

IRAN NEWS Felicitates Its Muslim Readers and Muslims Worldwide on the Occasion of Eid-ul Adha (Feast of Sacrifice). The Next Issue Will Hit the News-Stands on Saturday

IRAN NEWS



VOL. XXIX, No. 7801 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

WEDNESDAY JUNE 28, 2023 - TIR 7, 1402

2 DOMESTIC

Iran Opposes Any Geopolitical Change In Caucasus

> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Revival of Oil Production Capacity by 1.5m Barrels In Only 6 Months

> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Wagner Mercenary Leader Issues Defiant Audio Statement

> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Murray Makes Retirement Confession as Brit Gears Up for Wimbledon

> SEE PAGE 8

Protecting Mental Security of Society Helps Restore Public Rights

TEHRAN (IP) - The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said says if some people use virtual or non-virtual space to get on people nerves and disrupt people's mental security and scare people, this is against the requirements of restoring public rights.

Ayatollah Khamenei met with Judiciary Chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei and judicial officials, on the eve of June 28, 1981, the anniversary of the martyrdom of Ayatollah Beheshti and 72 of his companions and the Day of the Judiciary and stated: "A few people use virtual or non-virtual space to get on people's nerves and disrupt people's mental security and scare people, is against the requirements of restoring public rights. The judiciary should act with planning and discipline."

The Leader of the revolution addressed the officials of the judicial system and said you who are engaged in any form of service in this branch, must know that you are working in one of the most important pillars of the Islamic system.

The Leader noted: The judiciary is one of the main pillars in the establishment of the Islamic system. It is clear that if there is a disturbance in these main pillars, there will be a disturbance in the entire system. **See Page 7**

Hajj Can Foil All Plots of Arrogant Powers, Zionists Against Humanity



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the annual Hajj rituals can foil all the plots of the arrogant powers and the Zionists against humanity.

In a Tuesday message to the 2023 Hajj pilgrimage, the Leader said the rituals can render ineffective all the plans of the arrogant powers and Zionism aimed at the moral downfall of humanity at the current time and future.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that the arrogant powers and Zionism are targeting unity and spirituality with their acts of enmity and sabotage at this juncture in time and more than in the past.

The Leader emphasized that the US and other arrogant centers are strongly opposed to unity among Muslims, understanding among Muslim nations and countries, and commitment to the religion of the younger generation in these nations.

The following is the full text of Ayatollah Khamenei's 2023 Hajj message:

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds and peace and blessings be upon the Great Messenger of God, Muhammad al-Mustafa and upon his Pure Progeny and upon his chosen Companions.

The Abrahamic call to Hajj and his universal invitation have once again addressed the entire world from the heart of history, making eager and excited the hearts that are ready and which remember.

The invitation is addressed to all human beings: "And proclaim the Hajj to all the people" (Holy Quran 22:27). The Kaaba is the blessed host and a guide for all people: "Indeed, the first house to be set up for humankind is the one at Bakkah [Kaaba], blessed and guidance for all nations" (Holy Quran 3:96).

The Kaaba, as the focal point and the main focus of attention of all Muslims, and also the Hajj ritual as a small example of the extensive diversity of the Islamic world, can serve to elevate human society and improve the health and security of all people. Hajj can bless all humanity with spiritual and moral elevation, and this is the vital need of humankind today.

Hajj can annul and render ineffectual all the plans of the Arrogant Powers and Zionism for the moral downfall of humanity – today and in the future.

That which is a necessary condition for the occurrence of this universal impact is that as a first measure Muslims themselves should properly hear the life-giving message of Hajj and do their utmost to implement it.

The two main foundations of this message are "unity" and "spirituality." Unity and spirituality are what guarantee the material and spiritual advancement of the Islamic world and its enlightening the entire world. Unity means being connected both intellectually and in practice. It means that hearts, thoughts, and orientations come closer together. It means a synergy in science and experience. It means having an economic connection between Islamic countries. It means the existence of trust and cooperation between Muslim governments. It means working together against common, definite enemies. Unity means that the plots designed by the enemy cannot set Islamic denominations, nations, races, languages, and the diverse cultures of the Islamic world against each other.

Unity means that Muslim nations should know each other, not through the enemy's seditious descriptions, but through communication, dialogue, and interaction. They should be aware of each other's potential and capacities and make plans to benefit from them.

Unity means that the scientists and universities of the Islamic world work hand in hand together, the scholars of Islamic schools view each other in good faith and with tolerance and fairness, and they listen to each other's words. The intellectual elites in all countries and of all denominations acquaint the people with each other's commonalities, and encourage coexistence and brotherhood.

Unity also means that political and cultural leaders in Islamic countries should prepare themselves in a coordinated manner for the situation that will exist in the upcoming world order. They need to determine with their own hands and by their own will the proper place for the Islamic Ummah in the new global experience, which is filled with opportunities and threats. They should not allow the bitter experience of the political and territorial engineering of West Asia at the hands of Western governments after WWI to be repeated.

