

A Kuwaiti Newspaper Reported That Saudi Arabia Is Investigating Connecting Its Railway to Iran, As Earlier Foreign Ministers of Both Countries Had Decided to Rebuild Ties of Both States

Iran's Caspian Airlines Has Announced That a McDonnell Douglas MD-83 Plane Has Been Overhauled and Is Ready to Return To Service After Necessary Checks Were Performed on the Plane by Iranian Technicians

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Sri Lanka Set to Start Tea-for-Oil Barter With Iran Next Month

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka is set to start bartering tea to Iran next month in lieu of \$250 million owed for oil, a Sri Lankan official told Reuters, as the crisis-hit country tries to lift sales to a key market and protect its forex reserves.

The barter was agreed in 2021 for oil imported in 2012, but the exchange was delayed after Sri Lanka's unprecedented dollar shortage last year plunged the economy into its worst financial crisis in more than seven decades.

"This is very timely for us because we get access to an important market and both Iran and Sri Lanka can trade without relying on dollars," Sri Lanka's Tea Board Chairman Niraj de Mel told Reuters. "The agreement was to send \$5 million worth of tea each month for 48 months but we plan to start with about \$2 million per month."

Globally popular Ceylon Tea is Sri Lanka's highest foreign exchange-earning crop, brewing \$1.25 billion for the cash-strapped country last year, according to government data. Iran has been one of Sri Lanka's main tea buyers but exports have fallen steadily from \$128 million in 2018 to \$70 million last year as U.S. sanctions on Iran hit trade.

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Unilateral Sanctions Hamper Women's Empowerment

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Director General for International Affairs of Iran's Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, Khadijeh Karimi, says unilateral Western sanctions and coercive, unlawful measures hinder the empowerment, growth and prosperity of women in various spheres.

Karimi made the remarks on Friday at the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls in the Swiss city of Geneva.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran believes in the inherent dignity of women, and articles 20 and 21 of the Iranian Constitution emphasize the equality of all men and women," she noted.

Karimi also rebuked the removal of Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), lamenting that the move was a clear example of discrimination against women, especially Iranian women.

She added that the Islamic Republic of Iran, regardless of such blatant and unlawful discrimination, has pursued the empowerment of women and girls with greater momentum and seriousness.

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Tehran Dismisses U.S. Claim of Russia's Use of Iranian Drones in Ukraine



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations has dismissed the latest claim by the United States and its allies regarding Russia's use of Iranian drones in the Ukraine war.

In a statement on Friday, the mission said the anti-Iran claims are aimed to influence the six-month periodic report of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2231.

In a joint statement at the Security Council Stakeout on Friday, US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield claimed Iran and Russia were enhancing military cooperation.

Thomas-Greenfield claimed Russia has not only procured hundreds of 'Mohajer' and 'Shahed' series unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from Iran in clear violation of Resolution 2231, but it is also now working with Iran to produce the weapons inside Russia.

The US diplomat said she delivered the joint statement on behalf of the United States, France, Britain, Albania, and Ukraine.

In response to the claim, Iran's diplomatic mission said since the countries in question have failed to impose their "illegal" demands on the secretariat to take in the issue of the drones, they seek to influence the six-month periodic report through organized letters and "political show."

It said the pressure on the UN Security Council not to examine the report in due time this month during the presidency of the United Arab Emirates and to postpone it to the next month under Britain's presidency "clearly reveals their biased goals."

The mission said Iran has "repeatedly announced in a clear manner that it is not involved in the war and that this war cannot have a winner or a loser."

The statement said all that must be done should be aimed at ending the war in Ukraine as soon as possible and resolving the root causes of the conflict to establish sustainable peace.

The latest claim came in connection with the UN chief's report on Iran's implementation of Resolution 2231, passed in 2015 as part of the nuclear deal.

The resolution prohibits countries from receiving ballistic missiles and drones from Iran that have a range of more than 300 kilometers and a payload of more than 500 kilograms until October 2023.

Both Iran and Russia have repeatedly denied claims that Tehran has provided Moscow with drones to be used in the war in Ukraine.

Iran FM to West: Stop futile blame game, no Iran-made drone used in Ukraine

The anti-Iran claims first emerged in July 2022, when US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan alleged that Washington had received "information" indicating that the Islamic Republic was preparing to provide Russia with "up to several hundred drones, including weapons-capable UAVs on an expedited timeline" for use in the war.

Russia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzya also said on Friday that the claim about Iranian drones was "absolutely groundless."

"It's not the first time that we hear allegations about us using Iranian drones in Ukraine. We categorically rejected it. These are baseless allegations and blatant attempts to deliberately mislead the international community," the Russian diplomat said.

Nebenzya said Russia expected the UN Secretariat "to strictly abide by its mandate and not to yield to pressure exerted by some states."

Pakistan Says Energy Plans From Iran in Danger

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - According to analysts, Pakistan's attempt to resolve the foreign exchange crisis by importing energy from Iran could be in danger since a militant attack near their border has thrown future deals into doubt, reported Nikkei Asia.

On May 21, five Iranian border guards along with an extremist group were killed in Saravan which is a town in Iran near the frontier with Pakistan. The incident happened following the inauguration of a 100-megawatt transmission line in a border village by Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. The transmission will supply Iranian electricity to southern Pakistan's port hub of Gwadar, which has drawn investment under China's Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure push, as per Nikkei Asia.

Iran's foreign ministry slammed the "terrorist attack" as an "attempt to damage cooperation and friendly relations between Tehran and Islamabad" after the leaders' first one-on-one meeting in a decade.

Alex Vatanka, Founding Director of the Iran Program at the Washington-based Middle East Institute said, "This attack can be a huge spoiler for prospective energy deals between Iran and Pakistan."

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ViewPoint UN Coming To Its Senses?

After years of remaining silent or passive against Israeli regime's crimes, it seems the United Nations is gradually coming to its senses and realizing that it should take action against the Zionist regime's crimes because Israeli forces have ramped up its crimes because of the indifference of the international bodies and nations.

On Friday finally the United Nations human rights chief woke up and warned the situation in the occupied West Bank is "getting out of control" due to Israel's use of excessive force.

Volker Turk, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in a statement that rising violence "fueled by sharp political rhetoric and Israel's continued use of weapons" in the occupied West Bank could spiral out of control in the wake of recent attacks by Israeli settlers in several areas.

Turk called on the Israeli authorities to immediately end the violence and abide by international law with regard to the use of lethal force.

"Israel must urgently reset its policies and actions in the occupied West Bank in line with international human rights standards, including protecting and respecting the right to life."

"As an occupying entity, Israel also has obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure public order and safety within the occupied Palestinian territories."

Turk called for "effective investigations into cases of killings committed by Israeli forces, where there is sufficient evidence of violations of national or international law," also demanding that the suspected perpetrators "be held accountable."

The UN rights chief said the underlying dynamics leading to the widespread violence by Israel and arbitrary loss of life in the occupied Palestinian territories need to be addressed with urgency. "For this violence to end, the occupation must end," he said.

"On all sides, the people with the political power know this and must instigate immediate steps to realize this."

Meanwhile at the same time, the EU's top representative to the Palestinians, Sven Kuehn von Burgsdorff, condemned Israel for failing to meet its obligations to protect Palestinians.

"There was no attempt or effort to stop the settlers," he said.

The statements came after June 19 Israeli attack in Jenin refugee camp that killed at least seven Palestinians, including a boy and a girl.

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Iran Oil Output Increases by 350,000 bpd Since March

LONDON (Dispatches) - The International Energy Agency (IEA) has said in a recent report that Iran's crude oil output has increased by about 350,000 barrels per day (bpd) since the beginning of 2023 in spite of U.S. sanctions targeting the country's oil sector.

"Despite tough financial restrictions, Iran managed to increase crude oil output by about 130,000 bpd in 2022 to an average 2.55 million bpd, and by 350,000 bpd since the beginning of this year," the IEA said in its latest report dubbed Oil 2023.

The report argued that Iran remains a "wildcard" for world oil markets, and if it is released from sanctions, production could ramp up gradually by roughly 900,000 bpd to reach the capacity of 3.8 million bpd.

Higher exports and domestic throughput have pushed Iranian crude production up to around 2.9 million bpd in May 2023, it added. Last week, Bloomberg reported that Iran has been shipping the highest amount of crude in almost five years despite U.S. sanctions.

Bloomberg cited energy analysts as saying that Iran's oil exports have surged to the highest level since the U.S. unilaterally re-imposed sanctions on the country in 2018.

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Iran Criticizes West for Supporting Zionists' Brutality

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani in a message slammed the West's silence against and support for the Zionists' brutality against Palestinians.

The Zionists' brutal attack on the mosques and desecrating the Holy Quran, the destruction of houses, and the daily killing of children, women and the defenseless people of Palestine are sings of the fake regime's non-compliance with any redline in violating religious sanctities and human rights, Kanaani wrote on his Twitter account on Saturday.

Silence and support from the Western governments emboldens them in this brutality, he added.

Iran Urges Mechanism For Regional Dialogue

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The foreign minister of Iran called for the establishment of a joint mechanism for dialogue and cooperation among the Persian Gulf states.

In a post on his Instagram account, Hossein Amirabdollahian emphasized the necessity for the formation of a joint mechanism for dialogue and cooperation among all Persian Gulf countries.

"A better, safer and more prosperous future is the common right of all our nations and the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to double its efforts for this purpose," he said.

"Given the importance of neighbors in the foreign policy of our country and in order to strengthen the policy of neighborliness of the 13th administration, shortly after hosting the Saudi foreign minister and the fruitful talks in Tehran, I headed for the 4 countries of Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates in the south of the Persian Gulf," the foreign minister stated.

"Negotiation with the high-ranking officials and my counterparts in these countries were highly positive and constructive and was promising for all countries in both the north and south of the strategic region of the Persian Gulf. The talks also heralded a 'better, safer and more prosperous future' for the people among whom the bonds of friendship, compassion and kinship are so deep and strong," Amirabdollahian stated.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that putting in place a joint mechanism for



dialogue and cooperation with the participation of all littoral states of the strategic region of the Persian Gulf is necessary and fruitful more than ever before," he underlined, the Foreign Ministry's website reported.

"To this end, while welcoming the initiative of the UN secretary general to hold a meeting of the top diplomats of regional countries in New York, we will put forth the idea of forming a 'forum of dialog and cooperation' with the presence of all the countries in the north and south of the Persian Gulf and we will also give the details in writing in the near future to all our southern neighbors," he added.

"A better, safer and more prosperous future is the common right of all our nations and the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to double its efforts for this purpose," the Iranian foreign minister concluded.

Russian Expert Delegation Due in Iran To Discuss Rasht-Astara Project

TEHRAN (IP) - An expert delegation from Russia is expected to visit Iran within the next few days to discuss the technical issues surrounding the construction of Rasht-Astara railroad in northern Iran, a senior Russian official said.

