

other classified information probes

concerning Democrats, including former

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and

UK Police Arrest Murder Suspect

After Three Bodies Found

NOTTINGHAM (Dispatches) -

British police said a man had

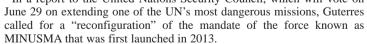
Detectives said they had an open mind about the motive for the linked incidents, which began just after 4 a.m. (0300 GMT), and added that counter-terrorism officers were working on the investigation, although they said this was normal.

Two of those killed were students from one of the city's universities. A 31-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of murder and detectives said they were not looking for anyone else.

The major operation, which led to many roads across Nottingham being closed, began after police were called to a report of two people being stabbed and left unresponsive on a road in the city center. Both were 19 years old.

The Israeli army responded that it began its operation on May 9 "in response to repeated rocket attacks against Israel".

It told AFP that Israeli forces "carried out attacks only after a real-time assessment before the attack that the expected collateral damage to civilians and civilian property will not be excessive in relation to the military advantage anticipated".



He acknowledged "uneven" results from MINUSMA but pointed to the importance of the coming year, with the junta promising -- to the skepticism of many -- a return to civilian rule.

"With Mali entering a crucial period leading to the return to constitutional rule, its continued presence remains invaluable," Guterres said of MINUSMA.

"The Council could consider streamlining MINUSMA tasks around a limited set of priorities to improve its overall effectiveness until the end of the political transition," promised by the junta by March 2024, Guterres said.

In January, Guterres submitted a strategic review of MINUSMA at the request of the Security Council to assess options for a mission tasked with stabilizing a West African state that has come under heavy pressure from jihadist violence.

With the security situation deteriorating, Guterres proposed three options including raising troop levels and pulling out the mission completely.

In the end, he opted for a middle course.

"As I stressed in January, the status quo is not and cannot be an option," Guterres wrote.

"It can also neither be an option for the Malian people, who continue to bear the brunt of unspeakable violence and whose strong yearning for a better future remains unfulfilled, nor one for the international community, which, since 2013, has invested heavily in the stabilization of the country."

Guterres called for MINUSMA to maintain its current level of 13,289 soldiers and 1,920 police personnel. As of last month, the actual force is smaller with 11,102 soldiers and 1,315 police due to the difficulties of persuading countries to contribute.



GENERAL

IRAN NEWS

Investors in **Biggest Climate Pressure Group Don't Like to Pressure**

LONDON (Dispatches) - Members of the largest investor coalition focused on convincing the corporate world to act on climate change rarely flex their muscles to pressure the worst polluters, an analysis of shareholder voting records and interviews with members show.

Climate Action 100+ (CA100+), set up in 2017, comprises more than 700 investment firms representing \$68 trillion in assets.

It set goals in its first phase to get the world's 166 largest corporate emitters of greenhouse gases to commit to net-zero targets, introduce governance and oversight of climate risks and disclose progress. In phase two, launched last week, it wants to get the biggest polluters to implement cuts to their emissions by 2030, so they can show they are on track to meet pledges to bring emissions down to zero on a net basis by 2050.

Shareholder voting data reviewed by Reuters, however, shows that investors in the group refrain from using the biggest weapon in their arsenal - the ability to vote against board directors - even when the polluting companies refuse to act.

Shareholder votes in favor of re-electing directors at 15 companies out of about 40 that CA100+ deems climate laggards, because they have not set 2050 net-zero targets, comprised on average more than 95% of the shareholder votes cast this year, in line with 2022 and 2021 levels, the data shows.

"There are lots of asset managers not even aligned with CA100+ objectives," said Xander Urbach, responsible investment advisor at Dutch fund manager MN, which leads CA100+'s engagement with oil and gas giant Shell. He declined to identify the managers.

CA100+ said in a statement it was a voluntary initiative and cannot tell signatories what to do.

At stake is whether CA100+ members use all the tools at their disposal to pressure climate laggards. Critics argue that the reluctance to challenge companies' boards is responsible for just 10% of companies having committed to align their spending plans with either their own emissions targets or the Paris climate agreement. Most CA100+ members seek to persuade companies to do more on climate through "engagement",

which involves lobbying corporate executives and directors, rather than voting to oust them, several members told Reuters.

Advocates of this approach say it has yielded results, with 75% of the 166 companies engaged having set a 2050 net-zero emissions target, up from less than 5% when the group launched in late 2017. Its non-prescriptive approach has also allowed CA100+ to recruit members who would not have joined a club with strict rules, supporters say.

"In phase two the overarching goal is to go from words to action," Francois Humbert, chair of CA100+'s Steering Committee and engagement manager at Generali Investments, told Reuters.

Phase two will require "10 times more effort" and need people with "lots of engagement experience and a bit more grey hair", he added.

Critics of CA100+'s approach say board challenges are needed. They point to examples such as activist investor Engine No. 1's success in winning board seats at Exxon Mobil Corp (XOM.N) in 2021 after it criticized the oil major for not doing enough to address climate risk.

The critics also say the absence of board challenges bodes poorly for CA100+'s goal to get polluters to cut emissions by 2030.

Eli Kasargod-Staub, co-founder of shareholder advocacy group MajorityAction, said CA100+ investors were abdicating their responsibility to hold directors accountable, given they have now been engaging with companies for five years.

Heatwave Lays Bare Vietnam's Structural Electricity Woes

HANOI (Dispatches) - Vietnam is battling electricity cuts caused by a heatwave that has exposed structural and bureaucratic problems limiting available power to half of installed capacity and crimping efforts to unlock \$15.5 billion in global climate funding.

The manufacturing hub hosts large factories run by tech firms Samsung and Foxconn, among others, but has struggled to upgrade its grid, a key step to satisfy demand and lure companies diversifying from China and elsewhere.

"Many factories have had to suspend production due to severe power cuts, and the cuts are regular," said Hong Sun, chairman of the Korean Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam.

"This is a very serious problem for South Korean companies operating in Vietnam."

And European businesses urged the government this month to move quickly to tackle the power crisis. "Addressing power shortages requires more concerted efforts to ensure efficient decision-making process for electricity market reforms," said Trang Nguyen, head of the Southeast Asia team at Australia's non-profit Climateworks Centre.