Spirituality means advancing religious ethics. The enchantment of "ethics minus religion," which has long been promoted by Western intellectual sources, has resulted in this unrestrained collapse of ethics in the West that everyone in the world is witnessing. Spirituality and ethics should be learned from the Hajj rituals, from the simplicity that exists in Ihram, from the negation of illusory privileges, from "feeding the destitute and the needy," from "there is to be no sexual contact, vicious talk, or disputing," from the circumambulation of the entire Ummah around the axis of monotheism, from the Stoning of the Devil [shaytān], and from the Disavowal of the Polytheists [mushrikān]. **See Page 7**

Global Energy Report Confirms Rise in Iran Crude Output

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Figures from the Statistical Review of World Energy, an annual report published by the Energy Institute (EI), have confirmed that there was a major rise in Iranian crude oil output in 2022 despite the continued pressure of US sanctions on the Iranian petroleum sector.

The report published on Monday showed that Iran's oil output, including production of crude oil, condensate and NGL, rose by 4.6% last year compared to 2021 to reach an average of 3.822 million barrels per day (bpd).

Figures in the report showed that Iran's combined production of crude oil and condensate, which is a very light form of oil, rose by 129,000 bpd or 4.1% in 2022 from figures reported in the year before.

Iran's output of natural gas liquids (NGL) also rose by an average of 40,000 bpd or 8.5% from 2021 to reach 509,000 bpd last year, said the report.

It said that fuel production in Iranian refineries rose by 2.2% year on year in 2022 to 2.397 million bpd while oil refining capacity in the country rose 2.3% to 2.67 million bpd over the same period. Natural gas production in Iran reached 259.4 billion cubic meters last year, up 1.1% from 2021, showed EI figures. **See Page 7**

Iran Sealing Deals With S. Arabia, UAE to Open Special Economic Zones

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Memorandums of understanding on the same matter have already been signed with Iraq, Syria and Oman.

The secretary of the Iranian Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones, Hojatollah Abdolmaleki, told Sputnik on Monday that Tehran is currently working on the development of special economic zones with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, noting that memorandums of understanding on the same have already been signed with Iraq, Syria, and Oman.

"We are developing cooperation in the field of special economic zones with various countries, especially with neighboring ones, including the Arab states. We have already signed a memorandum of understanding with Oman and Iraq. We have also signed a memorandum of understanding with Syria. Now we are negotiating with the UAE and Saudi Arabia on joint cooperation in free economic zones," Abdolmaleki said.

Under the auspices of China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia agreed to restore diplomatic relations on March 10. The two countries had their ties severed in 2016 following Saudi Arabia's execution of Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr. **See Page 7**

U.S. Reacts to Settlement Of Iraq Debts to Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller reacted to the settlement of Iraq's gas-related debts to Iran.

Since 2018 the Department of State has provided a number of waivers in consultation with Congress that allow Iraq to pay for electricity imports from Iran, by transferring funds into a restricted account in Iraq, Miller said.

"Consistent with U.S. sanctions, these funds can only be accessed for humanitarian and other non-sanctionable transactions. The money only goes to approved third parties. They are not transferred to Iran directly, and we the United States continue to approve transactions for the use of funds on a case-by-case basis," he claimed.

He went on to say that there has been no change in the US policy towards Iran or Iraq, adding that the Biden Administration continues to impose illegal sanctions on Iran. **See Page 7**

Sokhan Gostar Institute

IRAN NEWS

PRIVATE ENGLISH NEWSPAPER IN IRAN

Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily

Border Guard Martyred in Terrorist Attack

ZAHEDAN (IRNA) - An Iranian border guard has been martyred in a terrorist attack in southeastern Iran, the country's Border Police Command reported.

The border guard lost his life in a terrorist attack that took place on Monday evening in Saravan which is located in the east of Sistan and Baluchestan, a province that has a long border with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Iranian Border Police Command of Sistan and Baluchestan Province said in a communiqué that the terrorists were seeking to illegally enter the country. The border guards could foil the enemies' plot in entering the border, it further noted. During the clash, Sergeant Major Hassan Ghourzaei was martyred.

Iran Opposes Any Geopolitical Change In Caucasus

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



The common border between the two countries should transcend beyond being just a security issue, and must rather be used to boost economic ties, he said.

For his part, the Armenian prime minister briefed the Iranian president on the latest developments regarding his country's peace talks with Azerbaijan in which they would agree on borders, settle differences over the enclave, and unfreeze relations.

His remarks came against a backdrop of decades of tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region on the border between the two countries.

Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but has a primarily Armenian population that has resisted Azerbaijani rule since a separatist war there ended in 1994.

In 2020, the second Karabakh war broke out, killing more than 6,500 people on both sides during a six-week conflict. The war ended with a Russian-brokered deal that saw Yerevan cede swathes of the Azerbaijani territory that it had been holding for several decades.

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says Tehran supports the territorial integrity and historical borders of regional countries and firmly opposes any geopolitical change in the region.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran opposes any geopolitical change or the presence of Western military forces in the Caucasus because the presence of foreigners will not only fail to solve any problem, but will also cause new problems," Raisi said in a Monday phone call with Armenian Prime minister Nikol Pashinyan.