Sergey Pavlov, First Deputy Managing Director of International Business Development and International Affairs at Russian Railways, made the remarks during a Thursday meeting in Moscow with Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali.

He said that the talks of the Russian delegation in Tehran aim to accelerate the construction of the railway which is part of the strategically important International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC). The Russian official and the Iranian ambassador underlined the need for giving a boost to the project after signing an agreement by the two countries to construct the railroad.

Ships Passing Through Hormuz Strait Must Communicate With Iran in Farsi

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy Rear Admiral Ali Reza Tangsiri says vessels seeking to pass through the Strait of Hormuz must communicate with Iranian naval forces in Farsi.

"Any ship that wants to pass through the Strait of Hormuz must inform us of its nationality, type of cargo, and destination in Farsi, and if it does not do this, we will definitely go after it," Tangsiri said on Friday.

He also recalled that Iran was not allowed to control the Strait of Hormuz during the Pahlavi era, reiterating, "But now, vessels passing through this strait, including ships, warships, and any boats, must introduce themselves in Farsi."

Iran has time and again vowed to give a decisive response to any hostile move in the Strait of Hormuz that seeks to disrupt the security of the strategic waterway.

The Islamic Republic has also made it clear that it views US military presence in the region as a threat to its national security and a destabilizing factor in regional countries.

Pakistan Army Chief To Make Visit to Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Pakistan Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir will soon make an official visit to Tehran, for advancing military diplomacy with neighbors and expanding bilateral cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

A senior Pakistani military official, asked not to be named, told an IRNA in Islamabad that Pakistan Chief of Army Staff will make an official visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran in the coming days (this month).

This reliable source added that that security development in the region, strengthening bilateral cooperation in the security, border and military sectors are on the agenda of General Syed Asim Munir's talks with high-ranking Iranian officials.

He emphasized that Pakistan enjoys strong diplomatic, political and military relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and both countries have a serious determination to address issues between them and secure common interests.

Iran, Croatia Draft Agreement on Cooperation in Customs Affairs Approves

TEHRAN (IP) - The Guardian Council spokesman said that the draft agreement between Iran and Croatia on cooperation in customs affairs was approved.

Hadi Tahan-Nazif referring to the review of the bill of agreement between the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Croatia regarding assistance in mutual cooperation in customs affairs, stated: "The only objection to this resolution was resolved with the amendments of the parliament, and the resolution has not recognized anything against the standards of Sharia and the constitution."

The spokesman of the Iranian Guardian Council said: "Most of the flaws and ambiguities of the plan to amend the articles of the election law of Iran's Parliament have been resolved, and only a few things remain, which will soon be reflected in the parliament."

Tahan Nazif then stated: "We are doing our best for enthusiastic, competitive and healthy elections. In all elections, there have been different tastes and there has been no prohibition, and any political current that operates within the framework of the law can participate in the elections."

Forming Maritime Coalition to Enhance Regional Security

TEHRAN (MNA) - Forming a maritime coalition is one of the priorities of the region that would enhance security in the region, Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani says.

Rear Admiral Shahram Irani made the remarks in an exclusive interview with Mehr News Agency on Saturday.

The maritime coalition is one of the priorities of the region today and with its formation, security in the region will be significantly improved, he underlined.

Iran's first priority is the region and countries of the region, he said, adding that when the countries of the region come together, an unparalleled alliance would be formed.

The rapprochement of regional countries with the Islamic Republic of Iran and the formation of negotiations will create security in the region, he noted.

Pointing to Iran's role in securing maritime trade routes, the Iranian Navy commander noted that Iranian navy forces have been honored three times by the United Nations for establishing maritime security and combating piracy.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Admiral Irani referred to the historic mission of Iran Navy '360-Degree', adding that the mission of Iran's 86th Naval Fleet was so extensive that it has become a golden opportunity and has created a big leap in all fields.

Vietnamese, Iranian Legislatures Boost Ties

TEHRAN - Chairman of the Vietnamese National Assembly's Committee for External Relations Vu Hai Ha hosted a reception in Hanoi for Ambassador of Iran to Vietnam Ali Akbar Nazari.

Ha said since the establishment of formal relations between Vietnam and Iran in 1973, numerous bilateral cooperation agreements have been signed in various socio-economic areas, along with high-level visits between the leaders of the two countries.

With five decades of cooperation, Ha believed that bilateral cooperation will further flourish.

According to him, the friendly and cooperative relationship between the two legislatures has thrived over the past years. The relations between the Vietnam-Iran and

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



Iran-Vietnam Friendship Parliamentarians' Groups have also been strengthened.

The host wished that the two legislatures would continue facilitating the exchange of delegations, especially between their committees, working closely together at international forums, and further enhancing the role of the two friendship parliamentarians' groups as a bridge between the two parliaments.

Affirming Iran always attaches importance to and wishes to further boost all-around friendship and cooperation with Vietnam, Ali Akbar Nazari pledged that during his tenure, he will exert efforts to carry forward the traditional friendship and cooperation between the two States, legislatures and peoples./.

Role of Trade Unions Is Prominent in Political, Economic Fields

TEHRAN (IP) - Majlis Speaker says the role of the trade unions is very prominent in all political, economic, and cultural fields of the country."

The commemoration of the National Day and Trade Union Week was held on Saturday, in the IRIB conference hall with the presence of Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, some of Majlis representatives, and some members of the trade unions.

Referring to the role of trade unions during the holy defense, Qalibaf said: "The martyrs of trade unions took effective steps to preserve the country."

He stressed: "We could not take good advantage of the capacity of the trade unions, and the communications between the parliament and the trade unions is not as it should be."

Pointing out that the population of the trade unions is about 30 million, he added: "The trade unions sacrificed their lives and property in the last year's unrests and took steps for the security of Iran, and I understand all these efforts."

Following the ceremony, some heads of trade unions expressed their views and exchanged opinions.

Iran Embassy Assailant Indicted by Denmark Prosecutor

COPENHAGEN (PresstV) - A knife-wielding assailant who intruded into the Iranian embassy compound in Copenhagen with the intent to assassinate the ambassador last October has been finally indicted by a Danish prosecutor.

The 33-year-old assailant has been charged with aggravated assault against Iran's Ambassador Afsaneh Nadipour as well as inflicting property damage on the embassy building and automobiles, according to a statement released Friday by the prosecutor's office, which further noted that Denmark's justice minister has accepted the charges brought against the suspect.

The assailant entered the embassy compound on October 7, 2022 and tried to attack and seriously harm the female Iranian ambassador by rushing towards her with a knife, injuring a local employee of the diplomatic post who tried to stop him.

According to the prosecutor's statement, the attempted assault on Mrs. Nadipour was

thwarted by an embassy employee and the suspect was then arrested by the Copenhagen police and has since remained in custody. The statement said the inability of a foreign diplomat in Denmark to perform his or her duties without fear of being physically attacked is a very serious matter and totally unacceptable, adding under such circumstances, the diplomat - by law -- must come under police protection.

Following the incident last October, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian called the Iranian ambassador in Copenhagen and expressed serious regret that a lady and an ambassador with diplomatic immunity would come under such attack in the heart of Europe without timely police presence and interference. Denmark's ambassador to Iran was then summoned to the Iranian foreign ministry and handed a formal protest for failure to provide security for Tehran's embassy and diplomats in accordance with the Vienna Convention.

Iran, Saudi Arabia to Expand Flight Network | Iraq to Launch Joint Water Projects with Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran and Saudi Arabia have started negotiations on further developing the flight network between the two neighboring countries, the Head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) has said.

Speaking to IRNA on Saturday, Mohammad Mohammadi Bakhsh said that Hajj flights exist between Iran and Saudi Arabia from 21 cities, but the two sides are negotiating to establish non-Hajj flights.

He said he had invited his Saudi counterpart to visit Iran for negotiating on the expansion of the flight network.

This invitation is due to the examination of common issues and the request of the Iranian airports to launch flights from different cities of Iran to Saudi Arabia with the participation of Iranian airlines, he added.

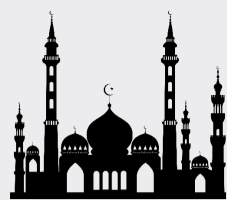
TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Blaming Turkey as the main culprit for the shortage of water in Iraq, the Arab country's minister of water resources said Iraq is seeking joint projects with Iran, including construction of dam on Arvand River, to address the water-related problems.

Aoun Diab said in an interview with Al Forat that Turkey has the key and major role in supplying most of Iraq's water resources, especially in the Euphrates by 90 percent.

He noted that Iran controls only 12 percent of Iraq's water imports.

Tensions between Iraq and Iran over the share of water had caused the severance of interaction between the energy ministries of the two countries for two years, Diab said, adding that the two neighbors have now decided to launch joint projects to address the water shortage problem after a series of negotiations.

He stated that Iraq is ready to cooperate with all countries in the region to solve the water shortage problem, adding that Iran has accepted the idea of construction of a dam on Ras al-Bisheh area of Arvand River.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:03
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:50

86. When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy. Allah takes careful account of all things.

87. Allah. There is no god but He: of a surety He will gather you together against the Day of Judgment, about which there is no doubt. And whose word can be truer than Allah's?

Surah 4. Women (86 - 87)

Iran Oil Exports on Rise Despite Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's oil minister said that the country's oil products and exports have climbed in spite of harsher sanctions.

Javad Owji said in an interview with the IRNA news agency that the promotion of energy diplomacy and relations with Asian, African, and Latin American countries has helped Iran create new markets for selling its oil.

He vowed good news on oil sales will be announced in the coming months.

The minister quoted President Ebrahim Raisi as saying that Iran's oil exports rose to 1.9 million barrels per day (bpd) in May.

Owji said international institutes that monitor the countries' oil exports have reported the hike in Iran's output and exports.

Last week, a Reuters report quoting consultants, shipping data and a source familiar with the matter said Iran's crude exports and oil output have hit new highs in 2023 despite US sanctions, adding to global supply when other producers are limiting output.

Tehran's oil exports have been limited since former US President Donald Trump in 2018 exited a 2015 nuclear accord and reimposed sanctions aimed at curbing oil exports and the associated revenue to Iran's government.



Even so, exports have risen during the term of his successor President Joe Biden, the report continued.

Iranian crude exports exceeded 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in May, the highest monthly rate since 2018, according to Kpler, a provider of flows data. They were around 2.5 million bpd in 2018, before the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal.

Iran said in May it has boosted its crude output to above 3 million bpd. That's about 3% of global supply and would be the highest since 2018, according to figures from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). A source familiar with the matter told Reuters earlier this month output was still at this level.