But against that backdrop it is unlikely renewable energy will come to the rescue any time soon, however. Despite a recent solar development binge, the Southeast Asian nation home to 100 million people is reliant on coal and hydropower.

It has nearly 80 gigawatts (GW) of maximum installed power capacity, but the heatwave has cut output to less than half that at peak times, data for two-week averages to June 11 from state network operator EVN shows, or not even enough for normal days.

Average peak demand has grown roughly fourfold since 2006 to 42.5 GW in 2021, an EVN presentation showed in February. That left the highly populated and industrialized north short of 4.35 GW during the heatwave, the government has said.

Coal-fired plants accounted for about 60% of electricity output last week, EVN data showed, and May imports of coal, at 4.5 million tons, were the highest since June 2020, according to Refinitiv data. But even coal is falling short, as roughly 25% of capacity at such plants has been idled for repairs, the industry ministry said.

A lack of rain has hit output of hydropower, the No.2 source of electricity, with some northern provinces receiving just about a fifth of last year's figure, weather data show.

Water levels at almost all northern hydropower plants are too low for them to run at more than a quarter of designed capacity, the industry ministry has said.

While solar forms a quarter of Vietnam's installed capacity after a surge in investment in renewable power in the previous decade, little of that has been tapped, due to delays in project approvals, lengthy tariff talks and regulatory uncertainty.

Installed capacity from solar farms and rooftop panels stood at 19.4 GW by the end of 2020, but just 10.5 GW was in use on average at peak time in the heatwave, EVN says.

And few solar energy producers are hooked up to the grid, with many having waited years for tariff agreements. Partly as a result, solar's contribution to Vietnam's power mix is set to drop to 8.5% of installed capacity by 2030, excluding rooftop panels, as other energy sources gain share under a power plan for this decade approved in June. Wind power projects, slowed by administrative hurdles and the COVID-19 pandemic, saw about 12.5 GW go unused by February, after missing a 2021 deadline for government authorisation to sell electricity at more favourable prices, according to an internal document from a member of the Group

Alarming Impact of Ultra-Processed Foods NEW YORK (Dispatches) - In the On Cardiometabolic Health answers were validated through a semi-quantitative food frequency

of Seven (G7) nations seen by Reuters.

last three decades, there has been a significant increase in the prevalence of cardiovascular diseases, which remains a major cause of mortality and morbidity. Simultaneously, an increase in the number of people with cardiometabolic risk (CMR) factors, such as high fasting plasma glucose, hypertension, obesity, and high low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, has been recorded.

Although several studies have established the link between higher ultra-processed food (UPF) consumption and increased incidence of cardiovascular diseases, not many studies have documented how modifying UPF consumption affects CMR factors. Addressing this gap in research, a recent Atherosclerosis journal study investigates how changes in UPF consumption influence CMR factors.

Study: Increased ultra-processed food consumption is associated with worsening in cardiometabolic risk factors in adults with metabolic syndrome: Longitudinal analysis from a randomized trial. Image Credit: aquariagirl1970 / Shutterstock.com Study: Increased ultra-processed food consumption is associated with worsening in cardiometabolic risk factors in adults with metabolic syndrome: Longitudinal analysis from a randomized trial. Image Credit: aquariagirl1970 / Shutterstock.com

Diet plays an important role in preventing the risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Typically, foods with high-density energy but low nutritional content increase CMR factors. Based on the NOVA classification, food, and beverages that are categorized as ultra-processed food (UPF) undergo a high level of industrial processing to make them more palatable, ready-to-eat, and accessible. In the last decade, the rate of UPF consumption has increased significantly. UPF intake has been associated with lower diet quality due to high levels of total and saturated fats, free sugar, and low concentration of fibers, proteins, vitamins, and minerals in these products.



Relevant data were collected during the first 12 months of follow-up of the PREDIMED-Plus study. The PREDIMED-Plus is an ongoing multi-center, randomized clinical trial that was designed to investigate how inten sive weight

semi-quantitative food frequency

questionnaire (FFQ) at baseline, six, and 12 months follow-up. A total of 5,373 participants, 52% of whom were male and 48% female, met all eligibility criteria and were included in the present study. All participants were around 65 years of age. The participants with higher UPF consumption were significantly younger, less physically active, and least adept to adhere to an energy-restricted Mediterranean diet.

Higher intake of UPF was positively associated with waist circumference, weight, diastolic blood pressure, TyG index, HbA1c, triglycerides, and fasting blood glucose. In this context, several sociodemographic and lifestyle characteristics were adjusted.

UPF consumption rate was reduced during the 12 months of follow-up, which could be because participants were instructed on how to adhere to the Mediterranean diet. In this study, UPF presented 7.7% of the total amount of food consumed by weight. The reduction in UPF consumption could be because all participants were obese and had metabolic syndrome at baseline. Thus, changes in their dietary intake could be a part of the healthcare regime.

Based on multivariable-adjusted analyses, higher UPF consumption was associated with obesity and greater waist circumference. However, such an association was not found in the lower UPF consumption group, as these associations exhibited a significant dose. response relationship. After 9.1 years of follow-up, individuals with the highest UPF consumption exhibited an elevated risk of developing hypertension as compared to those with a lower intake of UPF.





Several longitudinal, cross-sectional studies have established the link between UPF consumption and several CMR factors. A French study

revealed that higher consumption of UPF increases the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Another prospective study conducted by Navarra University (SUN) indicated that higher UPF consumption increases the risk of hypertension by 21%. The prospective study analyzed how modifications in UPF consumption influence CMR factors, such as body mass index (BMI), weight, blood pressure, waist circumference, glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c), triglycerides, blood glucose, cholesterol (total, HDL, and LDL), and triglycerides and glucose index (TyG index).

loss intervention related to adherence to the Mediterranean diet, physical activity, and behavior prevents the incidence of cardiovascular diseases.

All participants were recruited between September 2013 and December 2016 from 23 centers across the Spanish territory and randomly assigned to two groups. Both male and female obese participants were employed. All participants had three of the five risk factors of metabolic syndrome, including hypertension, plasma HDL cholesterol, fasting blood glucose, plasma triglycerides, and obesity. Data on participants' dietary intake was obtained through interviews, and

Higher UPF consumption has been strongly linked with an increase in diastolic blood pressure. However, when this effect was studied, no statistically significant association with systolic blood pressure was found when UPF consumption increased by 100 gm/day.

