

Appreciating Iran's Constructive Role in the Relations Between the Two Countries, Iraq President Abdul Latif Rashid Said in Meeting With Seyyed Kamal Kharrazi, President Of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations

IRAN NEWS

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic Of Iran to Afghanistan Met and Discussed With the Head of the Afghanistan Railway Department About the Expansion of Cooperation In the Khaf-Herat Railway Sector

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Iran, Uzbekistan Must Employ Commonalities To Enhance Ties

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Iran and Uzbekistan should employ all commonalities to expand relations in various fields.

Ayatollah Khamenei received President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan in Tehran on Sunday.

The Leader said the two countries share unique historical, cultural and scientific attributes.

Ayatollah Khamenei commended a new phase in bilateral relations after a long suspension and said that for years the scope of relations between Iran and Uzbekistan was "very limited."

The Leader said President Mirziyoyev's visit and talks with senior Iranian officials would hopefully open the door to a better future in relations.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has the capability to connect Uzbekistan to high seas through Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. And the grounds for bilateral cooperation exceed trade and transportation," Ayatollah Khamenei stated.

The Leader said innovations in a variety of scientific and technological fields can lead to the improvement of cooperation. **See Page 7**

CBI Says Annual GDP Grew to 4% Last Year



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) grew four percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20), according to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

The CBI put the GDP growth at 3.5 percent excluding oil, Tasnim News Agency reported.

According to CBI data, the GDP growth was positive in all four quarters of the previous year so that from the first quarter to the end of the fourth quarter of the said year, the economic growth rate of the country was 1.9 percent, 3.9 percent, 4.9 percent, and 5.3 percent, respectively.

As reported, based on the fixed prices in the Iranian year 1395 (ended on March 20, 2017), the country's GDP stood at 15.15 quadrillion rials (about \$30.7 billion) including the oil sector, and at 13.8 quadrillion rials (about \$28.13 billion) excluding the oil sector in the past year.

Earlier this month, the World Bank (WB) in its latest report dubbed "Global Economic Prospects" estimated a 2.2 percent growth for Iran's economy in 2023, a figure which is higher than the average growth forecast for the global economy and despite the fact that the country is still under sanctions imposed by the United States.

The bank has predicted that due to the contractionary monetary policy adopted by many countries this year, the average economic growth in the world is expected to decrease from 3.1 percent in 2022 to 2.1 percent in 2023.

Based on the WB report, Iran's GDP grew by 4.7 percent in the last quarter of the previous year, while the average GDP growth for most of the advanced countries like the U.S., China, and many European countries was less than the said figure.

In terms of economic growth, Iran ranked 15th among the world's 72 major economies in Q4 2022, which means that only 14 countries had higher economic growth than Iran in this period.

Iran's 4.7 percent GDP growth in Q4 2022 was achieved, while the average economic growth of developed countries was only 1.2 percent in this period.

The U.S. economy grew by only 0.9 percent in the mentioned period, the Eurozone by 1.8 percent and Japan by 0.4 percent.

According to the WB data, Iran's economy experienced a 2.9 percent growth in 2022; the average growth rate in West Asia and North African economies in 2022 was 5.9 percent.

Iran, EAEU Likely to Sign Free Trade Pact

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk says Iran and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are expected to sign a free trade zone agreement by the end of the year.

In an interview with Russia's TASS news agency on Monday, Overchuk reported "progress" in talks between Iran and the EAEU, which also include Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, saying they are in their final stages.

"We very much hope that such an agreement can be signed by the end of the year."

The agreement would replace and expand an interim accord that already provides a reduction in customs duties on hundreds of categories of goods.

Russia has sought to deepen its economic and trade ties with Iran since February 2022 when it came under an inclusive regime of Western sanctions because of the war in Ukraine.

Iran and Russia have signed major deals in recent months to expand their cooperation in areas of energy and manufacturing as the two countries aim to unite in their efforts to offset the impacts of foreign sanctions on their economies. **See Page 7**

Pakistan Gov't Urged To Import Iranian Oil

LAHORE (Dispatches) - The central president of Tehreek-i-Istiqlal of Pakistan has suggested the government import Iranian oil to curb its smuggling.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, Rehmat Khan Wardag said the supply of smuggled diesel from Iran was thwarting the business of local oil marketing companies and making their investments worth billions go to waste.

He demanded the government immediately ban the smuggling of Iranian diesel into the country.

Mr Wardag referred to the exit of Shell Oil Company from Pakistan. He said major petroleum companies were leaving due to the smuggling. He said the cost of doing business had increased, making it impossible for large and small companies to meet their expenses. The large companies were unable to pay salaries to their employees, he claimed. Mr Wardag suggested the government should import Iranian oil or allow the petroleum companies to do so.

Mr Wardag also urged the government to introduce barter trade with neighboring countries or use local and Chinese currencies to end its dependence on the US dollar. This, he said, would stabilize the economy and curb inflation. The development of the agriculture sector should be among the top priorities so that Pakistan could become self-sufficient in food production, he said.

Drug Smuggling Into Iran Down by 15%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The flow of narcotics into Iran has decreased by about 15 percent over the past four years, Eskandar Momeni, the secretary general of the Iranian anti-narcotics headquarters, has said.

The impact of dismantling the financial foundations of drug traffickers has increased by about 10 times over the past three to four years, he said, adding "This has led to a decrease of 15 percent in the entry of drugs into Iran."

"The rising trend of drug production in Afghanistan started about 20 years ago, after the occupation of Afghanistan by NATO and the United States.

Therefore, the smuggling of narcotics has increased almost 50 times, that is, from about 200 tons in 2000 to more than 9,000 tons," Momeni said, ISNA reported.

In May, Momeni said some 1,700 regional and international drug gangs were dismantled by Iran in the year 2022.

Iran is located next to Afghanistan, the largest producer of opioids, the second largest producer of cannabis, and recently the producer of glass (methamphetamine), he added. **See Page 7**

WHO, Japan Provide Iran With MRI Machines

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The World Health Organization (WHO) has delivered the first 3 MRI machines as a part of a project that is funded by the Government of Japan aimed at strengthening the diagnostic capacity of the Islamic Republic of Iran's health system.

The state-of-the-art 1.5-Tesla MRI scanners will be installed in hospitals identified by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, according to the WHO website.

A total of 6 MRI machines will be delivered through the implementation of this project. The first 3 machines arrived at target hospitals, namely, Kosar Hospital in Semnan, Hajar Hospital in Shahrekord, and Pasteur Hospital in Bam.

The installation process started immediately and will be completed in the next few weeks. Two other machines, destined for 12 Farvardin Hospital in Kahnooj and Imam Ali Hospital of Andimeshk, are scheduled to arrive by 21 June.

The sixth machine will arrive by 7 July and will be delivered to Shohada Hospital in Neyriz.

"Previously there were only 2 MRI machines in Shahrekord, one in a public hospital and one in a private imaging center," said Dr Neda Seyfi, Head of Hajar Hospital.

"The addition of the new machine will increase the capacity of the public sector in providing affordable diagnostic services to both the people of Shahrekord and adjacent towns."

The Chancellor of Semnan University of Medical Sciences, Dr Kamran Qods said, "Semnan University of Medical Sciences provides health care to about 70% of the province's population, yet the lack of an MRI machine was the missing link in the chain of our health services.

With this machine provided thanks to the People of Japan, the people of the province will have access to affordable MRI services."

MRI is a noninvasive imaging technology with a broad spectrum of clinical applications in the detection and diagnosis of various conditions, as well as treatment monitoring.

The machines provided within this humanitarian project will increase the capacity of the national health system for the diagnosis of diseases. **See Page 7**

Israeli Forces Kill 4 Palestinians, Injure Dozens in Jenin Shootout

BEIRUT (Dispatches)- Israeli special forces have killed at least four Palestinians and wounded dozens of others during heavy clashes that broke out between resistance fighters and the regime's troops after the latter carried out a raid in the occupied northern West Bank city of Jenin.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said in a statement on Monday that at least 45 Palestinians were wounded with live ammunition and several were listed in serious and critical condition, official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

The ministry identified the Palestinian victims as Khaled Asa'sah, 21, Ahmad Saqer, 15, Qassam Abu Siryie, 29, and 21-year-old Qais Jabareen.

According to local sources, violent clashes erupted between Israeli forces and Palestinian gunmen in the Jenin refugee camp and the al-Jabriyat neighborhood, with resistance fighters detonating homemade explosives as Israeli military vehicles passed by.

Several vehicles were damaged and set on fire as a result.

Footage shared by Palestinian media outlets showed Israeli army vehicles engulfed in smoke after apparently being hit by homemade explosive devices. **See Page 7**

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FM to Visit Qatar, Oman

TEHRAN (MNA) – Qatari media outlets reported that Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian is scheduled to visit Qatar and Oman.

Citing several Iranian officials who requested anonymity, the Arab media said that Amirabdollahian was to leave Tehran last night. His trip will be carried out in line with the Iranian government's "neighborhood diplomacy" to follow up on issues of common concern and strengthen bilateral relations, the report added.

The foreign ministries of Iran, Qatar, and Oman have not commented on the subject so far.

Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq recently paid a visit to Tehran and met with high-ranking Iranian officials.

Resistance Most Efficient Strategy to End Israel Occupation

TEHRAN (MNA) - Resistance is the most efficient strategy to end the 75-year occupation of Palestine, Iran's Supreme National Security Council of Iran said.

General Ali-Akbar Ahmadian made the remarks in a meeting with Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on Monday.

Palestine is the main issue in the Islamic world, he said, adding that strengthening the unity among Muslims, especially the regional players of the Resistance, will cause the greatest damage to the Zionist enemy and its supporters.

Explaining the efforts of the enemies to create division among the Resistance groups, Ahmadian stated, "The unity and support of the Resistance groups to the Islamic Jihad movement in the recent war disappointed the Zionist enemy."

Iran's top security official hailed the Resistance of Hamas against the Zionist enemy, and said, "The Palestinian Resistance, which once fought to defend itself in



Gaza, has reached a stage of preparation where it is now consolidating its presence in the West Bank."

Ismail Haniyeh, for his part, appreciated the distinguished and effective role of the Islamic Republic in strengthening unity and cooperation in the Islamic world and the Palestinian Resistance groups.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh arrived in Tehran on Monday morning.

The trip is being held at the invitation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Hamas delegation is supposed to hold meetings with Iranian officials and exchange opinions regarding the political and field developments related to Palestine.

Talks Underway to Send Manpower Overseas

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An official at the Ministry of Labor, Cooperatives and Social Welfare said that talks are underway with neighboring Qatar and also two other countries for dispatching manpower.