IME Witnesses Weekly Trade of 3.1m Tons of Commodities

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 3,127,518 tons of commodities and 70 vehicles with a total trading value of more than \$692m on its physical market, posting growths of 11.3% in volume of trades compared to the figures of the previous week.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,613,727 tons of commodities and 70 vehicles worth nearly \$480m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,230,760 tons of cement, 842,000 tons of iron ore, 392,342 tons of steel, 147,000 tons of sponge iron, 7,575 tons of aluminum, 5,846 tons of copper, 1,000 tons of zinc, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 70 vehicles.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 497,230 tons of commodities valued at more than \$201m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 220,666 tons of bitumen, 115,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 94,190 tons of polymeric products, 33,707 tons of chemicals, 27,000 tons of lube cut, 4,290 tons of oil, 2,260 tons of sulfur, 650 tons of petroleum products, 300 tons of insulation and 270 tons of feedstocks.

The IME also traded within the same week 16,560 tons of commodities on its side market.

Iran, Brazil Emphasize Expanding Agricultural Cooperation

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Officials from Iran and Brazil stressed the need to expand and enhance cooperation in the field of agriculture.

In a joint meeting held between Iranian Deputy Ministry of Agriculture for Commercial and Development Affairs Ahmad Khani Nozari and a Brazilian trade delegation in Tehran on Saturday, the two sides discussed the development of bilateral ties and boosting the exchanges of agricultural and stockbreeding products.

During the meeting, Nozari pointed to the high potentials of Iran and Brazil and added that the two countries enjoy high capacities in the field of agriculture which can bring about more synergy between the two countries.

He expressed hope that the two sides would witness further cooperation in the exchange of agricultural products with the appropriate balance of trade.

The head of the Brazilian delegation, for his part, called for increasing the level of cooperation regarding the exchanges of agricultural products as well as taking advantage of the agricultural capacities of Brazil, especially in the field of extraterrestrial cultivation.

Since Iran is among the top four countries in the world in terms of advanced nanotechnology, he said, Brazil is willing to expand cooperation with Iran in the field of agricultural nanotechnology and transfer of technical know-how.

During the meeting, some memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were signed between the two countries in trade, agricultural and stockbreeding fields.

Monthly Crude Steel Output Up 8.8% yr/yr

TEHRAN (MNA) - The World Steel Association (WSA), in its latest annual report, announced that the production of crude steel in Iran rose 8.8 percent in May 2023, from May 2022.

The report said that Iran produced 3.3 million tons of crude steel in May of this year.

Iran's crude steel production also increased by 2.2 percent to 13 million tons in the first five months of 2023, as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

The Iranian Steel industry has been constantly developing over the past years against all the pressures and obstacles created by outside forces like the U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus outbreak that has severely affected the performance of the world's top producers.

In early February, the WSA reported that Iran's crude steel production increased by eight percent in 2022 when the production by the world's top 64 steelmakers declined by 4.2 percent. Iran was ranked first among the world's top steel producers in terms of production growth in the previous year.

Based on the WSA data, Iran produced 30.6 million tons of crude steel in the mentioned year.

Meanwhile, WSA stated that crude steel production by the world's top 64 producers fell 4.2 percent to stand at 1.787 billion in 2022.

50 Foreign Companies to Attend ELECOMP 2023

TEHRAN (IRNA) - As many as 50 foreign companies are set to take part in the 26th International Exhibition of Electronics, Computers, and e-Commerce (ELECOMP 2023) scheduled to kick off tomorrow.

The latest edition of the ELECOMP is to be held at Tehran's Permanent Ground for International Fairs on June 25-28, according to Saturday report by the IRNA.

The expo will be held after a four-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Over 450 domestic and foreign companies are expected to participate in the commercial exhibition.

Uzbekistan, France, Pakistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syria, China, Russia, Turkey, Armenia, and Iraq are among foreign participants.

ELECOMP is considered the most significant commercial event in Iran's electronics and computer products and services market.

Export to India Rises 6% in 4 Months on Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of Iran's export to India increased by six percent during the first four months of 2023, as compared to the same period of time in 2022, according to the data released by the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Iran's export to India stood at \$257 million in January-April 2023, while the figure was \$242 million in January-April 2022.

India's export to Iran fell 29 percent from \$631 million in the first four months of 2022 to \$445 million in the first four months of this year.

Based on the data previously released by the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the value of Iran's export to India increased by 60 percent in 2022 as compared to the preceding year.

The Indian ministry put the worth of Iran's exports to India at \$653 million in 2022, while the figure was \$409 million in 2021.

As reported, petroleum products have been the major goods imported by India from Iran in the said months.

According to the mentioned data, the value of trade between Iran and India reached \$2.5 billion in 2022, rising 48 percent from \$1.693 billion in 2021.

During January-December 2022, India's export to Iran also increased by 44 percent to stand at \$1.847 billion, while the figure was \$1.284 billion in 2021.

Rice was India's major product exported to Iran in the said period during which the country shipped \$1.098 billion worth of rice to the Islamic Republic.

Iraq Expects Rise in Gas Imports from Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A spokesperson for the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity said Iran has expressed its readiness to increase the volume of gas exports to the Arab country.

Ahmad Musa al-Ebadi said that a visit by a delegation from Iraq's Ministry of Electricity to Iran in early June led to steep rise in gas exports to Iraq.

Iran supplies 45 million cubic meters of gas to Iraq, he added, noting that Iran has also helped Iraq to launch power plants.

Ebadi stated that Iran has expressed readiness to increase the export of gas to neighboring Iraq.

The spokesperson asserted that Iraq needs 55 million to 60 million cubic meters of gas annually, while Iran has supplied Iraq with 45 million cubic meters of gas so far following a series of negotiations.

He expressed hope that gas imports from Iran would continue to increase the generation of electricity in his country.

Some 5400 Worn-Out Vehicles Been Registered for Scrapping

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The executive manage of headquarters for renovating fleet and scrapping worn-out vehicles says since the second half of the second Iranian month of Ordibehesht, 5400 cars have been registered for being scrapped and renovation.

Heidar Pashaei said that unfortunately the pace of producing certificates for scrapping is very low and it requires the scrapping centers to double their efforts and producing certificates for scrapping.

He added that the plan for scrapping worn-out cars and motorcycles was put on the system website and scrapping centers were assigned to take action for producing scrapping certificate for cars, motorcycles and heavy vehicles, and since that time, 5400 vehicles have been registered for scrapping and renovation and this trend for the need of the market is very sluggish, reiterating that the market needs at least 50,000 scrapping certificate and these centers have to produce which have failed so far.

Rise in Transporting Goods by IRISL Despite Drop in Freight Rate in the World

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line Group (IRISL) says despite 20% rise in the volume of transport operation by the group in the current year, its revenues have declined due to the fall in the freight rate in the world which has affected all shipping lines in the world.



Speaking in a ceremony marking the International Day of Seafarers, the CEO of IRISL Mr. Mohammad Reza Modarres Khiabani hailed Iranian seafarers who hoisted the flag of the Islamic Relations in the waters worldwide, stipulating that all efforts of IRISL group is boost job satisfaction of its seafarers.

He then added that of the main achievements of the IRISL in the recent two years, he can mention replacing foreign seafarers with Iranians in its shipping fleet so that today he can say the fleet is fully Iranian.

He then termed positive last year performance of the group, adding that in the first quarter of the current year, despite 20% growth in the volume of transport operation the revenues have fallen because of sharp decline in the freight rate in the world which has affected all shipping lines in the world.

Modarres Khiabani also called for collective and sincere efforts of the staff for passing from tough years, reiterating that replacing foreign seafarers with Iranians the time for joining Iranian seafarers to the fleet has shortened.

All-Out Support of MSC From Projects of HOSCO

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) during his visit to three ongoing projects of direct reduction, iron and steel of Hormozgan and Simin Hormoz Star in Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) said that fortunately the developmental projects of HOSCO have acceptable pace and MSC as the main shareholder of it will not spare any support for implementing these projects either financially, technically or in manpower.



The CEO of MSC Mr. Mohammad Yaser Tayyebnia being accompanied by the CEO of HOSCO Mr. Ataollah Maroufkhani and some senior officials visited three developmental projects of 1.72m ton direct reduction of Hormozgan Steel, iron and steel of Hormozgan and 1.72m ton mining and steel industries of Simin Hormoz Star and got acquainted with the implementation of these projects.

On the sidelines of the visit, Tayyebnia pointed to the importance of HOSCO for Mobarakeh Steel Group in implementing developmental projects and said that HOSCO is one of the biggest affiliate groups of MSC.

He also hailed the performance of HOSCO in setting successive records for production and announced the all-out support of MSC from the developmental projects of HOSCO.

Mali's Approved Constitutional Changes

BAMAKO (Dispatches) - Malian voters overwhelmingly approved changes to the constitution in a referendum, marking a key step in the ruling junta's declared plans to restore civilian rule, provisional results showed Friday.

The military has made the draft constitution a cornerstone for the rebuilding of Mali, which is facing the spread of jihadism and a deep, multi-faceted crisis.

Ninety-seven percent of the referendum votes were cast in favour of the changes, the electoral authority said.

Voter turnout was put at 39.4 percent in the landlocked Sahel country, which is struggling with an 11-year-old jihadist insurgency.



Israel Admits Failings Over Attacks on Palestinians

TURMUS AYYA (Dispatches) - The Israeli army acknowledged Friday it "failed" to prevent an attack by Jewish settlers on a Palestinian village in the occupied West Bank, during which one villager was killed.

Revenge attacks on Turmus Ayya and other villages followed the killing of four Israelis by Palestinian gunmen on Tuesday, which militant group Hamas said was in response to an Israeli army raid on Jenin refugee camp which killed six Palestinians the previous day.

Army spokesman Daniel Hagari said troops had tried to prevent Israelis from attacking Turmus Ayya but they were stretched too thin.



Paris Climate Summit Ends Without A Deal on Global Tax on Shipping



PARIS (Dispatches) - Participants at a Paris summit stopped short of a deal to create a tax on greenhouse gas emissions produced from international shipping, leaving climate NGOs and activists lamenting the lack of ambitious responses to fight climate change and the world's inequalities brought forward at the meeting.

The two-day gathering of world leaders and finance bosses ended without a major announcement, though organizers did release a promised "road map" aimed at fulfilling French President Emmanuel Macron's pledge to assess reforms of the international finance system over the next two years.

"We need to be clear that if we don't change the institutions, the world will remain the same," Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said. "Those who are rich will stay rich. Those who are poor will remain poor. This is the way it is."

The idea of a global tax on the greenhouse gas emissions produced from international shipping has been gaining traction and could potentially be adopted at a July meeting of the International Maritime Organization, the United Nations agency regulating shipping. The money could be directed toward developing countries to help them deal with climate change.

Some experts believe that a tax on shipping alone could raise \$100 billion a year, and a strong endorsement of it in Paris would have provided Macron with a symbolic win.