"In line with the neighborhood policy and improvement of relations, the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great significance and gives priority to increasing interactions and cooperation with the South Caucasus region," he added.

The Iranian president emphasized that Armenia and Azerbaijan should recognize each other's territorial integrity as an important step towards the establishment of peace.

Minister Emphasizes Transformative Document in Artificial Intelligence

TEHRAN (IP) - The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance says a strategic document for the use of artificial intelligence and new technologies should be drafted.

Speaking at the artificial intelligence conference that was held at the National Library of Iran on Monday, Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili said that the phenomenon of artificial intelligence and important technologies has gradually moved out of a specific field with a laboratory perspective.

He added: with the introduction of new technologies, receiving news has been transferred from the written media system to the new media system, and people get the news instantly from social networks.

The Minister went on to say that a binding transformative document in artificial intelligence should be prepared and approved with the help of academic elites and experts to compile the document.

He also said that topics related to artificial intelligence and new technologies should be included in the five-year development plan, which is to be voted on in the parliament soon.

Muslims Realizing They Cannot Take Refuge in U.S.

TEHRAN (IP) - Vice President for Legal Affairs Mohammad Dehghan said that Muslim countries have realized that they cannot take refuge in criminals like America gradually they separated themselves from the U.S.

The second international conference on reviewing and exposing American human rights with the presence of ambassadors of Islamic countries and domestic and foreign thinkers in Tehran

Speaking at the event as one of the keynote speakers, Dehghan addressing the United Nations, said: "If had tried Americans who committed crimes then you could have claimed that you are a neutral organization."

"You tell us why you don't join The International Court of Justice in Hague. I say that if you had tried the American leaders who committed crimes all over the world, we could have testified that you are seeking justice, we can ask the local authorities to accept the International Criminal Court's statute. The crimes are evident and there is a list of the crimes committed against our country. The crimes that are happening in Palestine and being committed in Syria are as the result of U.S. proxy war," he added.

Dehghan also stressed: The crimes committed in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen show that America's hands are stained with the blood of innocent people. Didn't the Americans directly destroy Afghanistan's wedding? It is a list of crimes and it was not against only one country. Millions of people were killed for the Americans.' The country kills millions of people and apparently claims supporting human rights.

He then noted: How despicable and arrogant! America did not achieve its goals with all the crimes it has committed. America was expelled from Iran during the revolution, and many years later, thanks to the efforts and unity of Muslims, it was expelled from the region to a large extent, and America's interests "have also been jeopardized, and fortunately,

He further stated: "Muslim countries have come to this conclusion that they cannot take refuge among criminal countries like the U.S. and gradually they are distancing themselves from the U.S."

"The U.S. was weakened in the region and the world and even in its own country, and those crimes did not lead to any result other than the decline of America. We have launched ten volumes in the International Court of Justice against the United States".

Iranian Police Chief Starts Visit to Russia

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Police chief Ahmad-Reza Radan has arrived in Moscow at the official invitation of Russian authorities and amid growing cooperation in different fields between the two countries.

During the visit, Radan is to meet with Russian law enforcement officials to discuss expansion of cooperation between the police forces of Iran and Russia.

On his three-day visit, he will sign cooperation agreements on fighting terrorism, human trafficking, and narcotics, as well as agreements on scientific research cooperation between the two countries.



Americans Proven No Adherence to Human Rights

TEHRAN (IP) - The member of Iran's Guardian Council stated that the Americans have proven that wherever their illegitimate interests lie, they have no adherence to human rights and when they need to pressure other nations, they misuse this tool against other nations.

The second international conference on reviewing and exposing American human rights with the presence of ambassadors of Islamic countries and domestic and foreign thinkers in Tehran.

Speaking at the event as one of the keynote speakers Abbas Ali Kadkhodaeia a member of Iran's Guardian Council said: "All UN Security Council resolutions which are against terrorism stress that human rights must be respected. How does America's performance in Iraq and Afghanistan, which was carried out in the name of fighting against terrorism, go with the principles of human rights?"

Senior Diplomats of Iran and Norway Hold Talks

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani and Director General of Norwegian Foreign Ministry's Department for Regional Affairs Vebjørn Dysvik have held talks in Tehran.

The talks were held on Tuesday during visit of a Norwegian delegation led by Dysvik to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

In the meeting, Bagheri Kani and Dysvik exchanged views about the issues of mutual interests. The two also discussed important regional and international issues, including the situation in Palestine and Afghanistan.



New Envoy to Senegal Meets FM

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's new ambassador to Senegal has met with Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian before departing Tehran to begin his mission.

During a meeting on Monday, Hassan Asgari presented a report to Amirabdollahian on the latest developments in his destination and offered his plans to develop relations with Dakar as much as possible. The foreign minister, for his part, highlighted the importance of developing and expanding relations between Iran and African countries, especially Senegal, and called for efforts to further expand ties with Dakar in all fields, especially upgrading the level of economic cooperation.