Paving the way for dispatching competent manpower to other countries is among the moves that can be taken to help those seeking jobs, Deputy Minister of Labor for Employment Affairs Mahmoud Karimi Beiranvand said.

Reducing the employment rate, creating diversity in the country's revenues, transferring technical and engineering experiences, and preserving the dignity of the workforce are among other advantages of dispatching workforce overseas, he added.

Given the young population and high unemployment rate in the country among graduates of academic centers, dispatching competent manpower overseas can be a positive step in line with the growth and development of the country, the deputy labor minister opined.

Many countries have requested Iran to send manpower to these countries, he said, adding, "This issue was raised in the recent meeting of the Iranian and Qatari labor ministers."

Organizing the dispatch of manpower overseas is one of the programs on the agenda of the ministry, he stated.

Resistance Brings Palestinians Closer to Victory Over Israeli Regime

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi insists that acts of resistance by brave Palestinians have brought them ever closer to triumph over the occupying Israeli regime.

"With Jihad and resistance, we will approach victory day by day," the Iranian president further emphasize on Sunday in a meeting with visiting Secretary-General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement, Ziad al-Nakhaleh, and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, President Raisi also hailed the persisting struggle of the Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian resistance movements fighting the growing atrocities of Israeli forces across occupied Palestine.

The president once again reiterated the Islamic Republic's support for the oppressed Palestinian nation and their "just cause," which he said "remains the cause of all Muslims."

He went on to call for more unity among the entire forces of different resistance factions.

Nakhaleh had previously met and held talks earlier in the week with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who lauded the latest victory of Islamic Jihad forces against the Israeli regime while reiterating that the growing power of Palestinian resistance groups is the key to forcing the occupying regime to its knees..

Nakhaleh, who arrived in Tehran last week, also met on Sunday Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, who, for his part, praised the great achievements made by the Islamic Jihad in confronting the Israeli occupation forces during its five-day aggression against the besieged Gaza Strip.

Amirabdollahian also underlined the significance to maintain unity among all Palestinian factions while warning against persisting Israeli plots to sow discord among them.

He also stressed that the "racist" Israeli regime is the "main source of insecurity and instability in the region," calling on Muslim nations to take "a coordinated and effective action to stop crimes against humanity committed by Israel against the oppressed people of Palestine and to defend the Islamic sanctuaries in al-Quds."

For his part, Nakhaleh briefed Iran's top diplomat on the latest developments across occupied Palestine, particularly the May battle dubbed "Revenge of the Free People."

He further expressed his appreciation for Iran's unwavering support for the Palestinian people and resistance forces.

No Obstacle Gets in Way of Iran's Enhancing Ties With Neighbors

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says no obstacle can hinder the expansion of the Islamic Republic's relations with the neighbors.

Addressing a meeting of high-ranking delegations of Iran and Uzbekistan in Tehran on Sunday, Raisi said the enhancement of Tehran-Tashkent relations would be beneficial to both nations.

The Iranian president placed a premium on drawing up a roadmap for developing comprehensive cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan and implementing bilateral agreements.

Raisi said Iran's active and successful participation in the international industrial exhibition in Tashkent in April demonstrated Tehran's resolve to improve mutual trade and commercial relations.

He urged the relevant ministers of both countries to come up with a list of goods for preferential tariffs within the next two weeks, based on a bilateral agreement on preferential trade.

Pointing to historical and civilizational ties between Iran and Uzbekistan, Raisi said the two countries enjoy capacities for the improvement of cooperation.

The Iranian president said the current visit by his Uzbek counterpart to Tehran is a major step towards deepening cooperation.

The two countries, Raisi said, seek to double trade exchanges at the first phase and then increase them to three billion dollars.



The Iranian president urged both countries to follow up on bilateral agreements in the fields of economy and trade, transportation and transit, science and technology, agriculture, medical and pharmaceutical equipment in order to develop relations and exchange capacities.

The Iranian chief executive said the country

has managed to turn threats and sanctions into an opportunity for progress.

Raisi expressed Iran's readiness to share its experience in various scientific and economic fields with Uzbekistan.

The president stressed that the Islamic Republic does not see any "obstacles in the way of expanding relations with neighboring countries."

In the presence of Raisi and his Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Iran and Uzbekistan signed 10 documents for cooperation in a host of fields in Tehran on Sunday.

Mirziyoyev is the first Uzbek president to visit Iran in 20 years.

At the meeting with Raisi, he expressed Uzbekistan's interest in expanding cooperation with Iran in the fields of science, technology, transportation, energy infrastructure, medicine, and agriculture.

President Mirziyoyev invited Iranian companies and private sector activists to participate in Uzbekistan's economic projects.

Developing Relations With African States on Iran's Agenda

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says developing relations with African countries enjoys a special place in Iran's foreign policy.

The top diplomat made the remarks during a meeting in Tehran on Sunday with the visiting secretary general of Burkina Faso's Foreign Ministry, Issa Boro.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has put development of relations with African countries on its [foreign policy] agenda," the Iranian foreign minister said. Amirabdollahian also welcomed further expansion of bilateral relations between the two countries.

He added that holding of the two countries' joint commission meeting in the near future will be a good opportunity for improving mutual relations in the fields of economy, commerce, science, and education.

The African official, for his part, said the main goal of his trip to Tehran was exploring various areas of interest to both countries, especially with regard to their economic relations.

Boro stressed that his country is determined to reopen an embassy in Tehran and send an ambassador.

He added that the necessary ground is prepared for deepening and expansion of bilateral relations in all areas in view of both countries' determination to boost their ties and also considering Iran's engineering capabilities and major advances.

Earlier on Sunday, the Burkinabe official had met with Ali Bagheri Kani, Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs, who similarly stressed that Tehran sought to develop its relations with Ouagadougou.

Iran aims to boost ties with Burkina Faso, welcomes embassy opening: Deputy FM

Amirabdollahian spoke with his Burkinabe counterpart, Olivia Rouamba, on the phone last April, emphasizing the Islamic Republic's resolve to strengthen ties with all African countries, including Burkina Faso.

Interior Ministry Commissioned to Establish National Immigration Organization

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Seventh Development Plan has commissioned the interior ministry to establish the national migration organization with the aim of organizing immigrants and facilitate their affairs.

Iran's Ministry of Interior should establish the national migration organization to organize immigrants and facilitate their affairs, according to Article 85, Chapter 18 of the Seventh Development Plan.

Interior Ministry is entitled to collect legal and illegal immigrants' data in an integrated online reference database in cooperation with the foreign ministry, intelligence ministry, Statistical Center of Iran, Law Enforcement Command Headquarters, National Organization for Civil Registration and other executive bodies of the organization.

Iran's interior ministry should establish a mechanism for the identification and determination of immigrants within six months after announcing Seventh Development Plan to facilitate deporting the illegal immigrants from the country.

Iran Reports Increased Steel Output in March-May

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian steelmakers have ramped up production of steel ingots and other products during the first two months of the Iranian calendar year (March 21 to May 21, 2023), according to the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA).

ISPA figures published on Sunday showed that Iranian steel companies had produced a total of 6.319 million metric tons (mt) of steel ingots, including slabs, blooms, and billets in the two months to late May, an increase of 7.4% compared to the same period last year.

Additionally, Iranian steelmakers produced 3.932 million mt of finished steel products, including rebars, wire rods, angles, and different types of sheets, during the two months to May 21, an increase of 3.6% year on year.

Furthermore, the production of sponge iron, a key component in steelmaking, reached 6.723 million mt in March-May, up 2.8% from the same period last year.

Navy Chief Tours Pakistan to Discuss Maritime Security

TEHRAN (MNA) – Heading a military delegation, Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani has started three-day official visit to Islamabad at the invitation of his Pakistani counterpart.

Upon arrival at the international airport in Islamabad, the Iranian delegation was welcomed by a group of Pakistani Navy officials.

While attending the headquarters of the Pakistan Navy in Islamabad, Admiral Irani is going to meet with Chief of the Pakistan's Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi.

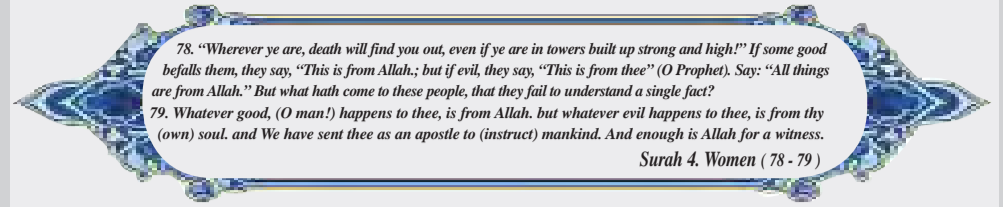
The expansion of bilateral cooperation in the field of maritime security, training and exchange of delegations will be among the most important topics in the talks between the Iranian delegation and the Pakistani military officials.

Holding meetings with Lt. Gen. Syed Asim Munir, chief of Pakistan's army, Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar, the commander of the Pakistan Air Force and paying a visit to some naval centers in Islamabad and Karachi will be among the plans of this visit.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:44
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:02
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:48



Iraq, Afghanistan Return Iran Gasoline

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters' Union (OPEX) Hamid Hosseini says Iraq and Afghanistan provide their required gasoline from Uzbekistan and Russia because it is with higher standards and for this reason the Taliban do not seek importing gasoline from Iran due to its low quality.

Hosseini said that it is for a while that Iraq and Afghanistan have turned to buy gasoline from Uzbekistan and Russia due to its good quality and these two countries have improved the standards for their imports. He added that the demand for high quality gasoline and products has been the main reason for Iran's exported gasoline to Afghanistan and these two countries do not buy low quality goods any longer.

He went on to say that the exported gasoline to Afghanistan has not been the product of



mother refinery and small refineries have produced it which is not in the standard level.

Hosseini added that with the increase in quality of exporting products of other countries have led to shrink of Iran's exporting market while in the past even up to 90% of oi products exporting markets were in hands of Iran.

He added that with this change in taste and demand, the small refineries are unable to improve their quality of products because the Headquarters of the Iranian Anti-Smuggling Task Force have ordered the refineries that they should not produce any product similar to what is produced in the mother refineries.

He said small refineries produce low quality product and it is rejected by the domestic customers and therefore is exported. He said that small refineries should be granted the license for producing products with better quality like Euro3 gasoline and gasoil in order that the country does not face with fuel supply in the summer.

Hosseini noted that although Uzbekistan and Russia sell good quality gasoline, Afghan customers still demand Iran's gasoline and they have accepted all consequences and costs and in some cases the exported product to Afghanistan is returned and it has nothing to do with Iranian exporter because he has sold his product and has taken its money.