"This is tax-free sector. And there's no reason why it's not taxed," Macron said. But the French president, who hosted the summit, suggested that China and the U.S. were not supporting the idea.

"If China and the U.S. and several key European countries are not on board, then you would put a tax in place that would not have any impact," he added.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who attended the summit, called the tax "a very constructive suggestion" and said the U.S. would look at it.

It was unclear which countries at the summit supported the proposal, which could be an important step toward getting a heavily emitting industry to pitch in to the cost of fighting climate change. The French presidency said 23 nations, which were not identified in the official statement, backed the initiative.

Shipping accounts for almost 3% of greenhouse gas emissions, according to the International Maritime Organization. A European Parliament report has warned that share could increase dramatically by 2050.

The gathering had no mandate to make formal decisions, but Macron had pledged to deliver a to-do list that would be accompanied by a progress-tracking tool. A 15-page document released soon after the summit ended relied heavily on calls for action by groups like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and others, such as changing the way risk is calculated on projects in the developing world and financing projects with local currency.

Both moves could reduce borrowing costs that are typically much higher for low-income nations that often face massive challenges in adapting to climate change at the same time they're confronted by poverty and myriad other issues.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said during the closing ceremony that African nations are not "beggars."

"It's important in the new era where the world is in now, that there should be a good measure of equality among sovereign nations ... We should go to demonstrate that Africa should never be seen as a continent that needs generosity. We want to be treated as equals."

During the summit, the World Bank announced a plan to provide a pause in debt repayments for the most vulnerable countries when they are hit by a crisis or catastrophe.

India's Opposition Parties Unite For 2024 National Elections

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Leaders of 15 Indian opposition parties agreed on Friday to fight the 2024 national elections on a common platform against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The parties, many of which are regional rivals and have been splintered at the national level, account for less than half the 301 seats the BJP has in the 542-member lower house of parliament.

They have, however, sought to sink their differences to challenge BJP after Rahul Gandhi, leader of the main opposition Congress party, was convicted in a defamation case and disqualified from parliament in March.

Their campaign got a shot in the arm in May when Congress trounced BJP in a key state election, exceeding expectations and gaining fresh momentum ahead of more state elections due this year and national elections in April-May 2024.

Although Modi remains popular and is widely expected to win a third term without much difficulty, opposition leaders say a joint campaign and straight, one-on-one constituency contests against BJP could turn the tables.



U.S. Indicts 4 Chinese Companies for Trafficking Fentanyl Ingredients

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. government has charged four Chinese companies and eight Chinese individuals with trafficking in chemicals used in manufacturing fentanyl, Attorney General Merrick Garland announced.

Two of the eight have been arrested as the US Justice Department intensifies its crackdown on the synthetic opioid responsible for hundreds of thousands of overdose deaths in the past decade.

It was the first time the United States has charged Chinese companies for trafficking fentanyl precursor chemicals inside the United States, rather than shipping them to Mexico, the origin of most of the fentanyl found in the country.

The announcement came just days after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Beijing, where he met with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

"These companies and their employees knowingly conspired to manufacture deadly fentanyl for distribution in the United States," Garland said.

"Just one of these China-based chemical companies shipped more than 200 kilograms of fentanyl-related precursor chemicals to the U.S. for the purpose of making 50 kilograms of fentanyl, a quantity that could contain enough deadly doses of fentanyl to kill 25 million Americans," said Garland.

Charged in three separate cases filed in federal court in New York were Hubei Amarvel Biotech, Anhui Rencheng Technology, Anhui Moker New Material Technology and Hefei GSK Trade.

The eight individuals charged included executives and employees of the four companies. The two people arrested, both employees of Hubei Amarvel, were taken into custody by US officials and held in Honolulu, Hawaii after they were expelled from Fiji on June 8. Although Mexico has been the main source of fentanyl sold in the United States, Washington has increasingly focused its attention on the Mexicans' suppliers in China.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 times more powerful than heroin and much easier and cheaper to produce.

Wagner Boss Vows to Avenge Alleged Russian Army Attack

LONDON (Dispatches) - Russian mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin accused the Russian military of "destroying" his fighters, without fully explaining his accusation, and vowed to stop the "evil" of the military leadership.

The Defense Ministry quickly issued a statement saying Prigozhin's accusations "are not true and are an informational provocation".

In a series of audio messages on his official Telegram channel, Prigozhin said:

"Those who destroyed our lads, who destroyed the lives of many tens of thousands of Russian soldiers, will be punished. I ask that no one offer resistance."

He said details of what had occurred were just emerging, but added: "The Minister of Defense arrived specially in Rostov to carry out an operation to destroy the Wagner PMC (private military company)."

An unverified video posted on the "Razgruzka Wagner" (Wagner's Combat Vest) Telegram channel showed a scene in a forest where small fires were burning and trees appeared to have been broken by force.

It carried the caption: "A missile attack was launched on the camps of PMC Wagner. Many victims. According to eyewitnesses, the strike was

delivered from the rear, that is, it was delivered by the military of the Russian Ministry of Defense."

Prigozhin vowed to avenge the incident: "There are 25,000 of us and we are going to figure out why chaos is happening in the country."

But he also added: "This is not a military coup."

Earlier in the day, Prigozhin, appeared to cross a new line in his increasingly vitriolic feud with Moscow, saying that the Kremlin's rationale for invading Ukraine was based on lies concocted by the army's top brass.

Prigozhin, whose frequent tirades on social media belie his limited role in the war as head of the Wagner private military company, has for months been openly accusing Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Russia's top general, Valery Gerasimov, of rank incompetence.

But on Friday he for the first time dismissed Russia's core justifications for invading Ukraine on Feb. 24 last year in what it calls a "special military operation".

"The war was needed ... so that [Defence Minister Sergei] Shoigu could become a marshal ... so that he could get a second 'Hero' [of Russia] medal," Prigozhin said in another audio message. "The war wasn't needed to demilitarise or denazify Ukraine."



Pakistan Hits Out at U.S. and India After Biden-Modi Meeting

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Pakistan on Friday criticized the United States and India after President Joe Biden met Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House and both leaders called on Pakistan to ensure its territory was not used as a base for militant attacks.

Pakistan's foreign ministry said a joint U.S.-Indian statement was "unwarranted, one-sided, and misleading". The reference to Islamabad in it was "contrary to diplomatic norms," it said. The ministry added that it was surprised by the joint statement and said it had "close counterterrorism cooperation" with the United States.

Relations between India and Pakistan have been fraught for years. Since independence from Britain in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought three wars, two of them over the Muslim-majority Himalayan region of Kashmir, which they both claim in full but rule in part.

The joint U.S.-Indian statement said: "They (Biden and Modi) strongly condemned cross-border terrorism, the use of terrorist proxies and called on Pakistan to take immediate action to ensure that no territory under its control is used for launching terrorist attacks."

Pakistan's foreign ministry said India was using the allegations of extremism against Islamabad to deflect from the situation in Kashmir and the treatment of minorities in India.

New Delhi has for years accused Pakistan of launching militant attacks in India, including the one in 2008 in Mumbai that killed over 165 people.

India also says Pakistan has helped Islamist militants who have battled Indian security forces in its part of Kashmir since the late 1980s. Pakistan denies the accusation and says it only provides diplomatic and moral support for Kashmiris seeking self-determination.

The special status given to the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir was revoked in 2019 when New Delhi split it into two federally controlled territories. Pakistan calls the moves illegal and wants them rolled back.

Biden rolled out the red carpet for Modi on Thursday, with both leaders touting deals their countries reached on defense and commerce aimed at countering China's global influence.

Pakistan also said it was "deeply concerned" over the planned transfer of advanced military technologies to India, saying such steps would not prove helpful in achieving peace in South Asia.



For EV Batteries, Lithium Iron Phosphate Narrows the Gap With Nickel, Cobalt

DETROIT (Dispatches) - As the auto industry scrambles to produce more affordable electric vehicles, whose most expensive components are the batteries, lithium iron phosphate is gaining traction as the EV battery material of choice.

The popularity of the chemical compound known as LFP is due partly to environmental and geopolitical concerns. But technological advances have also reduced the performance gap with more widely used materials such as nickel and cobalt.

LFP, embraced by EV industry leader Tesla two years ago, has sparked new interest especially in the U.S., where a clutch of domestic and overseas manufacturers has pledged more than \$14 billion in new production facilities.

Overseas, two of the world's largest automakers, Toyota Motor and Hyundai Motor, have both announced plans in the past week to equip their future vehicles with LFP batteries, but have not disclosed plans for the U.S.

"LFP is less expensive than cobalt and nickel, and all the minerals can be obtained here in North America (which means) much lower transportation costs and a more secure supply chain," said Stanley Whittingham, professor at Binghamton University in New York and a 2019 Nobel laureate for his work on lithium ion batteries.

The addition of manganese, a staple ingredient in rival nickel cobalt manganese (NCM) battery cells, has enabled lithium iron phosphate cells to hold more energy than previously, providing EVs with more range — up to 450 miles (724 km) on a single charge, Toyota said recently.

Michigan-based Our Next Energy, which is building a \$1.6 billion battery manufacturing complex in Van Buren Township, is a proponent of LFP, according to founder and chief executive Mujeeb Ijaz, because "the materials are more abundant and sustainable, with far less risk" of fire.

"We've also demonstrated that you can match the range of cobalt cells with no compromise," he said.

Tesla is among the automakers leading the quest in markets outside of China to provide lower-priced EVs - in Tesla's case, targeting a base price of around \$25,000. The use of LFP batteries should help Tesla and rivals to achieve that goal, experts say.

Ford Motor aims to open a \$3.5 billion LFP cell manufacturing plant in western Michigan, leveraging technology licensed from China's CATL, the world's largest EV battery maker. The goal, Ford CEO Jim Farley said in February, is to lower the automaker's cell costs to less than \$70 a kilowatt-hour, from more than \$100/kWh for current NCM cells.

More than 90% of LFP materials and components still come from China, said battery expert Shirley Meng, a University of Chicago professor and head of Argonne National Laboratory's Collaborative Center for Energy Storage Science.

The rapidly increasing adoption of LFP by EV manufacturers including Tesla and Hyundai suggests those companies "are not ready to decouple from China," Meng said.

Battery expert Lukasz Bednarski, author of the 2021 book "Lithium: The Global Race for Battery Dominance and the New Energy Revolution," believes automakers' interest in building lower-priced EVs could be one of the drivers behind LFP's rising popularity.

"LFP provides good enough performance at a lower cost, which makes it an attractive proposition for EVs for the middle class," he said.

Bednarski added that the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides incentives "for the development of the whole battery chain (with no) preference for LFP chemistry."

Rising investment in LFP manufacturing facilities in the United States is coming not just from domestic companies like Ford, ONE and General Motors.