UPF consumption was also associated with unfavorable levels of plasma triglycerides and TyG index but not with total HDL,

and LDL cholesterol. A positive association between total cholesterol and a 5% increment in UPF consumption was estimated.

The current study has several limitations, including the lack of generalizability in the cohort, as it comprised participants whose ages were between 55 and 75 years. In addition, all participants were overweight and had metabolic syndrome at baseline. Additionally, this study followed NOVA classification, which is not a perfect system to classify UPF.

People in Ireland Are the Most Lonely

DUBLIN (Dispatches) - One in five people in Ireland experience loneliness, according to a new survey.

The survey was conducted in November and December 2022 and included more than 25,000 respondents aged 16 and older from all 27 European Union (EU) countries. Overall, 13% of respondents said they felt lonely most or all of the time over the past four weeks, whereas 35% reported experiencing loneliness at least some of the time.

Loneliness was found to be most prevalent in Ireland, where more than 20% of respondents reported feeling lonely, followed by Luxemburg, Bulgaria, and Greece. The lowest levels of loneliness were observed in the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Croatia, and Austria, with less than 10% of respondents reporting feeling lonely. The prevalence of loneliness decreases with older age, as well as increased income and education. People going through major life events, such as separation, job loss, or finishing studies, experience loneliness more often.

The survey defines emotional loneliness as the feeling of a lack of a meaningful relationship with a significant other or a close friend. Social loneliness refers to the experience of an insufficient broader social network, including friends, neighbors, or colleagues. The problem of loneliness is not limited to the EU. According to a recent survey, 17% of American adults reported feeling loneliness "a lot of the day yesterday." The levels of loneliness are the highest among young adults under the age of 30 (24%) and those in lower-income households earning less than \$24,000 per year (27%).

INTERNATIONAL

Turkey's Unemployment Rate Jumps Slightly to 10.2%

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The number of unemployed people in Turkey rose by 0.1 of a percentage point in April from the previous month to 10.2% in April, the country's statistical authority said on Monday.

The number of unemployed persons - aged 15 years old and over - was up by 74,000 month-over-month to 3.58 million in April, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said.

The unemployment rate was 8.1% for men and 14.3% for women in April, the authority noted.

The data also showed a seasonally adjusted measure of labor under-utilization rose 1.7 percentage points to 23.8%. The survey, which was not conducted in some provinces hit by devastating February earthquakes in the previous two months, was carried out throughout the country in April, the TurkStat said.



Iraq's Parliament Finally Approves Budget

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq's parliament belatedly approved a record \$152 billion budget for 2023, after months of wrangling over the sharing of oil revenue between the central government in Baghdad and the semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region in the north. The process was also hampered by infighting between different Iraqi Kurdish parties. The budget — approved six months into the fiscal year and after four chaotic late-night voting sessions — allocates 12.6% of the revenue to the Kurdish region and is seen as strengthening

Baghdad's hand on the oil revenues. The central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish regional government in the city of Irbil have been locked in a dispute over oil revenue for years, while competing Kurdish parties are also at loggerheads over their shares. In the absence of a binding law detailing the sharing of funds from oil and gas exports, the Kurdish region has moved ahead with

exports on its own, while Baghdad has maintained that all exports should be run through the state-owned oil marketing company, SOMO, with Irbil receiving a share of the profits. Under the new budget, the Kurdish region can market its own

oil but must deposit the revenue in a bank account that officials from the central government can monitor. Baghdad will then deduct that amount from its monthly allocation to the Kurdish regional government and transfer any surplus money to Irbil.

The budget vote was dragged out over several days, in part due to objections by the largest Kurdish party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, to the provisions on the revenue sharing process and a related dispute resolution mechanism.

The Shiite majority coalition holds the most seats in the 329-seat Iraqi parliament, with 220 seats. The Kurds, who are the secondlargest ethnic group in Iraq, have about 60 seats, but they are divided between two main parties: the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which are often at odds. The finalization of the budget on Monday was a victory for Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's government, which was formed last year following a lengthy political vacuum in the wake of the 2021 elections. Al-Sudani came to power with the support of the Coordination Framework, a coalition of pro-Iranian parties, after the influential

Shiite cleric and political leader Muqtada al-Sadr — whose party had won the largest share of seats but not enough to form a government — withdrew from politics.

Paralyzed by the political stalemate, the parliament did not pass a budget last year. With a budget now in place for 2023, al-Sudani's government is hoping to combat poverty and bring much-needed economic stability. However, some analysts say the budget is predicated on an overly rosy outlook and warned of a ballooning deficit.

The budget projects 2023 revenue at about \$103.3 billion, based on a projected price of \$70 per barrel for oil exports, the main source of income for Iraq, with exports estimated at 3.5 million barrels a day, including 400,000 thousand barrels from the Kurdish region. The budget estimates a deficit of about \$48 billion

Xi Says Willing to Begin Free Trade Talks With Honduras

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China is willing to begin talks on a free trade agreement with Honduras "as soon as possible", Chinese President Xi Jinping said, during the first visit by the Central American country's president since forming diplomatic ties in March.

Honduras' President Xiomara Castro is on a six-day official visit to China. She launched diplomatic relations with Beijing after cutting ties with its rival, Taiwan, in a bid for more investment and jobs. The country is also seeking support from China to mitigate its debt burden.

China will actively promote Honduran products to enter the Chinese market, Xi was quoted as saying by tate broadcaster CCTV.

China's customs said on Monday it had approved the import of Whiteleg shrimp from Honduras.

Xi said China will unswervingly develop the friendly relations between the two nations and firmly support Honduras' economic and social development.

China also encourages Chinese enterprises to participate in Honduras' projects in areas including energy, nfrastructure and telecommunications, CCTV cited a joint declaration as saying.

The Honduran side is willing to provide policy support and facilitation, CCTV reported.

The Chinese leader also emphasized that both sides should deepen political mutual trust, and uphold the One-China" principle. "One-China principle is the primary premise and political foundation for the establishment of loyal diplomatic relations and the development of bilateral relations," Xi said.

U.S. Oil Output to Rise to Record High in July

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - U.S. oil output from top shale-producing regions is due to rise to the highest on record in July, but the size of the increase is expected to be the smallest since December, U.S. Energy Information Administration data showed.