Iran to Soon Add Newly-Bought Planes To Its Aviation Fleet

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of the Civil Aviation Organization says a number of newly-bought planes will be added to the country's aviation fleet amid increasing travel demand this summer.

Mohammad Mohammadi Bakhsh said that the purchased aircraft will be supplied to Iranian airlines within the next few days.

Mohammadi Bakhsh said some 50 planes had been added to Iran's aviation fleet over the 18 months to March.

Earlier this year, he had said that Iran's aviation industry, which remains under US sanctions, needs some 550 passenger planes to function properly.

Following the nuclear deal of 2015, Iran placed orders for purchases of 200 brand-new passenger planes from Western suppliers, including Airbus and Boeing.

The contracts, however, were suspended in 2018 after the United States withdrew from the accord and unilaterally restored sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Iran, Uzbekistan Signed Comprehensive Transport, Transit MoU

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran and Uzbekistan transport ministers signed an MoU in Tehran to promote comprehensive transport and transit cooperation.

The provisions of the MoU included strengthening transport and transit cooperation in international transport corridors, improving transit routes, developing road and rail transport, facilitating the connection of Iran to the Central Asian countries through the territory of Uzbekistan, removing all official duties for the road fleet in the territory of each country and facilitating all transport processes between the two countries.

The two sides emphasized harmonizing international transport processes.

Moreover, Iran and Uzbekistan decided to improve supply chain management in transport and target freight transit between the two countries up to 5 million tons per year. To this end, it was decided to prepare an action plan within three months.

Development of transit routes between Iran and Uzbekistan, especially through multimodal transport and commercialization of the southern branch of the



East-West Corridor from the southern ports of Iran to Central Asia were among other provisions of this MoU.

In the meeting, Uzbekistan Railways was urged to make necessary efforts to increase its rail freight through Iran territory to third countries.

In order to activate the rail corridor from/to China, from/to Turkey and Europe, it was decided that the parties should hold meetings with the railways of involved countries to determine the competitive tariff along the entire route and to decide on how to supply wagons and take the necessary measures.

Additionally, the two parties expressed their willingness to increase the number of regular flights and to hold specialized aviation training courses and cooperation in commercial aviation through the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran.

Iran announced its readiness to provide incentives related to maritime and port services for freight transit from Uzbekistan through the southern ports of Iran.

News Code 202186

SalamAir Announces Direct Flights to Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - SalamAir announced bi-weekly direct flights from Sohar Airport to Shiraz Airport in the Islamic Republic of Iran starting from the next month - July 5, 2023.

Oman's SalamAir, the fastest growing airline in the Sultanate, has announced a direct flight from Sohar Airport to Shiraz in Iran, one-way, on Wednesdays and Fridays, starting from July 5, 2023.

SalamAir is a low-cost airline from Oman headquartered and based at Muscat International Airport.

Salam Air is owned by the Muscat National Development and Investment Company (ASAAS) which won a government tender in January 2016. Founded in 2014, ASAAS is a partnership between the State General Reserve Fund, Muscat Municipality, and various pension funds. Oman's Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) had invited bids in 2015 for a low-cost commercial airline operator in Oman.

According to reports, its fleet has only 11 planes.



Aquatics Trade Balance Becomes \$\$54m in 2 Months

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran's balance of foreign trade of aquatics in the first two months of the current Persian calendar year (March 21 to April 22) reached +\$54 million, according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

IRICA added that Iran exported \$58 million worth of aquatics overseas from March 21 to April 22, 2023 while the country imported nearly \$4 million worth of aquatics.

Iran's export of aquatics reached from \$44 million in the previous year to \$58 million in the first two months of the current year, registering a 29 percent growth compared to the same period of last year, FARS news agency reported.

Over 973 tons of aquatics, valued at \$4 million, were imported into the country in the first two months of this year, showing a 174 and 56 percent growth in weight and value respectively compared to last year's corresponding period.

Iran's export of shrimp in the first two months of the current year increased 113 percent in terms of weight compared to a year earlier, IRICA added.

136,000 Tons of Goods Transited Via Railway in a Month

TEHRAN (MNA) - During the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20), 136,000 tons of commodities were transited via Iran's railway network.

As reported the figure shows 16 percent drop as compared to 162,000 tons of goods transited through the country's railway in the first month of the previous year.

The international conference to recognize the capacities and potentials of rail transport of the Islamic Republic of Iran was held in Tehran in early February with the participation of Uzbekistan, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. The conference was aimed at making Iran's international rail transport capacities more known, especially the advantages of international rail corridors passing through Iran.

Senior directors and representatives of railways from Central Asian countries, including Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia, along with rail cargo forwarding companies from Uzbekistan and Russia, were present at this international gathering.

Also, some Iranian international rail transport companies participated in the one-day event to present their services and capabilities for international transport and transit from Iran to the participants.

Considering the strategic position of Iran, as well as the important international rail corridors from north to south and east to west that pass through the country, as well as the connection of the railway network of the Islamic Republic of Iran to open waters, Iran's route is one of the shortest, safest and most economical routes for rail transit from east to west, especially the cargo transportation of the landlocked countries of Central Asia to Europe, India, as well as transportation of transit cargo from the important ports of Iran. Back in October 2022, Tehran hosted a summit on transit cooperation between Iran and five Central Asian countries including Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

KSC Continues Breaking Record For 2nd Consecutive Month

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In less than a month, Khorasan Steel Company (KSC) set two new records for production due to high incentive and endeavors of its staff.

The CEO of Khorasan Steel Company (KSC) Mr. Tahmoures Javanbakht announced the achievement and said the move of the biggest steelmaking company in eastern country on the track of production growth bespeaks capabilities and commitment of the staff of the company and expressed hope that with continuation of energy supply, the growing trend of production would continue.

While in the Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht the rolling unit of KSC witnessed a new record for daily production of final product after 9 years, this time it was the turn of tireless staff of steel-making unit to improve the record for daily steel ingot production to 2200 tons just in 25 days in current month of Khordad and improved its daily production tonnage by 42 tons.

Meanwhile head of exploitation of KSC Mr. Farshid Fazilati said that with efforts of Phase 2 of steel-making unit, on June 15 they produced 2200 tons of steel ingots which was a new record for daily production and improved the previous record by 42 tons.

The previous record had been set in November 2021 with 2158 tons. Fazilati also pointed to another valuable record of 16 consecutive melts in just one sequence of casting.

He went on to say that materialization of the slogan of the year "Production Growth" is the concern of his tireless colleagues of KSC and expressed his gratitude to them for their hard-working and felicitated them for the recent successes and records.

Unlawful Shipment of Goods By Firmenich to Cause Trouble

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A Swiss company with long international history, which operates in the field of perfume and essential oil production for the sanitary and cosmetic industries and all kinds of flavorings for the food industry, has created problems for its Iranian customer in a strange move.

According to our findings, the International Firmenich company, one of the flagships of the perfume and flavor industry in the world, is known to have the most economic activity with the United States, and has several factories in the state of New Jersey, has shipped products manufactured in United States to its Iranian customer instead of sending goods manufactured in Switzerland.

It is not clear why this company has taken such a suspicious action when it has a history of being aware of the embargo conditions governing Iran, as well as the ban on the entry of American goods into Iran. According to this report, after sending this product made by Firmenich factory in United States and shipping the cargo to Iran, it was discovered upon arrival at the Shahriar- Tehran customs by the authorities of the custom office and during checking and investigating about the products, it seems that according to the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this product does not have a clearance permit and will not be allowed for consumption in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

According to this report, this shipment of essential oil, which is used as a raw material for the perfumery and cosmetic in the country's industries, is still undecided at the customs. According to this report, the questionable point of the story is how this international Swiss company, which currently has more than a hundred active sales in different countries and has more than 125 years of experience in this industry, does an illegal and unlawful action like this. Firmenich international company was purchased by a large Dutch company called DSM on May 9, 2023, and it is necessary to check if this Dutch company had any role in this unprofessional and suspicious action to Iranian customer or not.



Pakistan Arrests After Greek Boat Tragedy

MUZAFFARABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan authorities arrested 10 alleged human traffickers on Sunday, days after hundreds of migrants were feared drowned off the Greek coast.

Every year, thousands of young Pakistanis embark on perilous journeys attempting to enter Europe illegally in search of a better life. Local media said as many as 300 Pakistanis had died after a rusty trawler sank near Greece's Peloponnese peninsula on Wednesday.

Officials said nine people had been detained in Pakistan-administered Kashmir -- home to a majority of the victims -- and one in Gujrat, a city that has long served as a springboard for migrants.



Labour Set to Get More Seats In Scotland Than SNP

LONDON (Dispatches) - The opposition Labour Party will win more seats than the Scottish National Party in Scotland in the next general election according to a poll in the Sunday Times, boosting its chances of winning an outright majority across Britain.

According to the Panelbase poll for The Sunday Times, the SNP would win just 21 of Scotland's seats in the British parliament, losing more than half of their current 45, while Labour would win 26, up from one now.

Support for the SNP, the pro-independence party which has dominated Scottish politics for most of the last two decades, has shrunk this year after former leader Nicola Sturgeon stood down.



Russia Reports Fierce Fighting in Ukraine



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia reported fierce fighting on three sections of the front line in Ukraine, a day after hosting an African peace mission that failed to spark enthusiasm from either Moscow or Kyiv.

A Russian-installed official said Ukraine had recaptured Piatykhvatky, a village in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, and were entrenching themselves there while coming under fire from Russian artillery.

"The enemy's 'wave-like' offensives yielded results, despite enormous losses," the official, Vladimir Rogov, said on the Telegram messaging app.

Russia's defence ministry made no mention of Piatykhvatky in its daily update, in which it said its forces had repelled Ukrainian attacks in three sections of the 1,000 km (600 mile) front line. A separate statement from Russia's Vostok group of forces said Ukraine had failed to take the settlement.

Reuters could not independently verify the battlefield reports.

There was no comment from Ukraine, which last week said it had recaptured another nearby settlement, Lobkove, and a string of villages further east, in Donetsk region, at the start of its long-awaited counteroffensive.

Ukrainian officials have imposed an information blackout to help operational security, but say that Russia has suffered much greater losses than Ukraine has during its new assault.

A regional official said Ukrainian forces had destroyed a major Russian ammunition dump in occupied Kherson region, part of a weeks-long effort by Kyiv to wreak havoc with Russian supply lines.

British defense intelligence said heavy fighting in recent days had been focused on Zaporizhzhia, western Donetsk and around Bakhmut, which Russian mercenaries captured last month after the longest battle of the war.

"In all these areas, Ukraine continues to pursue offensive operations and has made small advances," it said on Twitter.