Asgari has previously served as political attaché in Iran's embassies in Austria and Sri Lanka, deputy ambassador in Croatia and Georgia, and assistant director general of the Foreign Ministry's Strategic Planning and Monitoring Office.



Iran Continuing to Build Barriers Along Eastern Borders

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Interior Ahmad Vahidi has termed Iran's eastern borders as important for the country's security as he insists that Iran is continuing with a project to building barriers along its eastern borders.

"There were plans in the past to build barriers along these borders but they were not perfect," Vahidi told IRNA on Monday.

"The plan for building barriers is still underway ... the armed forces are building a combination of physical and electronic barriers in eastern borders," he said.

7 Iranians Released From Qatar Prisons

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador to Doha has announced the release of seven Iranians from prisons in Qatar and their return to the country.

In a post on his Twitter account on Tuesday, Hamidreza Dehqani Poudeh said, "With the cooperation of the relevant Qatari authorities, seven prisoners of our country were released today and flew home a few moments ago."

He also attached the picture of a departure screen at the Qatar airport in Doha that showed a Tehran-bound flight.

Among those released, there were six people who had been arrested for illegally but not deliberately entering Qatari waters. They had been sentenced to one year imprisonment, but the ruling was suspended.

Last week, the Iranian ambassador tweeted that the six detainees would be released and come back to the country in the coming days.

Iran and Qatar signed an agreement on the extradition of criminals back in 2010.

Over the past year, Dehqani Poudeh has met with Iranians at Qatar's central prison amid attempts to transfer some of the detainees to Tehran.

Recently, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian paid a visit to Doha, where he discussed with Qatari officials a range of issues, among them consular matters, especially the situation of Iranian citizens held behind bars in Qatar.

Iran's Full Military Preparedness a Warning to Enemies

TEHRAN (MNA) - Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard, commander of the army air defense force warned the enemies against any attempt to get close to Iran's borders.

Gen. Sabahifard made the remarks on an inspection visit to Qom air defense base on Monday where he also said that "Military power is one of the main pillars of a country's national power and it is considered important in providing sustainable security."

He considered the armed forces' defense preparedness and weapons power to be a deterrent adding, "Our defense and weapons preparedness is a warning to the enemies that if they approach the Islamic Republic of Iran's borders, they will face a strong and swift response from the [Iranian] armed forces."

The commander further considered the improvement of the quality of human resources as very important, saying "In the realm of military power and authority of a country, human resources have a very important place."

40m Active Users on Iranian Messaging Apps

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Information and Communications Technology of Iran Issa Zarepour has underlined that domestic messaging applications have more than 40 million monthly active users.

Addressing the staff members of the Iranian telecoms ministry on Tuesday, Zarepour cited information from the Google Firebase Dashboard to corroborate his numbers about active users of Iranian social media platforms.

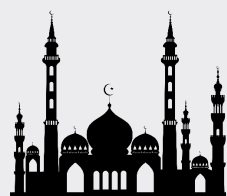
Iran has banned certain foreign messaging applications since September because of their role in the 2022 unrest in the country.

Authorities say the applications provided opponents of the Islamic Republic with an opportunity to propagate anti-Iran messages and images to sow discord in the country.

Zarepour also updated figures about the National Information Network (NIN), a platform that can provide safe and high-speed internet to Iranian users while observing some controls arrangements.

According to the minister, the NIN was about 23% complete until the inauguration of the Raisi administration in August 2021, adding that the project is now some 62% complete.

He said the NIN will reach a progress of 75% by the end of the current Iranian year to March 20, 2024.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:05
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:51

91. Others you will find that wish to gain your confidence as well as that of their people: Every time they are sent back to temptation, they succumb thereto: if they withdraw not from you nor give you (guarantees) of peace besides restraining their hands, seize them and slay them wherever ye get them: In their case We have provided you with a clear argument against them.

Surah 4. Women (91)

Revival of Oil Production Capacity by 1.5m Barrels In Only 6 Months

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr says with reimposition of sanctions and halt in the JCPOA during the previous government and lack of timely repair of oil installations, the oil production capacity of the country declined by over one million barrels but in the beginning of the 13th government and only with \$500m, they could restore and revive the lost capacity in just 6 months.

Speaking in a ceremony on Tuesday, Khojasteh-Mehr emphasized that the time and increase of productivity in drilling is very important in the economy of this project, adding that currently in the issue of drilling, they face with 14 challenges in the field of increasing the duration of drilling.

He added that at the beginning of the current government it was decided all plans and decisions are implemented in the shortest time, adding that some achievements of today like doubling the oil export is because of those decisions at the beginning of the job.

He reiterated that 20 months ago Iran's oil exports had fallen to less than 300,000 barrels per day and some 80m barrels of gas condensates were waiting on the water in the Persian Gulf and it was getting to be oil industry's Achilles' Heel. He noted that the solution of the previous government was to increase rented oil tankers with annual cost of \$450m and for three years all oil gas condensates products had been restoring on the bunkers on the water.