U.S. oil output is expected to rise to 9.38 million barrels per day (bpd) in July, EIA data showed. Output is due to rise by about 0.1% versus the previous month, which would be the smallest monthly gain since production was seen falling in December, the data showed.

Crude output in the Permian Basin in Texas and New Mexico, the biggest U.S. shale oil basin, is expected to rise by 1,000 bpd to a record-high 5.76 million bpd. That would be the smallest monthly increase for the region since February.

In the Bakken region of North Dakota and Montana, output is due to rise 7,000 bpd to 1.21 million bpd, which would be the highest since November 2020.

Crude oil production in the South Texas

Pakistan Pays in Yuan for Discounted Russian Oil ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan

paid for its first government-togovernment import of discounted Russian crude oil in Chinese currency, the South Asian country's petroleum minister said on Monday, a significant shift in its U.S. dollar-dominated export payments policy.

Discounted crude offers a respite as Pakistan faces an economic crisis with an acute balance of payments problem, risking a default on its external debt. The foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank are scarcely enough to cover a month of controlled imports.

The first cargo of discounted Russian crude oil arranged under a deal struck between Islamabad and Moscow earlier this year arrived in Karachi on Sunday. It is currently being offloaded at the port in the southern city of Karachi.

Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik, speaking to Reuters by telephone, did not disclose the commercial details of the deal, including pricing or the discount that Pakistan received, but said, the "payment (was) made in RMB)".

He said the purchase, Pakistan's first government-to-government (G2G) deal with Russia, consisted of 100,000 tonnes, of which 45,000 tonnes had docked at Karachi port and the rest was on its way. Pakistan made the purchase back in April.

About its grade, he said, it is Urals, adding this is one of the lighter crudes available. Pakistan's purchase gives Moscow a new outlet to add to growing sales to India and China, as it redirects oil from Western markets because of the Ukraine conflict.

Despite being a long-standing Western ally and the arch-rival of neighbouring India, which historically is closer to Moscow, analysts say the crude deal also presents a new avenue for Pakistan at a time when its financing needs are great.

Islamabad earlier this month also outlined a process to open barter trade with Russia, Afghanistan and Iran, another sign of the South Asian economy seeking

avenues to buy and sell commodities without trading in dollars, which analysts say could be a shift from West to East. Pakistan's Refinery Limited (PRL) will initially refine the Russian crude, the minister said. He had earlier referred to the purchase of the shipment as a trial run to judge financial and technical feasibility, but said on Monday that all the tests and trials had been done, which found that the Russian crude was fit to refine and market locally.

He played down concerns around the financial viability and the ability of local refineries to process Russian crude given Pakistan's historical importation of Middle Eastern petroleum products. "We've run iterations of various product mixes, and in no scenario will the refining of this crude make a loss," Malik said, adding: "We are very sure it will be commercially viable.'

Brazil Economists Cut Long-Term Inflation Expectations



BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazilian economists have reduced their long-term inflation expectations, putting an end to months of unchanged projections that the central bank had cited as a cause for concern.

According to the median forecast of a weekly central bank survey on Monday, 2025 inflation projections now stand at 3.9%, down from the previous estimate of 4.0% calculated since March 24. The expectation for 2026 has also decreased to 3.88% from the previous 4.0% forecast since March 17.

China Struggles With Weak Post-COVID Economic Recovery SHIYAN (Dispatches) - Sales of Yizhuan Automobile Co.'s trash trucks picked up after China ended anti-virus controls in

December, but their growth is in low gear as managers struggle to rebuild business lost during the pandemic. China's economy rebounded at the start of 2023, but after a good first quarter, factory output and consumer spending are weakening. An official survey in April found a record 1 in 5 young workers in cities were unemployed.

Yizhuan's sales are up only by single-digit percentages from last year's depressed level, according to its deputy general manager, Yu Xiongli. The 300-employee company is in Hubei province, where the first coronavirus cases were detected in late 2019. "It is still in the process of recovering," Yu said. "Growth is quite slow."

China's economic growth accelerated to 4.5% over a year earlier in the three months ending in March from the previous quarter's 2.9%, but forecasters say the peak of that recovery might already be past.

Growth would need to pick up further to reach the ruling Communist Party's target of "around 5%" for the year. "For now, the ongoing momentum seems not that promising," said UBS economist Zhang Ning.

The economy needs a "domestic demand rebound" with government support to boost confidence for businesses and consumers. Zhang said.

The end of restrictions that isolated cities for weeks at a time and blocked most international travel prompted hopes for a consumer boom. But retail sales are weak. Shoppers are uneasy about the economic outlook and possible job losses and are reluctant to commit to big purchases.

Retail sales in April surged 18.4% over last year's lackluster level, but that was barely half the growth of up to 35% called for by private sector forecasts. Factory output fell 0.5% compared with March and investment growth slowed.

"I have misgivings about spending money," said Xue Liang, who works in information technology in Beijing. "COVID-19 and changes in the international situation have made us worry a lot."



Manufacturing contracted faster in May, according to a survey by the national statistics agency and an industry group. New orders and export orders declined.

Exports in May tumbled 7.5% from a year ago after global consumer demand was depressed by interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve and central banks in Europe and Asia to cool inflation. Exports to the United States plunged 18.2%.

That is a challenge for automakers and other manufacturers that are trying to make up for weak demand at home by selling more abroad.

Tenglong Automobile Co., which makes electric buses in the southwestern city of Xiangyang, sent salespeople to Russia, South Korea and Southeast Asia as soon as travel controls ended to try to revive orders after a three-year gap. Eagle Ford region is due to fall by 5,000 bpd to 1.12 million bpd, the lowest level since April.

Total natural gas output in the big shale basins will increase by about 0.1 billion cubic feet per day (bcfd) to 97.3 bcfd in July, topping an expected record high in June, the EIA projected.

In the biggest shale gas basin, Appalachia in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia, output will rise to 35.4 bcfd in July, the highest since January, the EIA said. That compares with a monthly gas output record in Appalachia of 36.0 bcfd in December 2021.

Gas output in the Permian and the Haynesville in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas will rise to record highs of 22.9 bcfd and 16.6 bcfd in July, respectively.

Gas output in Appalachia was expected to increase even though drillers have been getting less gas out of each new well for 28 months in a row.