Russian defense operations had been "relatively effective in the south", with both sides suffering heavy casualties, the assessment said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who rarely comments on the course of the war, made two unusually detailed interventions last week in which he derided the Ukrainian push and said Kyiv's forces had "no chance" despite being newly equipped with Western tanks.

His comments appeared intended to reassure Russians at a crucial juncture, nearly 16 months into the conflict, as Ukraine seeks to break months of virtual stalemate and take back the 18% of its territory that remains under Russian control.

At talks in St Petersburg on Saturday, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa presented Putin with a 10-point peace initiative from seven African countries and told him the time had come for Russia and Ukraine to start negotiations to end the war.

Putin responded by rattling off a string of familiar accusations denied by Ukraine and the West and saying it was Kyiv, not Moscow, that was refusing to talk. He thanked Ramaphosa for his "noble mission".

Russian news agencies quoted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying Putin had shown interest in the plan but it would be "difficult to realize".

Blinken, Qin Hold Candid Talks

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The U.S. secretary of state and Chinese foreign minister on Sunday held what both called candid and constructive talks on their differences from Taiwan to trade but seemed to agree on little beyond keeping the conversation going with an eventual meeting in Washington.

Speaking after a 5-1/2 hour meeting followed by a dinner, U.S. and Chinese officials both emphasized their desire for stable and predictable relations, but China was clear it regards Taiwan as the most important issue and greatest risk.

Making the first visit to China by a U.S. secretary of state in five years, Antony Blinken stressed "the need to reduce the risk of misperception and miscalculation" in his talks with Foreign Minister Qin Gang, the State Department said.

"Qin Gang pointed out that the Taiwan issue is the core of China's core interests, the most important issue in Sino-U.S. relations, and the most prominent risk," Chinese state media quoted Qin as having told the top U.S. diplomat.



NATO Says Peacekeepers Unwavering as Kosovo Tensions Flare

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - NATO underlined the "unwavering" commitment of its KFOR peacekeeping force to its duties in Kosovo as tensions flare with pressure building on Serbia over the detention of three Kosovo police officers.

"The commitment of NATO KFOR to the implementation of its mandate is unwavering, as demonstrated by the recent additional deployment of 500 troops," alliance spokeswoman Oana Lungescu said.

"We once again remind all parties of their obligations to KFOR... including respect for the Administrative Boundary Line, procedures for the Kosovo Police and the 2013 Agreement on the deployment of the Kosovo Security Forces to the north," she tweeted.

NATO's KFOR has swelled to more than 4,000 troops after a battalion of 500 reinforcements from Turkey was sent to Kosovo two weeks ago, following clashes with ethnic Serb protesters in late May that wounded 30 of the peacekeepers.

An extra NATO battalion is on alert to deploy to Kosovo if required. Serbia is holding three Kosovo police officers who were detained on Wednesday. Kosovo's government has called it a kidnapping and, as a "security measure", banned all Serbian trucks from entering its territory.

The United States has strongly called for Serbia to release the police officers. Washington and Brussels are both urging a de-escalation of tensions.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has called on Serbia President Aleksandar Vucic and Kosovo's premier Albin Kurti to meet in Brussels in the next few days to agree on ways to ease the situation.

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008. Its ethnic Albanian majority rose up in 1999, sparking a NATO military intervention against Serbia's forces.

But Belgrade and its allies Beijing and Moscow refuse to recognise its independence, effectively preventing Kosovo from having a seat at the United Nations.

Serbs in Kosovo remain largely loyal to Belgrade, especially in the north, where they make up a majority and reject every move by Pristina to consolidate its control over the region.

Swiss Voters Approve Global Minimum Corporate Tax, Climate Goals

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Voters in Switzerland on Sunday approved the introduction of a global minimum tax on businesses and a climate law that aims to cut fossil fuel use and reach zero emissions by 2050, public broadcaster SRF reported.

The results showed almost 80% of those who voted in Sunday's national referendum backed raising the country's business tax to the 15% global minimum rate from the current average minimum of 11%, an unusually strong endorsement.

"This ensures that Switzerland will not lose any tax revenue to foreign countries," Finance Minister Karin Keller-Sutter said. "It will on top also create legal certainty and a stable framework."

The climate law was likewise approved and received the support of 59% of voters.

In 2021, Switzerland joined almost 140 countries that signed up to an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) deal to set a minimum tax rate for big companies, a move aimed at limiting the practice of shifting profits to low tax countries.

Even with the increase, Switzerland will still have one of the lowest corporate tax levels in the world, and the proposal, estimated to bring 2.5 billion Swiss francs (\$2.80 billion) per year in additional revenue, has been backed by business groups, most political parties, and the public.

The climate law, brought back in a modified form after it was rejected in 2021 as too costly, has stirred up more debate with those campaigning against it gaining traction in recent weeks.

Proponents say the law is the minimum the wealthy country needs to do to prove its commitment to fighting climate change while opponents from the right wing People's Party say it will jeopardise energy security.

In Sunday's referendum, voters also approved extending some provisions of the country's emergency COVID-19 law, required under Switzerland's system of direct democracy, where legislation is put to the public vote.

Switzerland is home to the offices and headquarters of around 2,000 foreign companies, including Google as well as 200 Swiss multinationals, such as Nestle (NESN.S). While all would be affected, business groups have welcomed the greater certainty that the new tax would bring, even if Switzerland lost some of its low-tax allure.

"No other country is going to have lower taxes either. We want the additional tax revenue to stay in the country, and be used to improve its attractiveness for businesses," said Christian Frey, from Economiesuisse, a lobby group.



Mali Counts Votes From Referendum

BAMAKO (Dispatches) - Mali started counting votes from a constitutional referendum that the ruling military junta and regional powers have said will pave the way to elections and a return to civilian rule.

The junta, which seized power in coups in 2020 and 2021, promised to hold the plebiscite as part of a transition to democracy, under pressure from West African regional bloc the Economic Community Of West Africa States. Provisional results are expected by Tuesday.

Some of the proposed clauses in the new constitution drafted by the transitional council are contentious, with proponents saying they would strengthen fragile political institutions and opponents saying they would give too much power to the president.

But regional bodies and the United Nations see the referendum itself as an important test of the junta's willingness to stick to the transition and hold a nationwide democratic process, particularly at a time when Islamist militants are stepping up attacks.

"With this project, we are betting on the future of our state, the restoration of its authority, and the regained trust between institutions and citizens," interim president Colonel Assimi Goita said in a televised speech on Friday.

The draft includes updates that have been proposed in past failed efforts to revise the constitution, including the creation of a second parliamentary chamber to boost representation from across Mali.

The proposed establishment of a separate court of auditors for state spending will bring Mali in line with a directive from the West African Economic and Monetary Union from 2000.

But some opposition parties, pro-democracy groups and campaigners for the 'No' vote say non-elected authorities such as the junta have no right to oversee such a substantial constitutional overhaul.

"I am for a revision of the constitution but not this referendum. The legitimacy of the actors, the process... I think we could have done better," lawyer Fousseini Ag Yehia said in the capital Bamako on Saturday.

Northern Mali armed groups that signed a 2015 peace deal, which has been shaky since the junta took power, had called for a boycott of the referendum saying the process was "not sufficiently inclusive".



Rabat Declaration Adopted To Improve Refugee and Migrant Health

RABAT (Dispatches) - Ministers and government representatives adopted a groundbreaking political declaration, the Rabat Declaration, to strengthen the global commitment to improve the health of refugees and migrants.

The Rabat Declaration was adopted during the high-level segment of the Third Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants that took place on 13–15 June 2023. The event, co-hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco, the World Health Organization (WHO), IOM, the UN Migration Agency, and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, was attended by government representatives from 48 United Nations Member States (1) and observers as well as representatives from humanitarian organizations, civil society and refugee and migrant communities and UN agencies.

The meeting aimed to promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants in national health systems as part of the global movement for universal health coverage, and work towards resilient and sustainable health emergency prevention, preparedness and response capacities. One in eight people globally is either a migrant or is forcibly displaced by factors including conflict, persecution, environmental degradation, or the lack of human security and opportunity.

Taking stock of the progress achieved in refugee and migrant health and considering the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, the countries supporting the Rabat Declaration committed to: accelerate efforts to improve the health of refugees, migrants and their host communities; address the root causes that negatively influence their health; and work towards including health and social protection considerations in national policies related to refugees and migrants.

The declaration also reaffirms the right of every human being, including refugees and migrants, to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Recognition of professional health certifications, enhancing information and communication channels to counter misperceptions and misinformation, ensuring safe working environments for refugees and migrants as well as investing in inclusive and appropriate data systems and high-quality global research are highlighted in the declaration as key to advancing towards the goals.

Countries supporting it commit to including refugee and migrant populations and their host communities in policies and plans for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to pandemics and other public health emergencies, while strengthening international and cross-border collaboration.

Stakeholders also pledge to foster inclusive financing mechanisms to reduce budget pressures on national systems and promote the meaningful participation of refugees and migrants in health policy discussions to identify and design appropriate interventions for their health needs.

Quotes from officials:

“The holding of this meeting in the Kingdom of Morocco supports the tireless efforts of our country for social justice, believing that health is a fundamental right for all, including migrants and refugees. In this context, the phenomenon of migration and asylum has always been an integral part of the history of the Kingdom of Morocco, as Morocco is considered a point of intersection between Africa, Europe and the Middle East, and is seen as a transit point, a receiving country and a safe haven for anyone who requests it.”

Khalid Ait Taleb, Minister of Health and Social Protection, Kingdom of Morocco

“Refugees and migrants face significant threats to health, and significant barriers to accessing the health services they need. Protecting the health and dignity of refugees and migrants during their often-dangerous journeys, and in the countries hosting them, is a matter of human rights, and human decency. Because health for all means all, including refugees and migrants.”



ChatGPT AI Shines In Challenging Medical Cases

LONDON (Dispatches) - A novel study put the diagnostic prowess of generative AI, specifically the chatbot GPT-4, to the test, yielding promising results.

The study involved evaluating the AI's diagnostic accuracy in handling complex medical cases, with GPT-4 correctly identifying the top diagnosis nearly 40% of the time and including the correct diagnosis in its list of potential diagnoses in 64% of challenging cases.

The success of AI in this study could provide new insights into its potential applications in clinical settings. However, more research is needed to address the benefits, optimal use, and limitations of such technology.

Key Facts:

In a study involving 70 complex clinical cases, GPT-4 correctly matched the final diagnosis 39% of the time. GPT-4 included the correct diagnosis in its differential list (a list of potential conditions based on patients' symptoms, medical history, and clinical findings) in 64% of the cases.