Khojasteh-Mehr went on to say that the ministry doubled the oil exports in the toughest condition and under sanctions and the government could compensate its budget deficit by selling oil and getting back the oil money.

He termed revival of energy diplomacy was the secret of NIOC in the field of oil export last year comparing to the preceding year which saw 79% growth and it shows the power and authority of the oil industry.

He said that at the beginning of the current year the oil production capacity of the country was 2.2m barrels but now it has reached 3.1m barrels per day, adding that 86% of the joint oil fields of Iran are in the working range of Arvandan Oil and Gas Company and today the oil product from those fields is ratio of one to three.

Khojasteh-Mehr further said that in recent months they have witnessed signing of many domestic and international MoUs and contracts in the oil industry, adding that soon the development project of South Pars Phase 11 will soon start, admitting that this issue has been delayed for 20 years.

He stated that the exploitable oil reserves of Iran is around 160b barrels, adding that for increasing oil and gas production, the country should have a compiled and systematic plan.

Iran Lifts Ban on Import of Cars Worth Over \$40,000

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Customs Administration has lifted a ban on imports of cars worth more than \$40,000.

The ban on importing passenger cars with prices above \$40,000 has been revoked for valid orders registered at customs facilities prior to December 1, 2017, the Customs Administration said in a notice, based on a ruling by Iran's Administrative Court of Justice.

In addition to measures to facilitate imports, the Iranian government has recently directed auto manufacturers to ramp up their production in a bid to reduce car prices in the country.

Iran, Uzbekistan Discuss Sports Cooperation



TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian sport minister Hamid Sajjadi and his Uzbek counterpart Adkham Ikramov agreed to hold joint sport camps.

The agreement was made on the sidelines of the 7th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VII) in Baku, Azerbaijan on Monday.

Referring to the commonalities of the two countries of Iran and Uzbekistan in different sectors, the Iranian minister appreciated Uzbekistan's hosting of the Iranian national football team in the 2023 CAFA Nations Cup.

Expressing happiness over the recent visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Iran, Sajjadi said, "We can deepen these interactions in common areas."

According to the Iranian minister, Iran and Uzbekistan can expand their relations to water sports, boxing, shooting, wushu, weightlifting and football.

Pointing to the Islamic Republic of Iran's plan to develop women's sports, Sajjadi added, "Over the past years, many programs have been carried out to expand women's sports in Iran, so that Iranian women can show their abilities to the world while observing religious and Islamic values."

Adkham Ikramov, for his part, expressed hope to cooperate and interact with Iran at higher levels such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in common fields.

"Iran and Uzbekistan can expand sports relations and interactions in the form of a joint memorandum of understanding, and we fully welcome this issue," he pointed out.

According to the Uzbek minister, Tashkent can have more connections with Iran in the field of handball, volleyball and basketball.

He also expressed readiness to share facilities and experiences with Iran in judo, boxing and taekwondo.

Five-Year Petchem Exports Fetched Iran \$61b

TEHRAN (Shana) - Iran has earned \$61 billion by exporting 120 million tons of petrochemical products from 2018 to 2022 amid growing sanctions, said the Association of Petrochemical Industry Corporation (APIC) deputy head.

Fariborz Karimaei, who made the announcement in the 32nd Meeting of Managing Directors of Petrochemical Companies, said around 40 million tons of petrochemicals were produced in the previous Iranian calendar year (which ended on March 20, 2023).

Of the figure, 28 million tons were exported and 12 million tons were sold inside the country, he said, adding the annual selling was valued at \$27 billion.

According to Karimaei, more than 27 million tons of raw materials worth \$26 billion and over 11 million tons of urea fertilizers valued at \$3.2 billion calculated according to compulsory prices were supplied to downstream and agricultural industries respectively by petrochemical complexes during the five-year period.

Iran, Pakistan To Facilitate Communication Services



TEHRAN (IP) - A delegation from Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development visited Karachi, the capital of Sindh in Pakistan, to facilitate communication services for Pakistani visitors to Iran.

Important meetings will be held between the Iranian delegation headed by Hamidreza Shahraki, the Minister of Information and Public Transport of Sindh and the president and the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) members.

The Islamic Republic of Iran hosts thousands of pilgrims and tourists from Pakistan who travel to Iran to visit the Holy Shrines.

Iran is Pakistani pilgrims and tourists' closest and most economical transit route.

The deputy of transportation of the Road and Road Transport Organization earlier met with Iran's Consul General Hassan Noorian in Karachi and the parties exchanged views on the latest developments related to bilateral cooperation, including the state of the borders of the two countries to facilitate the pilgrimage trips of Pakistani nationals during the days of Muharram and Safar.

They are also some members of the Sistan and Baluchistan Transport Association are also present in this visit, and the issue of granting permission to Pakistani buses to enter Iran to facilitate the travel of citizens of this country is also going to be discussed.

Iran, Kazakhstan Targeting to Achieve \$1b Trade in Agricultural Sector

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran and Kazakhstan have targeted to achieve \$1 billion worth of trade in the fields of agriculture and food industry.