EIA said it expects new Appalachia gas well production per rig to drop to 23.7 million cubic feet per day (mmcfd) in July, the lowest since June 2020.

New gas well production per rig in Appalachia hit a record of 33.3 mmcfd in March 2021.

The central bank has consistently expressed concern about increased inflation expectations for long-term horizons in its justifications for the need to keep the benchmark interest rate at a 13.75% cycle-high, which has remained steady since September despite cooling inflation. This policy stance has faced frequent criticism from President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who sees it as hindering economic growth.

Central bank chief Roberto Campos Neto had already emphasized last week that long-term inflation expectations would start to decline, pointing to a clearer economic environment.

The weekly survey also showed lower inflation forecasts for 2023 (5.42% from 5.69%) after consumer prices decelerated more than expected in May.

Nevertheless, the current reading remains well above this year's 3.25% inflation target.

Inflation expectations for 2024 also dropped to 4.04% from 4.12% in the previous week, still above the 3.0% target, which is also the official goal for 2025.

"The improving inflation outlook for 2023 should reduce inertial forces for 2024," Goldman Sachs economist Alberto Ramos wrote in a note to clients. "Furthermore, the improving inflation expectations for 2024 and the longer-term horizon of 2025-26 should be acknowledged and welcomed by the central bank."

Ramos estimated that this scenario should enable the central bank to start cutting rates in August. The next monetary policy decision is scheduled for June 21.

WORLD NEWS

Tehran Hosting Triangular Initiative on Drug Control

TEHRAN (MNA) - Senior officials from Iran and Pakistan started on Wednesday a two-day meeting in Tehran to deepen counter-narcotics cooperation under the framework of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)-brokered Triangular Initiative.

The meeting is part of the series of gatherings foreseen by the Triangular Initiative and aimed at discussing existing drug trafficking threats, regional counter-narcotic strategies, and operational means to improve trilateral cooperation, according to the UNODC website. The Triangular Initiative was launched in 2007 to strengthen cooperation in counter-narcotics law enforcement between the Islamic Republics of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. UNODC serves as its Secretariat; it facilitates the implementation of technical assistance and mobilizes financial support.



IRAN NEWS

India's Outsourcing Giants Cut Hiring; **Disheartening for Economy, Students**

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - India's outsourcing giants are slashing hiring and getting projects done with existing workers, a rare pullback that could weigh on the economy and affect engineering students who have seen information technology as the sector of choice for decades.

The slowdown, triggered by global uncertainty in demand, is unprecedented in an industry that is one of the biggest hirers in India's services sector since the 1990s and provides an assured career path and prosperity to hundreds of thousands of students each year.

"Weak IT hiring could be for two different reasons: short-term negative demand shock or a long-term displacement resulting from labour-saving technologies," said Rohit Azad, an economics professor at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. "The impact of weak hiring would depend on which is the primary cause driving it.

A negative multiplier effect in the immediate would be there nevertheless," Azad added. The IT sector accounts for about 8% of India's GDP versus less than 1% about 30 years

back, according to Rishad Premji, the chairman of Wipro, one of the country's IT giants. Overall, the Indian tech sector employs over 5.4 million people, according to trade group Nasscom, although the number is dominated by the IT sector. About 290,000 new jobs in the tech sector were created in the financial year that ended in March, but Nasscom warned of "global headwinds" in the current year.

With IT employees seen as big spenders on everything from cars, durables and second homes to travel and entertainment, they are likely to have had some effect on the sluggish 0.5% sequential growth in private consumption in January-March.

"Some slowdown in IT hiring intentions could contribute to the flat-lining in consumption that is already underway," said HDFC Bank Principal Economist Sakshi Gupta.

There are pockets of optimism elsewhere in the services sector - especially in accounting, where there is a surge in hiring. But the numbers are still dwarfed by the IT industry.

IT firms, which count global heavyweights such as Apple, Citigroup and American Express among its clients, went on a hiring binge during the pandemic that fuelled a digital services boom.

However, things changed this year as recession fears gripped the world and the collapse of three U.S. regional banks and the forced sale of Europe's Credit Suisse to UBS left the global financial industry shaken, making IT clients across sectors cut spending.

"The post-pandemic phase saw companies ramping up production to meet new demands in the market, leading to a growth in hiring across IT companies. This boom, however, soon fizzled out in the face of the global economic crisis and a looming recession," said Sachin Alug, the CEO of staffing firm NLB Services.

NLB sees a 20-25% drop in IT employee additions in the first half of the current financial year, while TeamLease Digital expects a 40% decrease for the entire year. Jobs portal Naukri.com's parent Info Edge flagged in May that its recruitment business was seeing "cautious" spending by IT customers.

IT bellwether Tata Consultancy Services said this month it had "recalibrated" its hiring after a drop in attrition. It added 22,600 people in the last financial year, taking its overall headcount to 614,795.

Infosys, another IT giant, warned in April its annual revenue growth would hit a six-year low and refrained from its usual practice of setting a target of fresh hires at the start of the financial year.

"We have a lot of bench with us. They are ready to move into production projects," Infosys CFO Nilanjan Roy said at the time.



Nasscom declined comment on the hiring slowdown.

The dismal outlook is worrying many students as the IT sector typically absorbs 20-25% of the 1.5 million engineers who graduate every year in India and was a rare bright spot during the pandemic, when most other industries put hiring on ice.

"Normally, on-campus hiring is easier than off-campus. This year, that kind of flipped," said Gautam, an engineering student in Punjab state, who declined to be identified further. "Some people had their internship revoked or full-time (job offers) revoked too due to cost-cutting.'

He said some of his classmates have decided to study further as they have lost hope of finding a job.

IT firms such as LTIMindtree and Wipro have been accused by an employee's union of trying to cut costs by deferring joining dates and slashing starting salaries.

That has "surely left applicants concerned about future prospects", said staffing firm Xpheno's co-founder Kamal Karanth, who highlighted how current hiring activity was "under a third of what was recorded in the buoyant peak".

LTIMindtree did not respond to a request for comment.

Wipro did not directly address the accusations but said the environment was different from a year ago.

"The race to hire ahead of demand has been replaced by a more measured approach in light of the declining attrition rates and the ongoing economic uncertainty," it said. India's engineers might find it hard to find jobs even beyond the IT sector as startups too have been laying off employees in recent months due to a funding squeeze.