Despite the promising results, researchers stress the importance of further investigation to understand the optimal use, benefits, and limitations of AI in a clinical setting.

In a recent experiment published in JAMA, physician-researchers at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) tested one well-known publicly available chatbot's ability to make accurate diagnoses in challenging medical cases.

The team found that the generative AI, Chat-GPT 4, selected the correct diagnosis as its top diagnosis nearly 40 percent of the time and provided the correct diagnosis in its list of potential diagnoses in two-thirds of challenging cases.

Generative AI refers to a type of artificial intelligence that uses patterns and information it has been trained on to create new content, rather than simply processing and analyzing existing data.

This shows an AI representation of a doctor.

Some of the most well-known examples of generative AI are so-called chatbots, which use a branch of artificial intelligence called natural language processing (NLP) that allows computers to understand, interpret and generate human-like language. Generative AI chatbots are powerful tools poised to revolutionize creative industries, education, customer service and more.

However, little is known about their potential performance in the clinical setting, such as complex diagnostic reasoning.

“Recent advances in artificial intelligence have led to generative AI models that are capable of detailed text-based responses that score highly in standardized medical examinations,” said Adam Rodman, MD, MPH, co-director of the Innovations in Media and Education Delivery (iMED) Initiative at BIDMC and an instructor in medicine at Harvard Medical School.

“We wanted to know if such a generative model could ‘think’ like a doctor, so we asked one to solve standardized complex diagnostic cases used for educational purposes. It did really, really well.”

To assess the chatbot's diagnostic skills, Rodman and colleagues used clinicopathological case conferences (CPCs), a series of complex and challenging patient cases including relevant clinical and laboratory data, imaging studies, and histopathological findings published in the New England Journal of Medicine for educational purposes.



Small Nanopores Can Help In Identifying Diseases



AARHUS (Dispatches) - Researchers discover a new, fast, and precise method for detecting COVID-19 and breast cancer indicators in blood samples. We may be able to use a simple blood test to diagnose diseases using tiny nanopores and nanobodies.

The study was published in Journal, ‘ACS Nano.’

Professor Jrgen Kjems and his research group at Aarhus University have achieved a remarkable breakthrough in developing tiny nano-sized pores that can contribute to better possibilities for, among other things, detecting diseases at an earlier stage in collaboration with Groningen University. Their research, which was recently published in the scientific journal ACS Nano, demonstrates a novel method for locating specific proteins in complex biological fluids such as blood without the need for chemical labelling. The study marks an important milestone in nanopore technology and has the potential to revolutionize medical diagnostics.

Nanopores are tiny channels formed in materials, that can be used as sensors. The researchers, led by Jorgen Kjems and Giovanni Maglia (Groningen Univ.), have taken this a step further by developing a special type of nanopore called ClyA with scanner molecules, called nanobodies, attached to it. These nanobodies, derived from antibodies, are capable of recognising different proteins with astonishing accuracy. In this study, the researchers attached nanobodies to ClyA, using a DNA adapter. By using a series of nanobodies, they were able to create many different nanopore sensors, which could detect a variety of proteins of different sizes.

Study Finds That Eating Meals Earlier Improves Metabolic Health

LONDON (Dispatches) - Eating more of one's daily calories earlier in the day may counter weight gain, improve blood sugar fluctuations, and reduce the time that blood sugar is above normal levels, a new study suggests.

“This type of feeding, through its effect on blood sugar, may prevent those with prediabetes or obesity from progressing to type 2 diabetes,” said study lead author Joanne Bruno, MD, PhD, an endocrinology fellow at NYU Langone.

Presented at the Endocrine Society's annual meeting on June 15, the new report evaluated early time-restricted feeding (eTRF), which involves restricting calories to the first eight hours of the day. Previous studies have found this form of intermittent fasting may improve cardiometabolic health and blood sugar levels. However, the team wanted to determine whether these improvements are related to weight loss or the fasting strategy. Led by researchers at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, the work is the first to evaluate the effects of eTRF on glycemia and inflammation independent of weight loss.

For their study, the researchers compared eTRF (80 percent of calories consumed before 1:00PM) to a usual feeding pattern (50 percent of calories consumed after 4:00PM) among 10 participants with prediabetes and obesity.

The patients were randomized to eTRF or usual feeding patterns for the first seven days and were changed over to the alternative arm for the next seven days. Food was provided to meet the patients' caloric needs for weight maintenance to determine the weight-independent effects of this strategy. Patients wore continuous glucose (blood sugar) monitors throughout the study.

“We decreased the time these individuals were having high blood sugar levels with just one week of eTRF feeding,” said study senior author José O. Alemán, MD, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Medicine at NYU Langone. “The findings show that eating a majority of one's calories earlier in the day reduces the time that the blood sugar is elevated, thereby improving metabolic health.”

Dr. Alemán and colleagues discovered the participants' weights were stable throughout the study. eTRF led to a decreased mean amplitude of glycemic excursion and decreased time above range (blood glucose exceeding 140 mg/dL) compared to the usual eating pattern group. The time in range was similar between the eTRF and usual feeding pattern group.

“Based on this data, eTRF may be a helpful dietary strategy for diabetes prevention,” concluded Dr. Bruno. “Further studies are needed to understand the true overall benefit of these intervention strategies.”

Funding for the study was provided by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute institutional training grant T32HL098129 and National Institutes of Health grant K08 DK117064. Further funding was provided by The Rockefeller University's Shapiro-Silverberg Fund for the Advancement of Translational Research.



Nasal Drops Show Remarkable Promise in Stroke Recovery



LONDON (Dispatches) - The crucial component of these drops is a complement peptide called C3a, consisting of a sequence of amino acids, which has been recognised for its significant role in the immune system and the brain's development and adaptability.

Scientists have successfully demonstrated the potential of using nasal drops containing a specific molecule to aid in the recovery of mice from the detrimental effects of a stroke.

The promising aspect of this treatment is that it can be administered seven days after the stroke occurs, offering hope that individuals who cannot receive immediate assistance can still benefit from protection against the severe consequences of the condition, according to Science Alert.

The crucial component of these drops is a complement peptide called C3a, consisting of a sequence of amino acids, which has been recognised for its significant role in the immune system and the brain's development and adaptability. The ultimate goal is to transfer this treatment to humans, potentially revolutionizing stroke recovery methods.

“With this method, there's no need to race against the clock,” neuro-immunologist Marcela Pekna from the University of Gothenburg in Sweden told Science Alert.

“If the treatment is used in clinical practice, all stroke patients could receive it, even those who arrive at the hospital too late for thrombolysis or thrombectomy. Those who have remaining disability after the clot is removed could improve with this treatment too,” he added.

UK Public's Inflation Expectations Ease in May

LONDON (Dispatches) - The British public's expectations for inflation in the coming 12 months cooled in May, according to a Bank of England survey on Friday that also showed net satisfaction with the central bank hit its lowest level since records began in 1999. The BoE's quarterly inflation attitudes survey showed expectations for inflation in the coming 12 months fell to 3.5% from 3.9% in February. For inflation in five years' time, expectations were steady at 3.0%. The survey was conducted in mid-May, before recent inflation and jobs data sent expectations in financial markets for more BoE interest rate hikes sharply higher – with a big knock-on effect in mortgage costs.



Iron Ore Dances Between China Stimulus Optimism, Soft Economic Reality

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Iron ore is engaging in a familiar dance of flitting between hopes of more and effective economic stimulus in China, and the reality that the rebound in the world's second-biggest economy is sputtering.

The spot price of iron ore has gyrated in recent weeks, driven by hopes for more stimulus from Beijing and concerns that the run of soft economic indicators is likely to extend.

China buys more than 70% of the total volume of global seaborne iron ore and produces just over half of the world's steel, making its economic conditions key to the outlook for the main raw material for steel.

The price of iron ore contracts traded in Singapore ended at \$113.42 a metric tonne on Wednesday, up marginally on the day but also up 10.8% from the low this year of \$102.33 on May 5.

The immediate driver was news that China's central bank on Wednesday lowered a key short-term lending rate for the first time in 10 months, cutting the seven-day reverse repo rate by 10 basis points to 1.90%.

That reduction, and expectations of further cuts to other lending rates, is sparking optimism that Beijing is acting to boost the flagging property sector, which consumes about one-third of China's steel output. The hope can be seen in the domestic iron ore price, with contracts on the Dalian Commodity Exchange outperforming Singapore futures.

The front-month Dalian contract ended at 804 yuan (\$112.29) a metric tonne on Wednesday, up 1.5% on the day and about 17.8% above the closing low for the year of 682.5 yuan on May 25.

There are also some fundamental supports for the iron ore price, most noticeably declining inventories at China's ports. Port stockpiles monitored by consultants SteelHome SH-TOT-IRONINV dropped to 126.2 million metric tonnes in the week to June 9, down from 126.9 million the previous week and hitting their lowest level since July last year.

There is a seasonal pattern to inventories as they build over the northern winter while steel mills curb output, then drop as steel production ramps up for the summer construction season.

In the same week last year, inventories were at 128.3 million metric tonnes, or 1.6% above the current level.

Although this isn't a huge drop on a year-on-year basis, it does indicate that there is room for steel mills to keep imports at a robust level and keep stockpiles comfortable.

Another bullish indicator is steel mills' lifting production rates, with data from the China Iron and Steel Association showing output at its members rose to 2.23 million metric tonnes a day in the June 1-11 period, up 6.5% from the May 21-31 period.

The association also reported that steel inventories were 15.8 million metric tonnes over June 1-10, up 1.2% from the prior 10 days but down 15% from the same period in 2022.

Countering the positive indicators for iron ore demand is a raft of underwhelming economic data that shows China's rebound after ending its strict zero-COVID policy in December has been uneven.

Economists Cut Singapore's 2023 Growth Forecast to 1.4%

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Private sector economists have cut their forecast for Singapore's economic growth this year to 1.4 per cent amid a global slowdown and inflationary pressures.

This is down from their projection of 1.9 per cent in March.

The findings from the latest survey of professional forecasters were released by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) on Wednesday (Jun 14). The survey was sent out on May 25.

Spillovers from an external growth slowdown emerged as the most cited downside risk to domestic outlook, as identified by 61 per cent of the 24 respondents. It was most frequently ranked as the top downside risk.

The respondents also flagged inflationary pressures and an escalation in geopolitical tensions as risks to the domestic growth outlook.

China in May banned US semiconductor giant Micron from selling chips to its key domestic industries, marking yet another escalation in the tense relations between both countries.

According to the survey, the manufacturing sector – which accounts for about one-fifth of Singapore's economy – is expected to contract by 1.3 per cent this year.