Iran's Deputy Minister of Agriculture Alireza Payman-Pak, who has traveled to Kazakhstan heading a trade and economic delegation, said that the two countries have targeted to achieve \$1 billion worth of trade in the fields of agriculture and food industry.

During the meeting, the two sides emphasized pursuing the requirements needed for facilitating joint cooperation in the field of agriculture between the two countries as well as introducing new trade opportunities and joint investment in Almaty and Astana.

In separate meetings with Kazakhstan's deputy prime minister, trade and agricultural ministers, and governor



general of Almaty, Payman-Pak, while introducing new opportunities of cooperation in the fields of export of fresh fruit and vegetables, dairies, aquatic animals, discussed other relevant issues including extraterrestrial cultivation.

Settling challenges facing ahead of the two countries in the field of veterinary medicine, logistics, guarantees related to the trade contracts with a focus on agricultural products were of the main topics discussed between Iranian and Kazakh officials.

The deputy minister of agriculture pointed to the agreement reached by the presidents of the two countries for achieving \$3 billion worth of trade in two years and said that the share of the agricultural and food industry sector in bilateral trade is estimated at \$1 billion.

Iran Private Ready to Enhance Trade Ties With Sweden

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has voiced ICCIMA's readiness to engage in more increased cooperation with Sweden.

President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has voiced ICCIMA's readiness to engage in more increased cooperation with Sweden.

Hossein Selahvarzi was speaking in a meeting on Monday with Iran's newly-appointed ambassador to Sweden Hojjatollah Faghani.

He noted that the Iranian private sector needs more information about the Swedish companies and the trade opportunities of the European country.

The Iranian ambassador to Sweden, for his part, congratulated the president of Iran Chamber of Commerce for being elected to the post.

Sweden is highly advanced in the areas of IT and paper production, Faghani said, adding that Iran and Sweden can cooperate in these areas.

The ambassador said that the Swedish people highly trust the Iranian businesspeople. "Iran's embassy in Sweden is ready for any kind of cooperation to increase the presence of Iranian businesspersons in the country."

Tuberculosis Infection in Men Comprises 56% of Cases

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Over 7,200 patients were diagnosed with tuberculosis in the country, of whom 56% are men and 22.8% are non-Iranians, Iran's Health Ministry announced.

Out of the total 7,299 people diagnosed with tuberculosis in the last Iranian calendar year (ending March 21, 2023), 3,945 (4.6 per 100,000 individuals) suffered from smear-positive pulmonary tuberculosis, announced the Center for Disease Control and Prevention affiliated with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

A review of the incidence of tuberculosis from March 21, 2018, to March 20, 2023, in Iran shows a decreasing trend in the reported cases of tuberculosis in way that the reported rate of all cases of the disease decreased from 10.5 per 100,000

in 2018 to 8.5 per 100,000 in 2023.

There was a noticeable decline in tuberculosis cases in Iran between March 21, 2020, and March 20, 2021.

The decline has its roots in the global COVID-19 pandemic and that maximum attention was redirected to the pandemic by the health system, and factors such as physical distancing measures implemented, human resource fatigue, the similarity of respiratory symptoms between tuberculosis and coronavirus disease as well as other important reasons, including the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on timely diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis in comparison to other contagious diseases.

Serbia Releases 3 Kosovo Police Officers



BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Serbia released three police officers from Kosovo who were detained near the disputed border between the Balkan foes earlier this month as tensions soared. The release followed demands by the U.S. and European Union that they be set free.

A court in the central Serbian town of Kraljevo said it was releasing the police officers, and they later returned to Kosovo. The court said in a statement that the three were charged with illegal possession of weapons and explosive devices, and will be allowed to remain free pending potential further proceedings.

U.S. Aircraft Carrier Makes Da Nang Port Call



BANGKOK (Dispatches) - A U.S. aircraft carrier and two guided missile cruisers were visiting Vietnam, a rare port call that comes as the United States and China increasingly vie for influence in Southeast Asia.

The USS Ronald Reagan, along with the guided missile cruisers USS Antietam and USS Robert Smalls, arrived in Da Nang on Sunday for the visit.

Neighboring China is Vietnam's largest trading partner but Beijing's sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea have led to increasing friction with Vietnam, as well as with Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Wagner Mercenary Leader Issues Defiant Audio Statement



KYIV (Dispatches) - The leader of the Wagner mercenary group defended his short-lived insurrection in a boastful audio statement Monday, but uncertainty still swirled about his fate, as well as that of senior Russian military leaders, the impact on the war in Ukraine, and even the political future of President Vladimir Putin.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu made his first public appearance since the uprising that demanded his ouster, in a video aimed at projecting a sense of order after the country's most serious political crisis in decades.

In an 11-minute audio statement, Yevgeny Prigozhin said he acted "to prevent the destruction of the Wagner private military company" and in response to an attack on a Wagner camp that killed some 30 fighters.

"We started our march because of an injustice," Prigozhin said in a recording that gave no details about where he is or what his future plans are.