"Even if a few startups do absorb freshers, they would skim the cream off the top, and not match the high volume intakes that the IT services and product enterprises do," Karanth said.

Some industry veterans said Indian students may be better off looking at other industries. 'We have significantly different opportunities that are better sustainable as career paths'' than two decades back, venture capital firm Siana Capital's founder Siddharth Pai said.

Pai highlighted sectors such as financial services, consumer goods, specialised manufacturing, medicine, law, chartered accounting and other services as more viable options.

What's Next for Italy's Coalition After Berlusconi's Death?

ROME (Dispatches) - The death of Silvio Berlusconi will send shockwaves through his Forza Italia party, a member of Italy's right-wing coalition, but analysts believe it could provide a chance for Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni to strengthen her leadership.

Media tycoon Berlusconi founded Forza Italia when he entered politics in 1994. The party always relied on his charismatic leadership, and saw its support dwindle in recent years as health issues limited his political commitment.

Forza Italia is currently the junior partner among the three main parties in the coalition and is seen as a more moderate force compared to Matteo Salvini's League and Meloni's Brothers of Italy.

The support of Forza Italia's 62 lawmakers between the upper and lower house of parliament is crucial for Meloni to maintain a solid majority, but there is scepticism that the party can find a leader able to avoid a break up.

"Forza Italia may die with Berlusconi, it is difficult to replace him, this is a monarchy that ends with the king," Giuliano Cazzola, a former lawmaker who was elected in parliament with Berlusconi, told Reuters.

Analysts believe Forza Italia members will increasingly be tempted to shift allegiance to other parties without Berlusconi keeping them afloat, giving Meloni leeway to snap up lawmakers and broaden her party's ranks.

Sanctions Undermine...

FROM PAGE 1

negatively affects the rights of people to a healthy effectively respond to climate-related security risks.

"Consequently, environmental degradation in Iran UN bodies, as it lacks the expertise and tools to developing countries and help them effectively implement their commitments.

China Now a Game Changer...

FROM PAGE 1

Held in partnership with the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, the Chinese Council for the Promotion of International Trade and the Union of Arab Chambers of Commerce, the 10th Arab-China Business Conference saw officials



meeting in different plenary sessions, discussing deals. The first day of the conference witnessed the signing of 30 investment agreements across various sectors worth \$10 billion, including a \$5.6 billion agreement between the Kingdom's Investment Ministry and Human Horizons, a Chinese developer of autonomous driving technologies and manufacturer of electric cars under the HiPhi brand, to establish a joint venture for automotive research, development, manufacturing and sales.

"China is the Arab world's largest trade partner where the total volume of trade exchange between both sides reached \$430 billion in 2022," Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan said at the opening ceremony of the conference.

Chinese business experts said the Arab-China Business Conference will help strengthen economic ties between the world's second-largest economy and the Arab countries as the world switches from US-dominated unipolar order to multipolar order.

Lin Shunjie, chairman of China International Exhibition Center Group, was quoted as saying that his visit to the Kingdom opened doors of new business opportunities between China and the Arab world, stressing that key strategies should be devised to "encourage Chinese companies to make more investments in the Arab world."

According to the top Saudi diplomat, China is the largest trading partner for Arab countries, and the volume of trade between the two sides reached over \$430bn in 2022, a 31 percent increase from 2021.

Bin Farhan also noted that the theme of the conference "collaborating for prosperity" highlighted the great significance, potential, and common sense that underlies the bilateral investment and trade relations between China and the Arab world.

Rupert Hoogewerf, a researcher who founded the Huron Report, noted that regarding the emergence of new sectors such as renewable energy, fast-growing real estate, and rapid industrialization across the West Asian region, there are huge opportunities for Chinese entrepreneurs.

"There is a lot of ambition to construct new infrastructure here," he was quoted as saying by Arab News, adding that China has a large number of 'young companies that are innovative" and are looking for investment hubs in the region.

On the sidelines of the event, Saudi's Al-Falih announced his country's preparedness to serve as China's gateway to the Arab world as the world's second-largest economy seeks to elevate trade ties with the region.

Reciprocally, China is in urgent need of energy and resources from Arabian countries in order to continue its economic development. According to official Chinese customs data, China's crude oil imports from top supplier Saudi Arabia soared 38 percent in April from a year earlier.

These developments, according to experts, have assumed greater significance as the Arab world, which has traditionally served as the bastion of Western powers, is finally coming out of the shadow.

"China's increases footprints in Arab countries come

environment and a decent standard of living. í Iranís UN envoy pointed out.

The senior Iranian diplomat went on to call for an immediate end to the imposition of sanctions, stating that the unilateral coercive measures act as barriers to the targeted countries' contributions to "climate change mitigation efforts."

"Economic, financial, and technological assistance should be provided to countries in need, and relevant platforms such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the UNFCCC (the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) should address these issues appropriately," Iravani said. He underlined that the Security Council should refrain from encroaching upon the mandates of other

"Iran firmly opposes the idea of linking climate change to international peace and security and strongly rejects any attempts to politicize technical matters such as climate change.

"Climate change is essentially an issue related to sustainable development rather than a matter of international peace and security," the Iranian ambassador to the UN said.

Iravani stressed that the issue needs to be addressed and pursued within the appropriate organs of the United Nations, in accordance with their respective mandates. He stated that developed countries should fulfill their obligations under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, and provide sufficient support, including financial assistance and technology transfer, to

Developing countries, within their capabilities and national circumstances, should receive assistance from the international community to overcome obstacles hindering the implementation of their commitments, the Iranian envoy noted.

Iravani stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite pressing challenges, is determined to honor its commitments, and is organizing with UN support the "International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms" to be held between September 9 and 10 in Tehran.

"The conference aims to bring together all affected countries and interested partners to discuss the means and ways to address the key challenges posed by sand and dust storms, and to find the best solutions and mechanisms possible for mitigating global risks and impacts," he said.

Tehran Denies...

FROM PAGE 1

For nearly a year, Iran has been encouraging internet users in the country to migrate to domestic platforms as access to major social media websites, including Instagram and WhatsApp, remain restricted or banned because of their role in an unrest that broke out in Iran last September and lasted for several months.