"The 2023 GDP (gross domestic product) growth forecast downgrade reflects the bigger than expected weakness in manufacturing, especially electronics, in the first quarter of 2023," said OCBC chief economist Selena Ling.

"Given China's reopening hopes have fizzled of late with some deceleration seen in the recent April to May economic indicators, there is a heightening of concern for a more prolonged soft patch into the second to third quarter of 2023."

There were some bright spots in the latest MAS survey, with the construction sector forecast to grow by 7 per cent, up from the previous projection of 4.2 per cent.

The accommodation and food services sector is also expected to grow by 10 per cent, an increase from the previous forecast of 8.4 per cent.

Last month, some private sector economists said Singapore faces a "high risk" of slipping into a technical recession in the second quarter of this year.

Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) in May maintained its 2023 growth forecast at 0.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent, with growth likely to "come in at around the mid-point" of this range.



Affordable Indulgences Prevail as Inflation Bites the Average Indian

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - In times of inflation and diminishing spending power, a notable shift in consumer behavior has emerged, highlighting the trend that money seemingly can buy happiness, albeit in a different form.

Consumers are bypassing big-ticket purchases and opting for more affordable indulgences that uplift their spirits, as indicated by a study conducted by I-Sec in India. This phenomenon, reminiscent of the "lipstick index" popularised during the 2001 recession by Leonard Lauder, chairman of Estee Lauder, holds true for both consumers and companies in India, with sales of discretionary products reflecting this trend.

While the Nifty index has delivered below-inflation returns in recent years, companies in the mid-premium and discretionary goods sectors have experienced a lesser impact on their revenue growth and stock prices during economic slowdowns.

This resilience is evident even in the face of significant income disruption caused by the pandemic between 2020 and 2022. Sectors such as beauty, packaged goods, affordable fashion, and value hotels have shown much stronger business performance compared to big-ticket items like cars and houses. Therefore, the study suggests that the "affordable luxury" segments are relatively immune to general economic slowdowns.

The shift towards affordable indulgences can be seen in various sectors. For example, during a slowdown, consumers gravitate towards affordable packaged foods like instant noodles, biscuits, and chips instead of expensive gourmet items.

According to a TOI report, Nestle's revenue from prepared dishes and cooking aids exhibited robust growth with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nearly 15%, while confectionery products like Munch and Kitkat chocolates recorded just over 17%.

Similarly, Britannia's biscuit segment achieved a CAGR of 14%. This trend is also observed in the affordable fashion and travel sectors, where consumers opt for private labels, scarves, handbags, and small-ticket jewelry instead of pricier alternatives.

The behaviour shift during Covid was a testament to the desire for small indulgences and the significance of finding joy in little things, Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail business head (Jayore) Rashmi Shukla told TOI.

"We recognise that consumer behaviour can evolve during economic downturns. We noticed a shift when consumers moved away from high-end embroidered Kashmiri shawls priced over Rs 75,000 to solid Kashmiri pashminas priced Rs 16,000-20,000. In our homeware section, we saw double-digit growth in the mid-premium section. People moved away from fine porcelain to handcrafted Kansa dinner and serveware. This was also triggered by the consumer's shift towards healthier living and their yearning for something authentic and rooted," she added.

Erdoğan Vows to Reduce Inflation to Single Digits

ANKARA (Dispatches) - President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan delivered a speech at the 30th Regular General Assembly of the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM) and the Champions of Export Award Ceremony on Saturday as he vowed to reduce inflation to single digits.

"Despite the negative global economic outlook, we want to increase our exports to \$265 billion at the end of this year and \$285 billion next year," Erdoğan said. "(In exports), our target for 2028 is to reach \$400 billion and above."

President Erdoğan emphasized that 2022 has been a record year for exports. "Our exports of goods increased by 12.9% to \$254.2 billion. Our country's share of global trade rose by 1.02%. Our service exports exceeded \$90 billion, an increase of 47.3%. Our defense exports increased by approximately 37% to 4.3 billion dollars," Erdoğan said.

Stating that Turkey made a very strong start to this year after completing last year like this, Erdoğan said that the earthquakes that occurred in Kahramanmaraş on Feb. 6, which shook 11 provinces, as well as the loss of more than 50,000 lives, seriously damaged not only households but businesses as well.

Expressing that they took action quickly as the state in the face of this huge destruction that only a few countries could handle, Erdoğan said they provided all necessary support to the business world so that the production wheels in the earthquake cities would continue to turn.

President Erdoğan underlined that they would make cities safer, more dynamic, vibrant and prosperous than before.

France, Germany at Loggerheads Over EU Spending Rules

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - EU finance ministers met in Luxembourg to discuss the proposed update of the bloc's spending rules but failed to achieve any progress, with France and Germany still at odds over the reforms after the meeting.

"The real point of disagreement is whether or not there should be automatic and uniform rules," said French economy minister Bruno Le Maire. "Our answer is clearly no because we believe that would be an economic mistake and a political mistake."

Referring to the period of austerity that followed the 2008 crisis, he added that Europe had already "tried uniform rules" in the past. "This led to recession, economic hardship and low growth in Europe," he said. "What we need now is more growth, prosperity and jobs."

The existing rules require governments to cut debt above 60 percent of GDP by five percent per year. All deem this excessively stringent, and therefore the rules have never been applied. Yet countries fail to agree the old rules will come back into force in 2024.

Proposed by the EU Commission in April, the latest idea tried to balance demands for more flexibility with calls for 'hawkish' member states which want stricter debt reduction rules. As a compromise, the commission put forward a system that would commit member states above 3 percent annual deficit to a path of 0.5 percent debt reduction per year.

Countries also have an added four to seven year adjustment period, allowing them to buy time if additional investments go to areas considered European priorities such as defence or climate spending.

But Lindner said rules need to be "uniform." "We need equal treatment; we need numerical benchmarks, and we need a common safeguard and not too much leeway for the Commission to negotiate bilaterally with member states," said Lindner.

In this he was supported by the Czech Republic, Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Croatia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Luxembourg.

The Netherlands, which under the previous finance minister Wopke Hoekstra was considered a fiscal hawk, was notably absent from the hawkish group.

Dutch minister Sigrid Kaag has instead chosen a more conciliatory tone and even allied with her Spanish counterpart Nadia Calviño, with whom she published a joint proposal calling for tailored solutions instead of inflexible rules.

However, this has so far failed to convince Lindner.

Philippines' Higher Tourism Growth Seen in 2023



MANILA (Dispatches) - The share of tourism to Philippines' gross domestic product (GDP) could reach as high as 8 percent this year due to the further reopening of the Philippine economy, an economist said.

In an interview with the Philippine News Agency, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort said the share of tourism to the GDP could grow to 7 to 8 percent, from more than 6 percent in 2022, given the continued recovery and growth in foreign and local tourism due to the easing of restrictions since early 2022.

"Tourism's contribution to the economy continued to increase as the economy reopened toward greater normalcy, with no more large lockdowns since 2022 that eased restrictions on the movement of tourists around the country as increased vaccination doses effectively reduced new Covid-19 cases," Ricafort said.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that in 2022, the share of Tourism Direct Gross Value Added (TDGVA) to the Philippine economy, as measured by the GDP, is estimated at 6.2 percent.

The TDGVA amounted to P1.38 trillion last year, higher by 36.9 percent from P1.00 trillion in 2021.

Ricafort said the government's policy to keep the economy as open as possible and the optional wearing of face masks further boosted both local and foreign tourism activities around the country.

He added that China, which is one of the biggest sources of tourists for the country, also eased restrictions last December 2022, thereby allowing more foreign tourists from the said country to come to the Philippines.

"For the coming months, tourism, both local and foreign, could still contribute more as a bright spot for the local economy, as a source of additional jobs and other business opportunities in various tourist destinations around the country, especially outside Metro Manila, also positively contributing to business and other economic activities in nearby areas of major tourist destinations," said Ricafort.

Over Half of AIDS Patients In Iran Still Alive

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Nearly 21,823 deaths as a result of infection with HIV have been registered so far, of the total of some 45,463 people infected with the deadly virus across the country, according to the Health Ministry's management of infectious diseases department.

In a report, the department said by the end of the previous Iranian calendar year in March, 23,640 HIV-positive patients are still alive.

It said 18,044 of the infected individuals go to health centers around the country to receive services, and 17,045 people are currently under treatment.

According to the report, although 81% of all cases of infection with HIV are men and 19% are women, the pattern of transmission and the percentage of men and women have changed in recent years. It added that out of all the cases identified and reported last year, 30% of registered cases are women and 70% are men.



Emerging Markets Embrace Innovative Water Management Strategies

LONDON (OilPrice) - With extreme weather events such as drought or flooding becoming more common due to climate change, countries around the world are looking to innovative solutions for water management.

Water scarcity captured global headlines last summer, as Europe experienced its worst drought in 500 years and China's Yangtze River reached record low levels, derailing hydropower operations. Elsewhere, widespread flooding affected Nigeria, India, Pakistan and other parts of the world.

Due to population growth, climate change and the rise of water-intensive clean energy technologies, the gap between renewable water supply and demand is expected to reach 40% by 2030, according to US investment bank Morgan Stanley. The UN estimates that drought could affect over three-quarters of the world's population by 2050.

However, progress is being made, with the percentage of the global population with access to safely managed drinking water at home rising from 70% to 74% between 2016 and 2020, and an estimated 107m people gaining access in 2020 alone.

Thanks to new government strategies, public-private initiatives and improvements in monitoring technologies, emerging markets are modernizing their water-management and distribution networks while working to limit waste, and conserve and augment existing sources.

In water-constrained areas, reducing water loss – also known as non-revenue water (NRW) – is typically more cost-effective than supply augmentation. New technologies such as smart meters and sensor networks can help limit loss and mitigate potential contamination.

Smart meters offer an internet-of-things solution to NRW by monitoring water distribution and usage, helping to identify inefficiencies and instances of leakage and theft. Market analyst firm Transforma Insight estimates that 700m smart water meters will be deployed globally by 2030.

Founded in 2017, Egyptian start-up Pylon offers subscription-based smart metering as a service to water and energy companies in Egypt and the Philippines, with plans to expand in Africa and South-east Asia. The company, which raised \$19m in a seed funding round last year, leverages smart-grid infrastructure to help its clients reduce water losses by an estimated 22%, enough to serve 40m people per day.

Sensors can also play an integral role in improving sanitation efforts by identifying potential contaminants.

US-based water monitoring technology company Virridy, for example, aims to use investment from a June 2022 \$5.5m Series A funding round to develop water E-coli sensors. The company already operates a network of satellite-linked borehole water monitors to boost drought resilience in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

Outdated or insufficient infrastructure is a major driver of NRW, with emerging markets losing some 45m cu metres daily to leakages from ageing distribution networks, according to the World Bank.