A feud between the Wagner Group leader and Russia's military brass that has festered throughout the war erupted into a mutiny that saw the mercenaries leave Ukraine to seize a military headquarters in a southern Russian city and roll seemingly unopposed for hundreds of miles toward Moscow, before turning around after less than 24 hours on Saturday.

The Kremlin said it had made a deal for Prigozhin to move to Belarus and receive amnesty, along with his soldiers. There was no confirmation of his whereabouts Monday, although a popular Russian news channel on Telegram reported he was at a hotel in the Belarusian capital, Minsk.

In his statement, Prigozhin taunted Russia's military, calling his march a "master class" on how it should have carried out the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. He also mocked the Russian military for failing to protect the country, pointing out security breaches that allowed Wagner to march 780 kilometers (500 miles) without facing resistance and block all military units on its way.

The bullish statement made no clearer what would ultimately happen to Prigozhin and his forces under the deal purportedly brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Prigozhin didn't disclose details, but said Lukashenko "proposed finding solutions for the Wagner private military company to continue its work in a lawful jurisdiction." That suggested Prigozhin might keep his military force, although it wasn't immediately clear which jurisdiction he was referring to.

The independent Russian news outlet Vyorstka claimed that construction of a field camp for up to 8,000 Wagner troops was underway in an area of Belarus about 200 kilometers (320 miles) north of the border with Ukraine.

The report couldn't be independently verified. The Belarusian military monitoring group Belaruski Hajun said Monday on Telegram that it had seen no activity in that district consistent with construction of a facility, and hadn't no indications of Wagner convoys either in or moving towards Belarus.

Though the mutiny was brief, it was not bloodless. Russian media reported that several military helicopters and a communications plane were shot down by Wagner forces, killing at least 15. Prigozhin expressed regret for downing the aircraft but said they were bombing his convoys.

Thousands of North Koreans March In Anti-U.S. Rallies



SEOUL (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of North Koreans marched in anti-U.S. rallies over the weekend, pledging "merciless" revenge against "U.S. imperialists," as the country marked the 73rd anniversary of the start of the Korean War, state media said.

More than 120,000 people participated in Sunday's mass rallies in the nation's capital, North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said.

While the 1950-53 conflict was triggered by a North Korean surprise attack, the demonstrators mobilized in Pyongyang promoted their government's version of events and accused the United States of provoking the war and leaving Koreans with "wounds ... that can never be healed." Meanwhile in South Korea, a North Korean defector-turned-activist said he flew balloons carrying some 200,000 anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets and COVID-19 medical supplies across the border Sunday night, continuing his yearslong campaigns that have often triggered angry responses from the North.

Photos sent by Park Sang-hak showed a placard with a picture of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and a message that highlighted how his grandfather, Kim Il Sung, was responsible for starting the Korean War. The North has not commented on Park's latest ballooning stunt.

North Korea is extremely sensitive about any outside attempt to undermine Kim's leadership and weaken his absolute control over the country's 26 million people.

At the rallies Sunday, North Koreans also expressed pride in Kim's expanding nuclear weapons and missile programs, insisting their country now has the "strongest absolute weapon to punish the U.S. imperialists and the war deterrence for self-defense which no enemy dare provoke."

Photos published by the North's Rodong Sinmun newspaper showed a stadium packed with likely tens of thousands of people in COVID-19 masks, raising their fists in the air and holding signs that read: "Let's eradicate U.S. imperialist invaders" and "The entire U.S. mainland is within our striking range."

Pakistan Army General Among Three Sacked Over Violence by Imran Khan's Party

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan's army has sacked three senior officers, including a lieutenant general, for failing to prevent violent attacks on military assets by ex-prime minister Imran Khan's supporters protesting his arrest, the army's spokesperson said.

It was a rare public announcement by the army of an internal inquiry and its outcome. At least 102 people are on trial in military courts over last month's violence, Major General Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry told a press conference in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

Chaudhry gave no details regarding how many of them were civilians or military officials. He also declined to name the senior officers who had been fired.

Human rights groups have raised concerns about military trials of civilians in Pakistan that they say cannot ensure a fair defense. The trials have also been challenged in Pakistan's Supreme Court in three petitions, including one by Khan's party.

In May, thousands of Khan's supporters rampaged through military installations across the country and vandalized them, including an air base, several military garrisons, the house of a general and the army's headquarters. Over 5,000 of them were arrested, though most were later released.

"We had to determine why security was breached at army installations. We had to find out what had gone wrong," Chaudhry said.

He said two departmental inquiries were conducted, headed by major generals, and punishments were given according to their recommendations.

Strict departmental action had also been taken against another 15 army officers, including three major generals and seven brigadiers, Chaudhry said, as part of internal accountability in the military. He did not specify what action had been taken.

Chaudhry added that several relatives, including women, of senior army officers were also facing trials for allegedly being facilitators of the violence.

German Gov't Calls for Tolerance After Far-Right Party Win

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany's government said that the country is shaped by values such as tolerance and respect, calling for them to be upheld a day after a far-right party won control of a county administration for the first time.