Zarepour said "young Iranian experts" had created the platforms that are needed for communications between the people and for other online services.

He suggested that Iran may ease its restrictions on those foreign-based social media platforms that comply with the country's rules. "No one in the country is after cutting the internet or creating restrictions on it," said the minister.

U.S. Bid to...

FROM PAGE 1

Dedov added that the West tries to portray various events related to the conflict in its own favor and interpret that "they are right and we are wrong."

"But we try to circulate the objective picture of the events, what is really happening there and who is responsible for this," he said. The envoy further hailed "wide understanding" in Iran visà-vis the operation in Ukraine and also the threat of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) eastward expansion. "We also appreciate that in Iran there is wide understanding that one of the reasons of the situation is the uncontrollable growth of NATO and its movement towards the East, just embracing one country after another," he said. The ambassador emphasized that NATO expansion would constitute "damage and a threat to our security as well."

amid waning American influence in the region and the transition in the world order, which holds a lot of promise for the region and the world," Hamid Moradi, a regional affairs analyst, told the Press TV website. He referred to the role played by China in facilitating reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia as proof that China has "shattered the theory of U.S. dominance in the Arab world".

An article published by the Wilson Center last week pointed to China's "growing presence in Arab hearts and minds", saying many Arabs today see China "as a friend". It cited a survey from January that said that included 23,000 interviews from respondents in Arab countries and concluded that "China remains more popular than the US".

"America is history as far as the Arab world is concerned. China has replaced it," said Moradi.

So we see China has realized it should strengthen its foothold in the Middle East and among countries by boosting its political influence on the countries because the Chinese now know that if they want to become the world power number one, they need political influence and to be a political actor and game changer, and resumption of ties between Tehran and Rivadh shows that China can be a better actor in the world than the U.S. and we will see more coming from China in the future in terms of showing its political influence.



Former World 100m Champion Died From Childbirth Complications

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Former 100 meters world champion Tori Bowie died from complications during childbirth, U.S. media reported.

The American, who won gold, silver and bronze medals at the Rio Games in 2016 and was crowned world champion a year later, died on May 3 at the age of 32. An autopsy report from the Orange County (Florida) Medical Examiner's Office obtained by USA TODAY Sports said Bowie was approximately eight months pregnant and experiencing labour when she died.

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SPORTS

Nuggets Beat Heat To Win First NBA Title

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Denver Nuggets beat the Miami Heat 94-89 today to bring a first NBA title to Mile High City, with Serbian big man Nikola Jokic scoring 28 points and being named the Most Valuable Player of the Finals.

With a raucous capacity crowd packed into Ball Arena ready to celebrate, the Nuggets ended a 47-year championship wait by taking the best-of-seven series 4-1.

Once again the Nuggets were led by Jokic, who hitfor a double-double of 28 points and 16 rebounds to cap a dominating postseason performance.

"The job is done, we can go home now," said Jokic, whose trophy case also includes two NBA MVP Awards. "It was an amazing effort by the team.

"That is why basketball is a fun sport, it is a live thing, you cannot say this going to happen, there are so many factors.

"I'm just happy we won the game."

IRAN NEWS

Michael Porter Jr. contributed 16 points and 13 rebounds to the Denver cause while Canadian Jamal Murray chipped in with 14 points.

Jimmy Butler led Miami with 21 points.

The eighth-seeded Heat had defied the odds throughout the postseason, taking out the Milwaukee Bucks, New York Knicks and Boston Celtics, but the challenge facing them today was a near impossible one.

Of the 36 teams that have fallen behind 3-1 in an NBA Finals only one, the 2016 Cleveland Cavaliers, came back to claim the Larry O'Brien Championship Trophy.

Making the task even more daunting, Ball Arena has been a virtual fortress for the Nuggets, who were 9-1 at home during the postseason coming into Game Five.

That one loss, however, coming to Miami in Game Two.

It was all hands on deck for the Heat with guard Tyler Herro, who had been out of action for nearly two months with a broken right hand, made available for the game but never got on the floor.

Miami started smartly, jumping ahead 5-0 before the Nuggets shifted into gear and went on a 12-0 run, whipping the crowd into frenzy.

But after a timeout the refocused Heat went on a 11-2 run of their own to retake lead as a wild opening quarter ended with Miami up 24-22.

In the second quarter turnovers and poor shooting continued to plague the Nuggets as they went a woeful 1-15 from beyond the arc while the resilient Heat held steady in the Ball Arena pressure cooker, taking a 51-44 advantage into the break.

The Nuggets came out with urgency in a bruising third quarter that finished with the Heat clinging to a 71-70 lead.

Hoping to send the series back to Miami for Game Six, Butler tried to come to the rescue late in the fourth scoring eight consecutive points, two free throws putting the Heat ahead 89-88 with just under two minutes remaining.

But the Nuggets would not be denied, a Bruce Brown lay-up giving Denver a 90-89 lead they would never let go.

Standing on the podium celebrating a first championship, Nuggets coach Michael Malone took the opportunity to fire up supporters even more, telling them more titles were on the way.

"I've got news for everyone out there," Malone said. "We are not satisfied with one."

French Amateur Club Land 160,000 Euro Windfall

PARIS (Dispatches) - French club SC Malesherbois have received a payment from the FIFA Clearing House worth more than their annual budget for their role in developing a player sold to a top European club, world soccer's governing body said on Tuesday.

FIFA's centralized clearing house was launched in November last year with the aim of bringing "transparency and accountability" amid efforts to crack down on the multi-billion dollar global transfer market.

THURSDAY JUNE 15, 2023



BEIJING (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi confirmed he "doesn't think" he will play at another World Cup in an interview with Chinese media, after the 35-year-old led Argentina to victory at last year's tournament in Qatar.

"I have said several times before that I don't think so, that that (2022) was my last World Cup," he said when asked by China's Titan Sports in a video interview if he might feature at the 2026 tournament in North America.

"I will see how things go but in theory I don't think I will be around for the next World Cup," he added in Spanish in the video published on the app Kuaishou.

The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner is currently in Beijing where Argentina will play a friendly against Australia on Thursday. His comments come after he said earlier this year to Argentinian newspaper Ole that it would be "very difficult" to play at another World Cup.