Battery makers from Norway, Israel, South Korea and even China have committed to building U.S. facilities to produce LFP materials, components and batteries, some of which will be used not in vehicles, but in large energy storage systems.



WHO Outlines

40 Research Priorities on Antimicrobial Resistance

GENEVA (Dispatches) - WHO has published its first global research agenda for the world's scientists to address the most urgent human health priorities to combat antimicrobial resistance

(AMR). It outlines 40 research topics on drug-resistant bacteria, fungi and Mycobacterium tuberculosis that must be answered by 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The WHO Global Research Agenda for AMR in human health will catalyze innovation and implementation research, spanning the epidemiology, burden and drivers of AMR, context-specific and cost-effective strategies to prevent infections and emergence of resistance.

It will also involve the discovery of new diagnostic tests and improved treatment regimens, the identification of cost-effective methods to collect data and translate it into policy, as well as how to implement current interventions more efficiently in resource-limited settings. Ultimately, the generated evidence will inform policies and interventions to strengthen the response to antimicrobial resistance, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

"Antimicrobial resistance is an urgent public health and economic challenge, and good quality research is a vital part of the response. To help preserve antimicrobials and save lives and livelihoods, this research agenda is a crucial tool for researchers and funders to prioritize research questions, and promptly and efficiently generate evidence that informs policy," said Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Assistant Director-General for AMR. "This first research agenda from WHO will provide the world's AMR researchers and funders with the most important topics to focus on and give the world its best chance to combat AMR," added Dr Silvia Bertagnolio, Unit Head in WHO AMR Division.

The research agenda was developed based on a review of over 3000 relevant documents published over the past decade. The review identified 2000 unanswered questions or knowledge gaps, which were further consolidated and prioritized by a large group of AMR experts to conclude with the 40 most pivotal research topics. A summary report containing the research priorities is available here.

AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to antimicrobial medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.

As a result, antimicrobial medicines become ineffective and infections persist in the body, increasing the risk of transmission to others. AMR remains one of the top global public health threats facing humanity and was associated with the death of close to 5 million people globally in 2019. Importantly, it is also a threat to the global economy, with impact on international trade, health care and productivity. If no action is taken, AMR could cost the world's economy US\$ 100 trillion by 2050.



Transforming Dry Air Into Drinking Water



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Scientists at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have developed a technology that could prove invaluable in tackling water shortages. They have created a material, made using lithium chloride, that can capture air in very arid zones and transform it into drinking water.

The world is currently experiencing unprecedented episodes of drought, amplified by the El Niño climatic phenomenon. While Canada faces the most devastating forest fires the country has seen in the last decade, global temperatures in June have recently broken records, according to the latest data from the EU's Copernicus program. According to the European service, May was the hottest month on record for the oceans, and Europe is warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world. These droughts, amplified and replicated by climate disruption, are increasingly raising the threat of water shortages around the world. So much so that, in recent years, scientific and technological innovations have been developing in response in several parts of the world. These include harnessing ocean heat or recovering ocean water vapor, for example. Such techniques all have the same objective: to deploy low-cost, environmentally-friendly solutions to improve access to drinking water.

One of the latest initiatives involves using a hydrogel infused with lithium chloride, a highly absorbent salt, to capture ambient air and transform it into water. While this process has already been tested in the past, this technology is innovative in that it involves capturing air from very dry places, such as deserts. Developed by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the concept is based on materials already in use, known as hygroscopic hydrogels. Although effective and inexpensive, they are unable to absorb large quantities of water vapor, explain the researchers, whose latest work is published in the journal, Advanced Materials.

Extreme Tourism Allows Ultra-Wealthy to Explore New Frontiers

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The US\$250,000-a-head expedition that vanished this week en route to the deep-sea wreck of the Titanic ocean liner is just one example of extreme tourism that is becoming more commonplace for those who can afford it.

From Earth's tallest peaks to suborbital space, here are some of the other exploits that can be attempted:

A three-way competition between billionaire entrepreneurs Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, and Richard Branson has spurred the development of a nascent astro-tourism industry.

Branson's Virgin Galactic Holdings said last week its first commercial spaceflight, called "Galactic 01", would launch between June 27 and June 30. The company has a reported backlog of 800 customers for the roughly 90-minute up-and-back flights, most of whom have paid between US\$250,000 and US\$400,000 for their tickets.

Since June 2021, when the first seat was sold for US\$28 million, Bezos' space tourism venture Blue Origin has offered 10-minute flights to an altitude of about 350,000 feet (106 km), where passengers experience a few moments of weightlessness before descending back to Earth.

A Japanese billionaire has already bought every seat on the maiden voyage of Musk's SpaceX Starship rocket, which is intended to spend three days circling the moon and come within 200 kilometres of the lunar surface. Initially scheduled for 2023, the flight has been delayed by failed tests of the vehicle.

Meanwhile, on Earth, rich tourists disinclined to make gruelling treks through some of the planet's toughest terrain can fly overhead or book private helicopters instead.

Before he set his sights on space, Branson was one of an elite group of extreme hot-air balloon travellers, becoming the first to traverse the Pacific Ocean in a balloon in 1991. Other wealthy individuals have set more distance, height, and duration records in the past few decades.

Heli-skiing services have launched in the snowy Himalayan mountains of Indian Kashmir, between India and Pakistan, during lulls in violence between Muslim separatists and the New Delhi government.

Mount Roraima, a mystic, flat-topped mountain on the Venezuela-Brazil border that inspired Arthur Conan Doyle's 1912 The Lost World novel and was once only accessible to the Pemon indigenous people, now attracts thousands of hikers each year — and a few visitors who arrive at the top via helicopter.



Does Drinking 100% Fruit Juice Reduce Risk of Cardiovascular Disease?



LONDON (Dispatches) - A recent study published in Frontiers of Nutrition evaluates whether and how polyphenols in fruit juices mediate effects on cardiometabolic risk factors.

Dietary polyphenols have received substantial research attention over the past few decades due to their health benefits.

Observational studies suggest a lower risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) incidence and mortality with a higher intake of major flavonoids. Likewise, evidence from epidemiologic studies indicates that higher consumption of flavonoids, mainly from fruits, can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and CVD incidence and mortality.

Fruit juice consumption is a secondary choice to whole fruit intake due to the loss of fiber with extraction and classification of sugars in fruit juices as free sugars. While sugar-sweetened beverage consumption harms metabolic health, consuming 100% fruit juice does not increase cardiometabolic risks. Nevertheless, there is no information on fruit juice components exerting beneficial effects. In the present study, researchers explore whether polyphenols in fruit juices mediate certain effects on cardiometabolic risk factors. To this end, the researchers systematically searched databases for dietary intervention studies investigating the impact of polyphenol-containing fruit juices on cardiometabolic risk factors. Studies with inadequate statistical data were excluded.

Eligible studies included randomized controlled trials (RCTs) analyzing the effects of the fruit juice intervention on cardiometabolic risk factors in adult populations excluding pregnant females and individuals with terminal-stage degenerative diseases. Studies were included if they used non-polyphenolic beverages as controls, reported the polyphenol content of the fruit juice, and assessed long-term effects.

German Labor Union Criticizes Deutsche Bank Job Cut Plans

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - A German labour union on Friday sharply criticized plans by Deutsche Bank to cut jobs at its German retail operations, foreshadowing tough negotiations ahead.

Deutsche Bank is drawing up plans to cut 10% of its 17,000 German retail jobs over the next few years as part of cost savings, Reuters and other media have reported.

Stephan Szukalski, chairman of the DBV bank union, said "one can only shake one's head at Deutsche Bank - once again". Such cuts, if confirmed, would "clip the wings of the bird" at a moment that retail business is rebounding and the investment bank is weakening, said Szukalski, who is also a member of Deutsche Bank's supervisory board. Deutsche Bank declined to comment.



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Rich Nations Finalize \$100b Climate Aid at Paris Summit

PARIS (Dispatches) - Wealthy nations have finalized an overdue \$100-billion climate finance pledge to developing countries and created a fund for biodiversity and the protection of forests, France's president said.

President Emmanuel Macron was speaking at a final panel of a summit in Paris where some 40 leaders, including two dozen from Africa, China's prime minister and Brazil's president had gathered to give impetus to a new global finance agenda.

The summit's objective is to boost crisis financing for low-income states and ease their debt burdens, reform post-war financial systems and free up funds to tackle climate change by getting top-level consensus on how to promote a number of initiatives struggling in bodies like the G20, COP, IMF-World Bank and United Nations.

The \$100 billion pledge falls far short of poor nations' actual needs, but has become symbolic of wealthy countries' failure to deliver promised climate funds. This has fueled mistrust in wider climate negotiations between countries attempting to boost CO2-cutting measures.

The World Bank said on Thursday it would ease financing for countries hit by natural disasters and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced it had hit its target of making \$100 billion in special drawing rights (SDRs) available for vulnerable nations.

Of the \$100 billion in SDRs to be rechanneled, Washington has yet to pass legislation to release its share, worth more than one fifth of the total. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said that it was a priority for the Biden administration to get approval in Congress.

"Leaders are fed up with the status quo, they want change," World Trade Organisation (WTO) chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala had told the summit.

"Leaders agree that the multiple challenges that we are facing are all linked: poverty, climate change and food security go hand in hand. Developing economies need financing that is additional and accessible and they also want a just (climate) transition," she said

Zambia clinched a deal to restructure more than \$6 billion in debts owed to other governments, its president said Thursday, in a long-awaited breakthrough to ease pressure on the southern African country's strained public finances.

The coronavirus pandemic pushed many poor countries into debt distress as they were expected to continue servicing their obligations in spite of the massive shock to their finances.

Africa's debt woes are coupled with the dual challenge faced by some of the world's poorest countries in tackling the impacts of climate change while adapting to the green transition. Some Western officials have accused China - the key bilateral creditor to many African countries - of dragging its feet in restructuring debt, something Beijing denies.

The summit also wanted more engagement on the private sector. Senegal struck a deal with wealthier countries on Thursday that will see it get an initial 2.5 billion euros (\$2.74 billion) in finance to develop renewable energy and speed up its transition to a low-carbon economy.

Deepening Economic Pain Leaves ECB in Policy Dilemma

LONDON (Dispatches) - Euro zone business growth stalled this month as a manufacturing recession deepened and a previously resilient services sector barely grew, leaving the European Central Bank in a policy dilemma as it presses ahead with rate hikes to fight inflation.

HCOB's flash Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the 20 nations sharing the euro currency, compiled by S&P Global and seen as a good gauge of overall economic health, sank to a five-month low of 50.3 in June from May's 52.8.

That was barely above the 50 mark separating growth from contraction and below all forecasts in a Reuters poll that saw a modest decline to 52.5.