In 2022 Manila Water, the water services company responsible for the Philippine capital, reduced NRW to 12.7%, well below the World Bank standard of 25% and on a par with NRW levels in Japan and Western Europe. The company used a combination of modern metering and infrastructure repairs, with strong communication networks with local stakeholders allowing for quick responses to leakages or theft.

In addition to limiting municipal NRW, addressing inefficiencies in irrigation systems is an important step towards ensuring global water security. With roughly



70% of global water usage dedicated to agriculture, improved monitoring and more sustainable agriculture practices in emerging markets are helping to boost food security around the world.

Ensuring universal access to and sustainable management of clean water and sanitation by 2030 is the focus of UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6. To help organise global efforts for sustainable water management into actionable commitments, the first UN Water Conference in 50 years was held in New York City in March 2023.

On a national scale, a number of countries have prioritised management of water supplies in recent years, with both government plans and new financing arrangements seeking to ensure improved water access.

In December 2022 Vietnam's prime minister approved a water resources planning scheme for 2021-30 that includes the goals of reducing water loss in supply activities to 10%, and increasing clean water access rates to 95-100% for urban areas and 65% for rural areas by 2025.

Saudi Arabia, which has the world's third-highest per capita water consumption behind the US and Canada, aims to reduce its usage by 43% by the end of the decade, in line with Saudi Vision 2030. In early 2023 the Kingdom announced the tendering of six wastewater treatment projects under public-private partnership (PPP) schemes to help upgrade the country's infrastructure and reduce NRW.

In order to improve water access, countries such as Saudi Arabia have invested in desalination plants, especially as the industry attempts to reduce its carbon footprint and commodify wastewater.

Financing is central to the success of water-management projects, with the OECD estimating costs of \$1trn per year, or 1.21% of global GDP, to achieve SDG 6. Beyond government expenditure, performance-based contracting offers a key financing opportunity, incentivising companies based on their record for reducing NRW.

Ho Chi Minh City – Vietnam's most populous urban area, which is at risk of flooding and freshwater scarcity – has effectively utilised this contracting model to upgrade its water distribution and sanitation infrastructure, saving the city an estimated 122m litres of water daily.

In March 2023 global investment company Metito and British International Investment, the UK's development finance institution, announced the launch of the Africa Water Infrastructure Development platform, which aims to fund sustainable water projects across Africa and boost the continent's overall water security. The platform's first asset, a 40,000-cu-metre-per-day bulk surface water treatment plant in Kigali, Rwanda, provides 25% of the city's potable water supply and is the first PPP-run plant in sub-Saharan Africa outside of South Africa.

Iran, Uzbekistan...

FROM PAGE 1

Ayatollah Khamenei urged Tehran and Tashkent to disregard those who are against the expansion of relations.

During the meeting, which was also attended by President Ebrahim Raesi, Mirziyoyev hailed his historic meeting with Ayatollah Khamenei.

The Uzbek president praised the Iranian nation's resilience in the face of US-led sanctions and said Iran's grand achievements, particularly in science and technology, proved that a nation can achieve major goals by pursuing the wise guidelines of its leader and through unity.

Iran, EAEU...

FROM PAGE 1

Overchuk also said that negotiations are underway between the EAEU and several more states on a number of free trade zone agreements.

"[We are in talks with] Egypt, India, Indonesia, and the UAE. All these countries are friendly to us, they are growing markets, so respectively the economic center of the new multipolar world is moving in their direction," Overchuk said.

He added that such negotiations are "very difficult, and they take years."

"Negotiators need to take into account a lot of different interests. In our case, the interests of all five EAEU member states, their businesses and consumers are involved here. All this should be taken into account by our negotiators. This is a complex process," the Russian official said.

Drug Smuggling Into...

FROM PAGE 1

Momeni made the remarks in a meeting with Iraqi Interior Minister Abdul Amir Kamel Al-Shammari on the sidelines of the first Baghdad International Drug Control Conference which was held from May 9-10.

Setting up about 800 coastal checkpoints in the Persian Gulf, strengthening and developing electronic and electro-optical equipment, and installing land-based radars and specialized cameras are among Iran's measures to deal with maritime smuggling, Momeni explained.

Momeni signed a memorandum of understanding with Ghada Fathi Waly, the director general of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on the sidelines of the 66th session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) that was held in Vienna from March 13-17.

The agreement opens a new chapter in Iran's cooperation with the United Nations in the four areas of dealing with the supply and demand of narcotics, and offering treatment and rehabilitation services, Momeni said, IRIB reported.

Israeli Forces Kill...

FROM PAGE 1

Another clip showed the Israeli military vehicles coming under fire. Gunfire and explosions could be heard across the city in other clips shared online.

TV7 Israel News television station reported that at least six Israeli troops were wounded as a result of an explosion that struck their military jeep.

The channel added that an explosive device hit the jeep and penetrated it. The wounded soldiers were transferred under gunfire to Gilboa (al-Jalama) crossing and from there to near hospitals onboard helicopters.

Clips published by Palestinian media also showed an Israeli Apache helicopter launching a missile at a target and deploying flares over the city.

Footage showed an area close to a building being struck several times by helicopter missiles, in what marks the first airstrike in the West Bank in years.

The Jenin Brigades, a local wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance group, announced in a statement that its members had detonated explosive devices near Israeli military vehicles and then targeted them with gunfire.

Tensions have been running high in the occupied West Bank over the past year, with the Israeli military conducting violent raids under the pretext of detaining what it calls "wanted" Palestinians.

As a result of these attacks, nearly 160 Palestinians, including 28 children, have lost their lives and many others have been arrested in 2023.

German Greens in Doldrums Over Bitter Compromises

BERLIN (Dispatches) - When Germany's ecologist Greens hold a mini-party congress, members of the junior coalition party are expected to vent their fury over tradeoffs that have sent the party's popularity plunging.

From concessions on coal to clashes with climate protesters, the party has repeatedly found itself on the defensive since entering Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government.

Matters have come to a head in recent weeks, with a painful compromise on European Union migration measures and a row over gas boilers.

"The situation for the party has not been as dangerous for many years as it is this summer," the NTV broadcaster said in a recent report.

The German Greens scored their best-ever election result in 2021, becoming the third-largest party in parliament and entering the government for the first time since 2005.

But critics in the party say it has sacrificed its founding principles to govern in an awkward coalition with Scholz's centre-left SPD and the pro-business FDP.

Ahead of the congress, opinion polls put the Greens in fourth place behind the resurgent far-right AfD.

Anger boiled over when EU nations last week reached agreement on a long-stalled revision of their rules on migration. They included plans to introduce fast-track asylum procedures on the bloc's external borders.

The deal was a crushing blow for the Greens, who had been pushing for more lenient rules for families with children, among other things.

Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock defended voting for the changes. "If Germany had rejected the reform or abstained, it would have meant more suffering, not less," she argued.

But many party members remain furious.

"It was the wrong decision and we should admit that at the weekend," Greta Garlich, leader of the Greens in Lower Saxony, told Stern magazine on Friday.

The mood among the party's grassroots supporters is "pretty dire", she said.

The Greens have also run into trouble over a controversial heating law championed by vice-chancellor Robert Habeck, of the Greens.

The law, finally introduced in parliament this week after months of infighting within the coalition government, effectively bans new oil and gas boilers from 2028 in favour of more climate-friendly but expensive solutions.

But the text was only agreed after hefty concessions from the Greens, including pushing back the start date by four years.

Habeck defended the policy in parliament on Thursday, insisting "the core of the law remains intact".

But Die Welt daily described it as a "low point for the once

so radiant Greens" and a "resounding defeat" for the party.

As recently as May 2022, Habeck was one of Germany's most popular politicians. But the ZDF broadcaster noted in a recent report that he had undergone a "transformation from communications talent to crisis manager and now bogeyman".

The three-way coalition had never looked like a match made in heaven for the Greens.

But Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing energy crisis have made that partnership even more difficult than they might have imagined.

To help compensate for a shortfall in Russian gas deliveries, the government voted last year to restart mothballed coal-fired power plants -- much to the ire of climate activists.

The expansion of the Garzweiler open-cast coal mine proved a particular flashpoint, with protesters occupying the village of Luetzerath as clearance work began in January.

Being in government has been a "very sobering experience" for the Greens, Ursula Muench, a political scientist at the Bundeswehr University Munich, told AFP.

"They are hardly succeeding in translating their own convictions on climate, the environment and the protection of species into concrete policies at a time when the climate crisis is worsening," she said. The Greens have also been rocked by accusations of nepotism.

WHO, Japan...

FROM PAGE 1

Syed Jaffar Hussain, the World Health Organization Representative and Head of Mission in Iran has appreciated the country for its efforts to enhance health security in the region.

The WHO representative also thanked Iran for holding the 26th G5 High-Level Experts Meeting on Health Cooperation and the 1st Healthcare Leadership and Governance Training Program, IRNA reported.

G5 countries (Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, plus the World Health Organization) took part in the meetings from May 6-10 with the theme of "Joint Work for Solving Joint Health Problems."

Addressing the opening ceremony, Health Minister Bahram Einollahi referred to the unity and cooperation of the countries in the fields of health, treatment, and medical education as a historical necessity.

Achieving, maintaining, and promoting health is never possible in a regional way

and does not happen in an isolated region, but requires the cooperation of countries, especially neighboring countries, he stressed.

"To develop health in the countries of the group of five, we must look at health collectively and think about creating and promoting health in all countries.

The health sector of Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan is tied to each other. Today, with the relations and cooperation that exist in different sectors between the countries and neighbors, a disease is capable of penetrating all countries."

"Therefore, our unity and cooperation is a historical necessity so that the health indicators in the region can be improved and brought to the ideal point," the minister reiterated.

He went on to say that conditions should be provided so that professors, students, and scientists can easily communicate with each other and travel to each other's countries without hindrance and hold joint scientific conferences.

NBA Star Reserve Williams Retires After 17 Seasons

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Lou Williams, the NBA's all-time top reserve scorer and a three-time winner of the Sixth Man of the Year award, announced his retirement from the league after 17 seasons.

The 36-year-old guard, who did not play in the NBA this past season, saw his final league game with the Atlanta Hawks in 2022. Williams, who announced his decision in a social media video posting, averaged 13.9 points, 3.4 assists and 2.2 rebounds a game over 1,123 contests with the Philadelphia 76ers, Toronto Raptors, Los Angeles Lakers, Houston Rockets, Los Angeles Clippers and Hawks from 2005-2022.