He will turn 39 during the next tournament. Messi last week announced he would join MLS side Inter Miami after his two-year deal with Paris Saint-Germain came to an end.

Argentina will play Thursday's friendly against Australia at the 68,000-capacity Workers' Stadium in Beijing.



AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) - On the face of it there was nothing extraordinary about Canadian Milos Raonic's 50th tour level win on grass in the opening round of this week's 's-Hertogenbosch tournament a 6-3 6-4 defeat of Miomir Keemanovic.

The big-serving 32-year-old was once a regular in the second week of Grand Slam tournaments and he reached the Wimbledon final in 2016 when he was beaten by Andy Murray. But the injuries that had nagged him throughout his career returned with a vengeance in 2021 and after three months out with leg injuries another comeback stalled and he took a hiatus from the game that looked like becoming permanent.

So Monday's win over Kecmanovic was an emotional one for the Montenegro-born

right-hander whose breakthrough inspired a new generation of Canucks such as Felix Auger-Aliassime and Denis Shapovalov and 2021 US Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez. "It's nice to be here after almost two years now and stepping away for a long time," Raonic told ATPTour.com.

"It's nice to be giving it one more try and hopefully going as far as I can. I've put in the best effort I could, and I want to see how far it takes me."

Raonic looked composed throughout the contest in which he offered plenty of glimpses of the serving power and thunderous forehand, but conceded he had been nervous.

"I didn't get to hit a single tennis ball for a full year, now I get to play in front of a bunch of people," Raonic said. "It was pretty nerve-racking, I forgot that feeling."

Raonic, who is playing with a protected ranking, said he is taking things 'day by day' and just enjoying the ride, after his long time away.

"It's been a little heartbreaking a lot of the time when I couldn't do anything and it's nice for me to be here one more time," he said.

"I get the chance to be on court, the chance to play, I get the chance to compete, to put in the work, and I get a chance to see how far it takes me, so I'm thankful."



Friday, an unintended consequence of the expansion to 24 teams is quickly becoming apparent, with six teams already given at least a 95 per cent chance of making it to Germany with only two rounds of matches played.

Euros Expansion Leaves

Drama-Lite Qualifying

With 20 teams qualifying automatically as the top two in each group and another three via playoffs, along with hosts Germany, a huge swathe of the event's jeopardy has been removed at the top end.

Research simulation by data company Nielsen Gracenote predicts that Switzerland (98 per cent chance of reaching Euro 2024 without playoffs), Portugal (98 per cent), France (98 per cent), England (97 per cent), Belgium (97 per cent) and Serbia (96 per cent) already have one foot in the finals despite still having the vast majority of their qualifiers to play.

Croatia, Poland, Czech Republic, Spain, and the Netherlands are also expected to

Happy Return for Raonic After Two-Year Heartbreak

But for the former world number three it marked the end of an injury nightmare that sidelined him for two years and made him doubt whether he would ever play again.

progress, all having over an 80 per cent chance of direct qualification despite losing or drawing one of their opening games, as are Hungary, who have played one game. Another five teams have at least an 80 per cent chance of finishing in the top two of their groups. Gracenote predicts the 20 most likely automatic qualifiers to be Switzerland, Portugal, France, England, Belgium, Serbia, Croatia, Poland, Czech Republic, Spain, Hungary, the Netherlands, Denmark, Scotland, Romania, Italy, Wales, Slovenia, Austria and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is a very different story to the tense campaigns that preceded the tournament when it comprised four teams up to 1980, when it expanded to eight, and 16 from 1996 until the 2021 edition when it first moved to 24. Qualifying matches were huge occasions, where one slip could and did cause a pedigree team to miss out. Despite being the reigning champions, Italy failed to qualify in 1972 and also missed 76, 84, when they were world champions, and 92. It was the same situation for France who missed out in 88 following their 1984 triumph, which itself was a rare highlight coming after five successive failures to qualify from 64-80.

Brazil to Play Spain at Santiago Bernabeu in Anti-Racism Campaign

MADRID (Dispatches) - Brazil will play a friendly match against Spain at the Bernabeu in March next year as part of an anti-racism campaign in support of Real Madrid forward Vinicius Jr, the Spanish FA (RFEF) president Luis Rubiales said.

Rubiales and his Brazilian FA (CBF) counterpart, Ednaldo Rodrigues, met in Madrid to launch their joint movement to combat racism under the slogan "One skin".

The agreement follows the racist insults 22-year-old Vinicius suffered in a LaLiga match at Valencia in May, the 10th such incident against the player that LaLiga has reported to prosecutors this season.

"It is important to understand that harder punishment needs to be applied in cases of racism by the football authorities," Rodrigues told a news conference.

"Fines are not enough. The clubs need to be held accountable too. CBF was the first football federation to adopt harder sanctions for cases of racism, such as the deduction of points in league standings, closure of stands or the lifetime expulsion of club members.

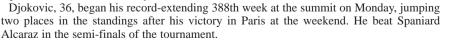
"We need to lead a campaign worldwide to fight against this virus that ashamed everyone in football."

Last month, the CBF also launched a national campaign against racism in Brazilian league matches with the slogan "There is no game with racism".

Brazil, five-time world champions, are in the region for matches against Guinea in Barcelona on Saturday and Senegal in Lisbon three days later.

Djokovic Returns to World Number One

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic reclaimed the world number one ranking from Carlos Alcaraz after winning his men's record 23rd Grand Slam title at the French Open, while Rafa Nadal dropped out of the top 100 for the first time in 20 years.



Alcaraz dropped to second place while Daniil Medvedev, who crashed out in the first round, also slid one place down to third. Roland Garros runner-up Casper Ruud remained in fourth place.

Nadal, a 14-times French Open champion, has endured an injury-plagued season and not played since January because of a hip injury sustained during the Australian Open.

The 37-year-old has dropped from 15th to 136th in the rankings due to his continued absence from the tour. He underwent surgery earlier this month and is expected to be out for five months. In the women's rankings, Iga Swiatek retained top spot after defending her French Open title. She has held the ranking since April 2022, moving to the summit following Ash Barty's retirement.

Aryna Sabalenka, who won the Australian Open in January, had the chance to overtake Swiatek but lost to Karolina Muchova in the semi-finals and remained in second place. French Open finalist Muchova climbed from 43rd to a career-high 16th.