The figures suggest that the bloc's economy is at best stagnating after a recession in the previous two quarters and a recovery is nowhere on the horizon, even if robust holiday bookings suggest that the tourism sector could keep the bloc afloat in the near term.

"This speaks against a recovery of the economy in the coming months, which is expected by many," Commerzbank economist Christoph Weil said. "We see our assessment confirmed that the euro area economy will contract again in the second half of the year."

"The so far 400 basis points of ECB rate hikes are increasingly slowing down the economy," he added.

For the ECB, the data deepen a dilemma.

Inflation at just over 6% is far too high and the labour market is running hot, suggesting more price pressures ahead as workers enjoy improved bargaining power.

But economic activity is weak and the ECB has clearly failed in its goal of tightening policy just enough to contain price pressures without pushing the bloc into recession.

Another issue is that a recession would normally push up unemployment, making the bank's job easier.

But firms appear to be hoarding labour, keenly remembering how difficult it was to hire back workers after the pandemic and offering the ECB little relief.

Indeed, the jobless rate is at a historic low and nominal wage growth is at its highest in decades, even if wages are just catching up after inflation eroded their real value.

Friday's PMI data only confirm this trend, as firms still increased headcount this month, with the employment index at 54.1, somewhat below May's 54.6.



UK Shoppers Boost Spending Again Despite Inflation's Squeeze

LONDON (Dispatches) - British retail sales unexpectedly rose in May, boosted by an extra bank holiday to mark the coronation of King Charles but also suggesting most consumers were coping with high inflation's squeeze on their spending power.

A day after the Bank of England escalated its battle against inflation by raising interest rates to their highest since 2008, official data showed retail sales volumes rose by a monthly 0.3%, defying a Reuters poll forecast for a fall of 0.2%. Last month's increase followed a rise of 0.5% in April. Sterling edged up against the U.S. dollar and the euro after the data was published by the Office for National Statistics.

The surge in Britain's inflation rate has hit household spending power. The pace of price growth held at 8.7% in May according to data published earlier this week, contrary to forecasts for a slowdown. But Friday's retail sales figures showed that, at least for now, British consumers were weathering the cost-of-living storm.

"The figures were far better than we had expected," Ruth Gregory, deputy chief UK economist at Capital Economics, said.

"But our view is still that the growing drag on activity from higher interest rates will eventually tip the economy into recession, generating a 0.5% peak-to-trough fall in real consumer spending."

Samuel Tombs with consultancy Pantheon Macroeconomics said a consumer-led downturn would probably be avoided as falls in expensive energy bills more than offset the hit to the overall economy from higher borrowing costs for mortgage holders.

Zambia Seals \$6.3b Restructuring in Breakthrough for Developing Nations

PARIS (Dispatches) - Zambia has struck a deal to restructure \$6.3 billion in debt owed to other governments, including China, marking a long-awaited breakthrough for indebted nations around the world that have faced lengthy negotiations with creditors.

Zambia in 2020 became the first African country to default on its sovereign debt during the COVID-19 pandemic and struggled since then in protracted discussions to agree a deal. "Zambia has reached an agreement on a debt

treatment with our official creditors - a significant milestone in our journey towards economic recovery & growth," Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema said on Twitter.

The agreement calls for Zambia's debt to be rescheduled over more than 20 years with a three-year grace period during which only payments on interest are due. China is the largest official creditor to Zambia.

The debt earmarked for restructuring includes \$1.3 billion in arrears, and private sector creditors are expected to do the same on the \$6.8 billion owed to them, according to a French official who did not wish to be identified.

Zambia is viewed as a test case for a debt restructuring framework backed by the Group of 20 wealthy nations intended to streamline relief for countries caught in a developing world debt crisis sparked in part by the pandemic.

However, the process has been achingly slow for Zambia, a fact that has discouraged all but a handful of other struggling governments from seeking help under the mechanism.

Beijing was keen not to be seen further holding up debt relief for Zambia at the summit, the French official said, adding that French President Emmanuel Macron's talks with Chinese authorities in Beijing in April also helped unblock the situation.

Macron said on Twitter the debt restructuring deal was "a historic achievement".

"We remain mobilised to ensure that other countries caught in debt trap benefit from a multilateral response," Macron added.

The restructuring agreement with official creditors paves the way for Zambia to receive another \$188 million tranche of money from the International Monetary Fund, part of a \$1.3 billion package approved in August 2022.

"This agreement paves the way for the completion of the first review of Zambia's three-year Extended Credit Facility Arrangement, which is helping put Zambia on a path toward sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction," Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said in a written statement.

Turkish Central Bank Nearly Doubles Key Policy Rate to 15%

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) hiked its key policy rate or one-week repo rate by 650 basis points to 15%, its first such rise in 27 months, as it turns to more conventional economic policies to counter sky-high inflation.

The bank hiked its key rate from 8.5% in the closely watched first interest rate-setting meeting since President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan filled his government with investor-backed faces after winning tight May polls.

"Monetary tightening will be further strengthened as much as needed in a timely and gradual manner until a significant improvement in the inflation outlook is achieved," the central bank said.

The bank's policy-setting committee "will continue to take its decisions in a predictable, data-driven and transparent framework," it said in a statement.

"In addition, in order to be able to sustain price stability in the long term, the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey will continue to support strategic investments that will improve the current account balance," it added.

Turkey's current account balance posted a deficit of \$5.4 billion in April, up from \$4.9 billion in March.

The meeting is the sixth Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting this year and the first under the helm of Hafize Gaye Erkan, the bank's new governor.

Ahead of today's announcement, economists' expectations for the rate hike ranged widely, from 14 to as high as 40 percentage points.

Erdoğan revamped his financial team following his May election victory, bringing in prominent figures such as Mehmet Şimşek, the new finance minister, and Erkan, the first woman to lead the country's central bank.

The appointments were seen as a sign that Türkiye would change course and abandon the unorthodox belief that lowering interest rates fights inflation.

The central bank cut its key interest rate from around 19% in 2021 to 8.5% earlier this year, despite soaring inflation.

The annual inflation rate reached 85% late last year and the central bank burned through most of its reserves trying to prop up the lira - down 90% against the dollar over 10 years - from even bigger falls. Inflation has eased to 39.5% last month, according to official figures.

Turkish media previously said the new finance minister agreed to join the government only after winning assurances that he would be free to steady the ship as he saw fit.

Lithium Producers Warn Global Supplies May Not Meet Electric Vehicle Demand



LAS VEGAS (Dispatches) - Lithium producers are growing anxious that delays in mine permitting, staffing shortages and inflation may hinder their ability to supply enough of the battery metal to meet the world's aggressive electrification timelines.

Once a niche metal used primarily in ceramics and pharmaceuticals, lithium is now one of the world's most in-demand metals given aggressive EV plans from Stellantis, Ford and other automakers.

At stake is the pace with which electric vehicles could displace internal combustion engines, a key goal of the green energy transition.

"You could end up in a crisis situation where the battery companies don't have the security of (lithium) feedstock," Stu Crow, chairman of Lake Resources, said on the sidelines of this week's Fastmarkets Lithium and Battery Raw Materials conference in Las Vegas.

"There's a disconnect between the panic that we're seeing here, and the frenetic activity of trying to secure supply within the industry."

This week, Lake Resources became the latest lithium company to announce a project delay, pushing back first production from its Kachi lithium project in Argentina by three years. It cited power supply and other logistics concerns.

Albemarle, the world's largest lithium producer, is growing rapidly across the Americas, Asia and Australia. Still, it expects global lithium demand to exceed supply by 500,000 metric tons in 2030. Various consultancies and other producers have slightly different projections, but all warn of a looming shortage.

"It's a big challenge," said Eric Norris, head of Albemarle's lithium business.

There were 45 lithium mines operating in the world last year, with 11 expected to open this year and seven next year, according to Fastmarkets. That pace is far below what consultants say is needed to ensure adequate global supply.

Photo Exhibition and Iranian Film Week in Brasilia

TEHRAN (IP) - On the occasion of the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and Brazil, a photo exhibition was held in one of the cultural centers of Brasilia, where three Iranian films were also screened.

At the exhibition's opening ceremony, Iran's ambassador to Brazil, Hossein Gharibi, said: Brazil and Iran have established a solid and fruitful partnership resulting from economic and trade relations and cultural exchanges.

Deputy Governor of Brasilia for International Affairs also said: Iran and Brazil have had good cooperation in cultural, political, and economic fields, and Iran's photo exhibition is an artistic gift for the capital of Brazil. The exhibition will be held for three weeks, and three Iranian films, "Crazy Rook," "Hoze Naghashi," and "Sweet Taste of Imagination," will be shown with Portuguese subtitles.



China's Security Industry Sees U.S., Not AI, as Bigger Threat

BEIJING (Dispatches) - After years of breakneck growth, China's security and surveillance industry is now focused on shoring up its vulnerabilities to the United States and other outside actors, worried about risks posed by hackers, advances in artificial intelligence and pressure from rival governments.

The renewed emphasis on self-reliance, combating fraud and hardening systems against hacking was on display at the recent Security China exhibition in Beijing, illustrating just how difficult it will be to get Beijing and Washington to cooperate even as researchers warn that humankind faces common risks from AI. The show took place just days after China's ruling Communist Party warned officials of the risks posed by artificial intelligence.

Looming over the four-day meet: China's biggest geopolitical rival, the United States. American-developed AI chatbot ChatGPT was a frequent topic of conversation, as were U.S. efforts to choke off China's access to cutting-edge technology.

"This new technology contains a great potential danger," said Fan Weicheng, Director of Tsinghua University's Center for Public Safety Research. He clicked through a presentation featuring an AI-generated figure of Barack Obama speaking, illustrating the risks of deceptive images and video that can now be digitally created.

"The United States has a 21st-century national security strategy. Russia has a national security strategy. Germany has a strategy. So does Japan," Fan said. "We in China are also working on this."

Chinese academics, Fan says, are working on an "early warning system" to identify and manage potentially disruptive technology, creating indexes and formulas to measure the impact emerging technology could have on China's national security.

In the past decade, China's AI technology has made rapid advances, fueled in part by cooperation with American research institutes and tech firms. As in the U.S., Chinese leaders are worried about advances in artificial intelligence.

But there's an additional challenge. As geopolitical tensions have reached a fever pitch in recent years, Washington has moved to cut China's access to American technology - pushing Chinese tech firms towards self-reliance.

Remarks from a meeting chaired by Chinese leader Xi Jinping last month urged a renewed focus on potential risks from new technologies.

"The complexity and severity of national security problems faced by our country have increased dramatically," said a readout of the meeting by the official Xinhua news agency. "We must be prepared for worst-case and extreme scenarios."

China needs to develop locally-made products and become self-reliant while keeping an eye on new developments coming out of the West, exhibition-goers said. "It's the AI era. The future has arrived," said Liu Caixia, a director at a Chinese policing research institute. "Those in the academic community are feeling fear."