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Wolves Captain Neves Set for Saudi Move

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wolves captain Ruben Neves is reportedly close to becoming the next major player to arrive in Saudi Arabia with Al Hilal set to spend £47 million (\$60 million) on the Portuguese international.

Sky Sports and the BBC reported on Sunday that Neves, who only had one year left on his contract, will leave for Wolves' club record fee. Thanks to its oil riches, Saudi Arabia, the conservative Gulf monarchy frequently targeted over its human rights record, has swiftly achieved a prominent role in world sports, dishing out billion of dollars in the process.

Spain Snatch Nations League Glory On Penalties Against Croatia

ROTTERDAM (Dispatches) - Dani Carvajal chipped home a Panenka penalty to win Spain the Nations League on Sunday, with a 5-4 shoot-out victory over Croatia, after a tense match finished 0-0 following extra-time.

Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon denied Lovro Mayer and Bruno Petkovic from the spot, before Carvajal cheekily chipped home to earn La Roja their first trophy since Euro 2012 and break Croatian hearts.

Zlatko Dalic's side, runners-up at the World Cup in 2018 and third in 2022, have never won a major trophy and were hoping Nations League success would cap a glittering international career for captain Luka Modric, who played his 166th international game.

The victory is a confidence boost for new Spain coach Luis de la Fuente after heavy criticism in March after a defeat by Scotland in Euro 2024 qualifying. It also avenged their 2021 final defeat by France.

"For us it was a unique opportunity, we went out early in another tournament (at the World Cup in Qatar) and today we had to take advantage," Real Madrid defender Carvajal told Spanish broadcaster TVE.

"We had confidence with the penalties and it went well, I knew how I was going to shoot it, and I knew I was going to be sixth... I wanted to take it Panenka style and it went well."

Dalic warned over 25,000 Croatian fans were expected to travel to Rotterdam and they filled the majority of the stadium, De Kuip a sea of red and white checkered squares, save for a modest area of Spanish fans.

The Croatians chanted Modric's name in the 10th minute, matching his shirt number, a plea for him not to retire from international duty after the tournament, as had been rumored.

On the pitch Spain made the early running, with Gavi drilling narrowly wide after pressing furiously to win the ball back.

Alcaraz Back on Unfamiliar Territory After Paris Pain

LONDON (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz heads into only his third career grass court tournament at Queen's Club, desperate to shake off his French Open horror show but admitting the switch of surfaces poses "difficult" questions.

The 20-year-old Spaniard saw his dream of adding the French Open to his 2022 US Open title spectacularly unravel due to whole body cramping caused, he admitted, by the stress and tension of facing Novak Djokovic.

His defeat in the semi-final in Paris to eventual champion Djokovic also saw him relinquish his world number one ranking.

However, the flamboyant shot-maker now faces a fresh dilemma -- how to master the demands of grass courts with Wimbledon just two weeks away.

"I arrived in London Saturday morning and I had my first practice on grass yesterday," Alcaraz said during a press conference on Sunday at the west London venue.

"I was not able to practice too much at home as we have no grass courts. I need to adapt my movement and shots on the grass, but I am really happy with the practice I have had here."

Alcaraz, who made the fourth round at Wimbledon last year, said he rested for four days following his Roland Garros exit.

With 10 titles under his belt -- seven on clay and three on hard courts -- he now needs to use his recharged batteries to draw up a grass court masterplan.

"The most difficult part is to move well on grass. You need to be more careful than other surfaces, so for me to move on grass is the most difficult," he admitted.

"The most comfortable is going to the net and playing aggressively all the time. For me it is similar to other surfaces with my style. Playing that style is comfortable and I like it."

"There are a lot of players who slice on grass. I am not one of them, so I have to think about the movement. I have to be focused on every movement and shot."

"For me it is more tiring when you are moving on grass. It is totally different, so you have to be really specific."

Alcaraz, the top seed at Queen's, will begin his pursuit of a fifth title this season against French qualifier Arthur Fils.



won by Portugal and France in 2019 and 2021 respectively.

La Roja were unable to muster a shot on target in the first 80 minutes of an extremely tense battle.

Mario Pasalic headed wide before being replaced by Petkovic, who was Croatia's semi-final star against the Netherlands -- to the extent one Croatian newspaper described him as "Bruce Willis in football boots". It did not prove the case this time.

Spain sent on their own semi-final match-winner in response, with Joselu replacing Morata, while Ansu Fati also entered the fray.

It was the young Barcelona forward who came closest to scoring in the 90 minutes for either side, with his low strike cleared off the line by the diligent Ivan Perisic.

Croatia appealed in vain for a penalty after Nacho tangled with Borna Sosa, and Spain substitute Dani Olmo, who spent six years with Dinamo Zagreb, hammered over as extra-time continued in the same tight pattern.

With the sides inseparable, the match was decided on penalties.

After Simon denied Mayer, Aymeric Laporte had the chance to earn victory but hit the bar. Athletic Bilbao stopper Simon flung himself to his right at full stretch to save from Petkovic and set the scene for Carvajal to spark Spanish celebrations.

They became the second country to have won the World Cup, Euros and Nations League, after France in 2021.

"We're so happy, it was a really tough game and this is so difficult to do," said Manchester City's Champions League final goalscorer Rodri, man of the match.

Croatia were left with the taste of disappointment yet again, but Dalic said another podium finish was a positive sign.



STUTTGART (Dispatches) - Frances Tiafoe claimed his first grass court title on Sunday, saving a match point to defeat Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff in the Stuttgart final.

The American came through 4-6, 7-6 (7/1), 7-6 (10/8) and will move into the world top 10 for the first time, joining eighth-ranked compatriot Taylor Fritz among the elite.

The last time the United States boasted two men in the top 10 at the same time was in July 2011 courtesy of Mardy Fish and Andy Roddick.

Tiafoe withstood 28 aces from Struff who was bidding to become the first home champion since Michael Stich in 1991.

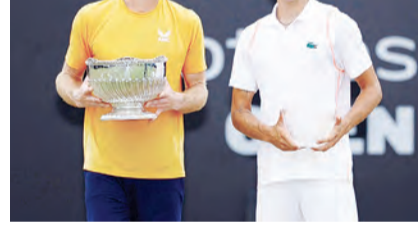
The 25-year-old Tiafoe saved the championship point at 6/7 in the third-set tie-break on his way to securing his second title of 2023 after Houston in April and third of his career.

He made a successful diving lunge on his third match point, just getting the ball over the net for victory after two hours, 12 minutes on court.

"I had to give it all on the match point," he said. "I hit an overhead but he got to it. I had to dive and got super-lucky. I was really happy to win."

Tiafoe will have little time for celebration with a flight to London to catch in time for next week's start at the Queen's Club Wimbledon tune-up tournament.

Murray Claims Second Straight Grasscourt Title



LONDON (Dispatches) - Andy Murray cramped up his preparations for Wimbledon by beating Frenchman Arthur Cazaux 6-4 6-4 in the Nottingham Open final to lift a second successive grasscourt title after his victory in Surbiton last week.

The three-time Grand Slam champion put in a clinical performance, converting three of

his four break points to claim the Challenger Tour title without dropping a set across his five matches in the tournament.

"It was a really good week, I really enjoyed my time here. The courts have played brilliantly, the groundstaff did an excellent job," Murray said.

"I played really well and got better as the week went on and I'm glad to get through - on to Queen's. I'm absolutely pumped." The 36-year-old Briton, who has resurrected his career after hip resurfacing surgery, skipped the French Open to focus on the grasscourt swing.

He is next in action at the Queen's Club Championships, which started on Monday.

Australia Captain Cummins Rocks England In 1st Ashes Test

BIRMINGHAM (Dispatches) - Australia captain Pat Cummins starred with both bat and ball as the Ashes-holders had the better of a rain-marred third day in the first Test against England in Birmingham.

The lower-order batsman made a useful 38 in a total of 386 that left Australia just seven runs behind on first innings.

And the fast bowler then dismissed Ben Duckett before England also lost their other opener, Zak Crawley, in a dramatic 20-minutes' play between the showers.

England were 28-2 in their second innings, a lead of just 35 runs, at stumps after a huge downpour at 1450 GMT had sent the players from the field.

They had made steady progress when an initial rain delay stopped play for an hour-and-a-quarter. But after the match resumed in overcast skies, with the Edgbaston floodlights piercing the gloom, conditions were now hugely in favor of World Test champions Australia's pace attack.

And they made the most of a brief 22-ball session by taking two wickets for no runs as England slumped from 27-0 to 27-2.

Cummins led the way, with Duckett edging the 30-year-old low to all-rounder Cameron Green, who dived forward to hold his latest excellent catch in the gully.

Three balls later, Scott Boland had Crawley caught behind off a superb full-length delivery that angled in and straightened to take the edge.

Ollie Pope and star batsman Joe Root, whose unbeaten 118 was the cornerstone of England's first-innings 393-8 declared, were both yet to get off the mark when the umpires finally abandoned play for the day at 1713 GMT.

"It's nice to have two wickets overnight," said Australia wicketkeeper Alex Carey. "It's pretty evenly poised...It was an exciting 20 minutes, the lights came on and the ball was moving around a bit more."



Italy Seal Nations League Bronze Against Hosts Netherlands

ENSCHEDA (Dispatches) - Italy sealed a third-place finish in the Nations League finals on Sunday, with a 3-2 win over disappointed hosts the Netherlands.

Ronald Koeman's Dutch side started the week determined to win their first trophy since 1988's European Championship but they fell short on home territory in both matches, losing the semi-final against Croatia on Wednesday.

Federico Dimarco and Davide Frattesi struck first half goals for Euro 2020 winners Italy in Enschede as the Netherlands started slowly.

Steven Bergwijn pulled one back with 20 minutes remaining but Juventus forward Federico Chiesa quickly restored Italy's advantage to ensure they would take bronze, despite Georginio Wijnaldum pulling another goal back.

Koeman has now lost three of his four games since being reappointed Netherlands coach in January.

Inter Milan defender Dimarco sent a searing strike into the top corner after Giacomo Raspadori teed him up neatly in the sixth minute.

Neither player started in the semi-final defeat by Spain on Thursday, as Italy coach Roberto Mancini made several changes and returned to his favoured 4-3-3 formation.

It paid off, with Italy netting the second through Frattesi, one of only four who also faced La Roja from the outset.

The Sassuolo midfielder, 23, has been Italy's best player in the final four, another example of the promising crop of players coming through for the Azzurri.

Bergwijn injected some excitement into the game with a well-taken goal to give the Netherlands a chance, but soon Chiesa stroked a low finish past Justin Bijlow at the other end. Wout Weghorst netted for the Oranje after a deflected free-kick fell into his path but the goal was ruled out for offside.