"We've seen in some sci-fi blockbusters, there's only intelligent machines left in the world and human beings are kept like pets," said Liu. "What kind of attitude should we adopt to deal with it?"

Liu's answer was clear and in line with China's determination to lead in cutting-edge technologies: Push forward, and deploy AI in new fields.

But it also reflects a contradiction between China's technology ambitions and deepening concerns about the possible social and political risks of such technologies. China's tech firms have approached chatbots like ChatGPT with caution, for example, because of heavy censorship, having AI generate politically sensitive content is a no-go.

But ChatGPT begs the question: Should China rush to embrace AI and possibly fall prey to its pitfalls, or tiptoe cautiously and risk falling behind the United States?

Across the Pacific, American tech executives and policymakers are grappling with the same questions. Waves of U.S. sanctions have targeted Chinese chipmakers and AI companies to restrict Beijing's access to cutting-edge technology. Politicians worry about China's growing prominence in the field.

With Sino-U.S. frictions at a boiling point, Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Beijing this week to stabilize ties, seeking to assure Chinese counterparts that Washington was not looking to decouple from China - only "de-risk and diversify."

Though both sides declared the trip a success, Beijing expressed frustration with



U.S. sanctions, with China's top foreign affairs official Wang Yi demanding the U.S. "abandon suppression of China's technological development."

Some experts believe cooperation, not conflict, is necessary to confront what they see as a threat to all humanity. Earlier this month, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman dialed into a conference hosted by the Beijing Academy of Artificial Intelligence to encourage collaboration between Chinese and American researchers to mitigate the risks of AI.

"The stakes for international cooperation have never been higher," Altman said, noting that China was home to some of the world's top AI researchers. "We must manage the risk together."

Such concerns were mirrored at the conference in China, where executives expressed concern about the potential for AI-generated voice and imagery to be used in fraud, hacking, and disinformation campaigns.

"The potential for fraud is very high," said Li Congting, chief AI scientist at video surveillance manufacturer Uniview. "Many people have already played around with ChatGPT. Everyone thinks its ability to interact is really good like there's a real person behind it."

Scientists and tech industry leaders in the U.S., including high-level executives at Microsoft and Google, recently warned about the potential perils of artificial intelligence. Many Chinese researchers echoed those concerns. But at the Beijing expo, there was little talk of cooperation with the United States.

"Tech innovation has become the main battlefield of international geopolitics," said Gao Lei, a top official at a state-run enterprise managed by China's Ministry of Public Security. The US has "escalated its suppression" of China's tech industry, Gao said, saying it was "imperative" to replace American technology with local computer chips.

Though both countries grapple with concerns about AI, stark differences in their approaches to technology make cooperation difficult.

China has built one of the most intrusive digital surveillance systems in the world, blanketing city streets and rural villages with cameras and tracking citizens through chat apps and mobile phones.

The U.S. government has sanctioned many Chinese tech companies for their role in Beijing's high-tech crackdown in China's far west Xinjiang region, where digital technology was used to flag ethnic minorities for arrest on often spurious grounds.

Many of the companies at the expo had been sanctioned, including telecoms giant Huawei, camera-maker Hikvision and surveillance specialist Meiya Pico. A representative for Meiya Pico declined an interview with The Associated Press (AP), citing a blanket ban on speaking with foreign media.

UN Coming...

FROM PAGE 1

Israelis do not limit their crimes only to killing of people but they also insult the sanctities of Muslims and especially Palestinians and each time it goes unnoticed by the international bodies and even nations and only Muslim nations have to react to those insults.



Palestinian factions as well as countries around the world have condemned the desecration of a mosque and the Holy Quran by fanatic Israeli settlers during a Wednesday attack into a village in the occupied West Bank.

Newly-released CCTV footage shows a group of Israeli settlers who stormed the Palestinian village of Urif south of Nablus entered a mosque and vandalized it, and also took a copy of the Holy Quran and ripped pages before throwing the holy book into the street.

Hazem Qassem, a spokesman for the Hamas resistance movement, said on Friday that what happened in the village of Urif is a heinous crime and a dangerous escalation of the religious war waged by the Zionists.

Qassem stressed that this barbaric behavior of the settler group, which was supported by the occupation military, was an insult to all the Palestinian people and an unprecedented disregard for their sanctities.

The spokesman called on Muslim nations and religious institutions to adopt a clear stance on the move, which he described as a "hateful racist" behavior.

But it is the task of the UN and all international bodies to rush to defend Muslims and Palestinians instead of seating and watching what the Palestinians or Muslims do against those insults and crimes.

What Volker Turk did can be a step forward and we can pin hopes on the future of the UN in showing its real task and nature which has been lost under the influence of arrogant powers and many countries have called for some reforms in this international body.

On Wednesday Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei praised the remarkable achievements of Palestinian resistance groups and the sacrifices made by the youth in the occupied territories, saying the West Bank is where the Israeli regime will be brought to its knees.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with Ismail Haniyeh, head of the political bureau of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, and his accompanying delegation in Tehran on Wednesday.

The Leader commended the strong sense of responsibility among the young and faithful Palestinian generation, as well as their individual and collective struggle against the Israeli occupation.

He emphasized that recent events in Jenin, where Palestinian youths have surrounded the Zionist military, serve as clear examples of a new era and signal "a bright future with complete victory."

Underscoring the centrality of the Palestinian issue, Ayatollah Khamenei stated, "Progress in resolving the issue of Palestine will also translate into progress on other matters concerning the Islamic Ummah."

Ayatollah Khamenei also pointed to the noticeable changes in the conditions of Palestine over the past couple of years, particularly the increased presence of youths on the field, who draw strength from their faith in Islam.

Highlighting the importance of enhanced unity and coordination among all resistance groups, the Leader said, "During the recent battle of Gaza, we witnessed the enemy's attempts to sow discord and divisions among the resistance groups. However, by the grace of God, their efforts were in vain."

The Leader is totally right and Palestinians through unity and resistance can achieve victory and they can even make the nations wake up against tyranny of the Zionist regime as we saw someone like Volker Turk officially confess to the crimes of the Zionists and call for some action against Israel.

Of course we do not expect any action from the UN against Israel for the time being but unity and resistance and retaliatory action of the Palestinians can finally make the UN take some serious action against Israel and it will be a big step towards the final victory of Palestinians which is imminent.

The UN should act in a way that it can win the trust of all nations and not just few certain states which have their own influence on this body but winning the trust needs serious action against tyranny and savage governments and currently the countdown has started for the victory of Palestinians and Muslims against the Zionists.

Iran Oil Output...

FROM PAGE 1

The crude shipments have doubled since last autumn to reach 1.6 million barrels a day in May, according to the report.

A Reuters report, also said on July 16, that Iranian crude shipments continued to rise in 2023 with higher shipments to China, Syria, and Venezuela. The report quoted consultants, shipping data, and a source familiar with the matter.

A large chunk of Iran's crude oil goes to China which is the world's major importer of energy. Several European customers including Germany, Spain, and Bulgaria also imported oil from Iran.

The United States, under former president Donald Trump, abandoned the nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018 and reinstated unilateral sanctions that the agreement had lifted.

Unilateral Sanctions...

FROM PAGE 1

Iranian officials maintain that the country is committed to empowering women and promoting their rights despite the hurdles created by the illegal US sanctions.

Speaking at a UN Security Council debate on women, peace and security on March 8, Zahra Ershadi, Iran's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, said Tehran acknowledges that there is always room for improvement in terms of protecting and promoting women's rights. "We continue to work to empower Iranian women and girls and to ensure that their rights are upheld while actively taking into account the concerns voiced by our women and girls. This is one of our top priorities, and we'll endeavor to make progress in it," she said.

"Despite facing challenges, such as the inhumane unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States, Iran remains committed to promoting women's rights and has made significant progress in empowering women."

Sri Lanka Set to...

FROM PAGE 1

A significant share of Sri Lanka's tea is now shipped to Iran via the United Arab Emirates (UAE), official data shows, with the UAE more than doubling its tea imports from Sri Lanka to \$118 million last year from \$48 million five years ago.

Under the barter program, state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corp that bought the oil will give rupees to the Tea Board to ship tea via Sri Lankan exporters.

Iranian tea importers will then pay riyals to the National Iranian Oil Company, de Mel said.

"We are awaiting the final documents and hope to start exports from July," he added.

Sri Lanka's foreign exchange reserves grew to \$3.5 billion at the end of May - a 14-month high - helped by increased remittances and tourism inflows after securing a \$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

Pakistan Says...

FROM PAGE 1

"You cannot have economic cooperation in an environment of insecurity," he added. A few days ago, another extremist group stormed a natural gas and oil production facility in Northwest Pakistan near the Afghan border, which killed four police and two private guards, as per Nikkei Asia.

As the country is dealing with an economic crisis punctuated with 36 percent inflation (as of April) and reduced foreign exchange reserves.

The country's forex levels have dropped to about USD 4.3 billion. It can only suffice for about one month of imports. Moreover, it is also facing USD 3.7 billion in overseas debt due this month and the USD 7 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout for the country of 230 million has stalled.

Due to its reduced supply of US dollars, Islamabad is trying to make future energy deals with Iran since it can pay them in the local currency, according to Nikkei Asia.

"Without stopping incidents like these, the energy cooperation between Pakistan and Iran will not be possible," said Przemyslaw Lesinski, an Iran expert at the War

Studies Academy in Warsaw, referring to the border guard attack.

A Pakistani government official, who requested anonymity as he was not authorized to speak with media, said that Islamabad wants to formalize oil imports from Iran so it can pay for supplies in local currency. But US sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program could hold up a deal unless Islamabad can work out an agreement with Washington, as per Nikkei Asia.

"Pakistan will need a nod from the U.S. for this arrangement to go ahead," the official said. Multiple Pakistani government officials also said that Islamabad and Tehran are in talks to resume a cross-border pipeline project that could supply 750 million cubic feet a day of Iranian natural gas to Pakistan, or about 20 percent of its needs, according to Nikkei Asia.

Pakistan has asked Washington for a waiver on any sanctions it could face for importing gas from Iran. But no decision has yet been made public, said local media reports, Nikkei Asia reported.

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Marcelino Named as New Coach at Marseille

MARSEILLE (Dispatches) - French giants Marseille unveiled Marcelino as their new coach to replace Igor Tudor who quit after just one season in charge. Former Athletic Bilbao coach Marcelino will take charge of training for the first time next month with a Champions League preliminary round tie to play on August 8/9. "The arrival of Marcelino is part of the desire to give continuity to the club's project," said Javier Ribalta, Marseille's director of football.

Tahiyra Reigns for Weld at Royal Ascot

ASCOT (Dispatches) - Frankie Dettori was in double form to break the 80-winner mark at Royal Ascot as veteran Irish trainer Dermot Weld rolled back the years to claim the showpiece Coronation Stakes. Dettori, fresh from landing the Gold Cup 24 hours earlier, guided Porta Fortuna to victory in the opening Group Three Albany Stakes for Donnacha O'Brien. "80 at Ascot - I achieved my dream," he said. "I love this place so much. It is unbelievable."

Zverev Joins Bublik in Halle Open Last Four

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Olympic gold medalist Alexander Zverev is through to the semi-finals of the Wimbledon warm-up Halle Open, after defeating Chilean Nicolas Jarry. The 26-year-old German, who made it to the semifinals of this year's French Open, defeated Jarry in straight sets 7-5, 6-3.

Zverev will play in the semis for the third time. The German previously made it to the final of the Halle tournament in 2016 and 2017, losing to 10-time winner Roger Federer on both occasions.

Zverev will meet Kazakh Alexander Bublik in the semifinals. Bublik advanced when Italian fourth seed Jannik Sinner withdrew hurt in the second set of their quarter final tie.

Bublik won the first set 7-5 and was up 2-0 in the second when Sinner pulled out with a right leg injury.

The Italian had taken a medical timeout at the end of the first set. He received treatment from a physiotherapist and played, and lost, two more games before pulling out.

Sinner, the 21-year-old world number nine, now faces a race against time to be fit for Wimbledon which starts in early July.

The match was the opening last-eight tie.

Meanwhile Holger Rune overcame a stern test from Lorenzo Musetti to reach his sixth semi-final of the season at the Cinch Championships.

In their first tour-level meeting, the second seed defeated Musetti 6-4, 7-5 after one hour, 54 minutes. Rune won 54 per cent of points behind his second serve, compared to Musetti's 29 per cent to advance to his first career grass-court semi-final.

"I enjoy it [on grass]. I think I'm starting to play better and better," Rune said in his post-match interview. "[It's] getting more challenging in every match and I think my mindset has been incredibly good these three matches. I've been able to come from a break behind and stay in the moment. "Grass is also tough for the body. First



few matches, every part of your body has to get used to it, the movement, the upper body, everything. So I was struggling a bit but I'm happy that I could finish and win a match."

Rune, who received treatment on his right wrist during the opening set, won five consecutive games after trailing 1-4. In the second set, the Dane saved two set points on serve at 4-5.

"I had, since I woke up this morning, some pain in the wrist," Rune said. "I think grass is so much faster than clay, so if you become a bit late on the ball, or on the serve [return], it's a lot of pressure on your wrist. That was the case. I took some treatment. It was painful a couple of games after but I feel okay now."

The 20-year-old Rune, who is yet to drop a set this week, will face Alex de Minaur on Saturday after the Australian defeated Frenchman Adrian Mannarino 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 to reach the last four. De Minaur, seeded seventh, is aiming for his second grass-court title (Eastbourne, 2021).

Should Rune triumph at the Queen's Club, he would rise to a career-high World No. 5 in the Pepperstone ATP Rankings.

Benitez Agrees Deal to Become New Celta Manager



MADRID (Dispatches) - Rafa Benitez has reached agreement with Celta Vigo to become manager on a three-year deal, the Spanish club said.

The 63-year-old, who won the Champions League with Liverpool in 2005, the UEFA Cup with Valencia (2004) and the Europa League with Chelsea (2013), returns to coaching over a year after being sacked by Everton in January 2022.

He will take charge of LaLiga side Celta on their 100 year anniversary, succeeding Carlos Carvalhal, who took was sacked earlier this month after a difficult season in which they had to fight until the last game to avoid relegation.

Benitez's last experience in Spain was in the 2015-16 season with Real Madrid, when he replaced Carlo Ancelotti only to be sacked six months later after a series of bad results, being replaced by Zinedine Zidane in January 2016.

"Rafa Benitez is one of the most successful coaches in the history of our country and has coached world-class teams in the main European leagues," Celta said.

"(In) our Centenary season, an unforgettable... event for Celta's fans, (we will have) a formidable leader on the bench."

Hasaranga Leads Sri Lanka To Rout of Oman

BULAWAYO (Dispatches) - Leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga took his second successive five-wicket haul as Sri Lanka crushed Oman by 10 wickets in the 2023 World Cup Qualifier.

Sri Lanka now have two wins from two matches and are well-placed to reach the Super Six stage.

Scotland are also on course for the next stage after they defeated the UAE by 111 runs in the day's other Group B fixture.

Hasaranga took six wickets in the opening win over the UAE, and was at it again with five for 13 against Oman who were bowled out for just 98.

Sri Lanka needed just 15 overs to chase that total down, Dimuth Karunaratne (61 not out) leading them home.

Lahiru Kumara (3-22) also starred with the ball for 1996 world champions Sri Lanka as Oman slipped to 20 for four.

A 52-run stand between Jatinder Singh (21) and Ayaan Khan (41) hinted at a recovery before Hasaranga entered the fray.

His triple wicket maiden ripped the heart out of the Omani middle order, leaving them in dire trouble at 72 for seven.

Hasaranga finally removed Ayaan before finishing off the innings by trapping Bilal Khan leg before.

Sri Lanka showed their intent from the very first ball of the chase, Pathum Nissanka (39 not out) slashing Bilal for four over point.

The pair never really looked troubled, bringing up the 50 partnership in the seventh over with Karunaratne's fifth boundary of the innings.

"He's a champion. Whenever I throw him the ball, he delivers for me," Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka said of Hasaranga.

"Very good to see him keep getting five-wicket hauls and man of the match awards. I think the future is really bright and they support staff and management has done a good job to keep the environment calm."

Sri Lanka have now won two in a row with matches against Ireland and Scotland to come. Oman can still reach the Super Six with a win over Scotland in their next game.

Scotland backed up their thrilling one-wicket win over Ireland by beating the UAE by 111 runs, with a captain's knock from Richie Berrington.

Al Hilal Sign Portugal Midfielder Neves From Wolves



RIYADH (Dispatches) - Portugal midfielder Ruben Neves is joining Al Hilal from Premier League side Wolverhampton Wanderers on a three-year deal, the Saudi Arabian club announced.

Wolves did not disclose specific financial details but said Neves, who signed his deal in Paris, was moving for a club record fee, reported to be worth 55 million euros (\$60 million).

"No other player has made such an impact on the pitch in gold and black during the last six years having featured more than 250 times in a remarkable period in the club's history," Wolves said in a statement.

The 26-year-old scored 30 goals in 253 appearances in all competitions with Wanderers.

Neves joined Wolves in 2017 when they were in the second-tier Championship, helping them reach the top flight in his first season. He was previously with Porto in Portugal.

Wolves finished seventh in their first campaign back in the Premier League to qualify for the Europa League.

"What an unbelievable journey. A big thank you to every single person I had the chance to work with, every single moment was unforgettable," a tearful Neves said in an emotional farewell video.

"To all of the players who were part of the club during the last six years, you are friends for life. The way we protected the pack was really incredible.

"I leave as a player, but I will always be a wolf. No matter what. Thank you for everything, and I will see you in the South Bank stadium, one day."

The former Wolves captain had a year left on his contract and had also been linked with a move to Barcelona for next season.

U.S. to Host Expanded 32-Team Club World Cup in 2025



PARIS (Dispatches) - The United States will host the expanded 32-team Club World Cup in 2025, governing body FIFA announced.

"The Club World Cup 2025 will be the pinnacle of elite professional men's club football, and with the required infrastructure in place together with a massive local interest, the United States is the ideal host to kick off this new, global tournament," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

The dates, host cities and match schedule for the tournament will be established at a later date, FIFA said.

The U.S. will also host the 2026 World Cup along with Canada and Mexico.

The club World Cup has been held annually in a seven-team, or sometimes six-team, format since 2005 with that year's six continental champions plus, when necessary, a representative of the host nation.

FIFA announced the enlarged format in February.

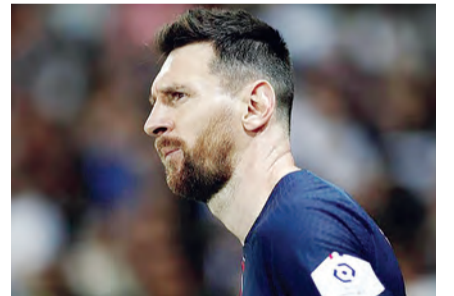
The new competition is planned to include four representatives each from Asia, Africa and CONCACAF, which includes North and Central America, as well as six from South America, 12 from Europe, including the winners of last five Champions Cup, and one each from Oceania and the host country.

In theory, the last edition in the smaller format will be played in Saudi Arabia in December. Six of the places have already been decided with five continental champions -- Manchester City, Leon of Mexico, Egyptians Al Ahly, Urawa Red Diamond from Japan, Auckland City of New Zealand -- and Al Ittihad representing the host country.

The Copa America in South American has not yet finished.

Current plans would leave a one-year gap before the expanded tournament kicks off. Continental federations have reportedly asked FIFA to ensure that their 2024 champions have a chance to play for a global title next year. FIFA also announced on Friday it was pushing back the decision on the host of the 2030 World Cup from September or October to the second half of next year "to ensure additional consultation with all key stakeholders."

Messi Says He Struggled to Adapt After PSG Move



LONDON (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi said he and his family had trouble adapting after his move to Paris St Germain in 2021, and he said the boos and jeers directed at him towards the end of his stint was something team mates Kylian Mbappe and Neymar also endured.

The Argentine great did not renew his contract with PSG this month after two years and he announced on June 7 that he will join MLS side Inter Miami, leaving some fans disappointed with his performance.

While Messi recorded 32 goals and 35 assists in his two seasons with the French champions, a rift with the fans emerged after he failed to help the team make it past the Champions League last 16 round.

"My stay in Paris started with a very difficult adaptation, much more than I expected, even though I had people I knew in the dressing room. It was difficult to adapt, the change, arriving late, not having a pre-season, adapting to the new club, the new way of playing, new teammates, the city...It wasn't easy for me or for my family," he told BeIN Sports.

The welcome was "very nice," he said.

"And then people started to treat me differently, a part of the Paris fans started to treat me differently." "There was a rift with a big part of the Paris fans, it was not my intention, far from it, it happened like that. It had happened before with Mbappe and Neymar and I know that's their way of doing things."

"I will remember all the people who respect me, as I have always respected everyone since I arrived, and that's all, it's an anecdote."

Messi, who won two league titles and a French Super Cup with PSG, was also heavily criticised in Paris after he was suspended by the club following an unauthorised trip to Saudi Arabia.

After much speculation where Messi was linked with a return to Barcelona, the world champion is expected to make his debut for Miami on July 21 in a Leagues Cup clash against Mexican side Cruz Azul.