Alternative for Germany, which has come under scrutiny from security services over its ties to extremists, won a runoff election Sunday in Sonneberg county, about 180 kilometers (112 miles) east of Frankfurt.

A spokesman for Chancellor Olaf Scholz declined to comment directly on the outcome of the local election, but said that it was important to take people's concerns seriously and engage in "civilized discussions."

"Our country is shaped by values such as fairness, tolerance, decency and respect," Steffen Hebestreit told reporters in Berlin. "This must be cultivated and practiced again and again."

The victory of Alternative for Germany's candidate, Robert Sesselmann, against a center-right rival was sharply criticized by anti-racism campaigners and others.

Charlotte Knobloch, a Holocaust survivor and president of the Jewish Community of Munich, said that voters in Sonneberg had made "a dangerous decision," but added that officials at the federal and state level also bore responsibility for the outcome.

Alternative for Germany, or AfD, was founded a decade ago and first entered parliament in 2017

following an anti-migrant campaign in response to the influx of refugees to Europe during the preceding years.

The party's recent surge in national polls, to between 18% and 20%, has unnerved mainstream parties in a country where the rise of fascism during the 1920s and 1930s is still a core subject in schools. Thuringia, where Sonneberg is located, was one of the first power bases of Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party, after it became part of the state government there in 1930.

The state's present-day governor, Bodo Ramelow of the Left party, said AfD's success in Sonneberg showed that far-right populism seen in the United States, France and other European countries has also taken hold in Germany. Thuringia is one of three eastern states that hold regional elections next year.

Friedrich Merz of the center-right Christian Democrats, whose candidate lost to AfD, accused the environmentalist Green party that's part of Scholz's federal government of alienating voters by demanding tough measures against climate change. Echoing AfD's strategy, Merz said his party would focus its attacks on the Greens.

Green party co-leader Ricarda Lang, meanwhile, warned against a "right-wing culture war."

"It will now be the job of all democratic parties to prevent a normalization of AfD, because it's clear that it remains a threat to democracy," she said.



Race to Identify Health Effects of Microplastics

PARIS (Dispatches) - Tiny pieces of plastic have been found littered throughout human bodies, trapped in our lungs and laced through our blood, but the long-term health effects of this exposure remain unclear.

Every day humans ingest, inhale or otherwise come in contact with microplastics, plastic pollution less than five millimetres (0.2 inches) in diameter that is mostly invisible to the naked eye.

Microplastics have been found most everywhere on Earth, from the deepest oceans to the highest mountains, as well as in the air, water, soil and food chain.

But in the last couple of years scientists have discovered microplastics not just throughout nature but also throughout human bodies, detecting it in lungs, livers — even in placentas.

Last year a Dutch study became the first to identify microplastics in human blood.

While scientists have urged caution due to the study's small sample size, the presence of microplastics could suggest it is being transported through the bloodstream into organs.

But for now, the data remain incomplete on the health effects of microplastics, a complex cocktail of polymers and chemicals that could smuggle in other contaminants in what is called the "Trojan Horse" effect.

Xavier Coumoul, a toxicologist at French medical research institute INSERM, told AFP that there has been "more and more research" in the area over the last decade.

But he said that research had been late to get started because — similar to global warming — the "insidious changes" crept up so slowly.

"We do not know whether our level of exposure will lead to chronic or acute illnesses in the long term — but we can legitimately ask the question," he said.

Research has shown that microplastics have a range of detrimental effects on the health of animals, including an increase in inflammation, oxidative stress and damage to cells.

"Both in human and mice lung tissues, we have seen an inhibitory effect on development after putting plastic fibres inside organoids, mini-lungs grown" from stem cells, said Barbro Melgert, a respiratory immunologist at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands.

"This effect seemed not to be caused by the plastic itself, but by something leaking from the (plastic particles), some chemicals added," she said.

"But we don't know exactly what chemical was involved," she said. "It's very difficult to find out, especially with low quantities."

Indeed, the roles that the shape, size and type of microplastic — as well as additives — remain poorly understood. But researchers are working on it.

Last week, a study in the journal *Physics of Fluids* modelled how different sizes of inhaled microplastics rattled through human airways, finding that they tended to collect in the nasal cavity or in the back of the throat.

It is also unclear how much microplastic individual people are exposed to.

"We don't really know how much microplastics we breathe, there's not a lot of studies," Melgert said, adding that research over longer time periods was needed.

The World Wildlife Fund made headlines in 2019 by estimating that people ingest around five grams of plastic a week, the equivalent of a credit card.

The methodology and findings of the study the WWF was citing have been contested, and other research has indicated a lower level of individual exposure.



How Climate Change Fuels Extreme Heat

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Heatwaves across Asia and beyond have already broken records this year, while the arrival of the El Nino climate phenomenon will mean even more extreme temperatures.

Here AFP looks at how climate change produces extreme heat, how scientists evaluate heatwaves and the risks to human health:

What is extreme heat?

Extreme heat is defined from a baseline of the average temperature in any one location, which varies widely across the world.

So a temperature of 25 degrees Celsius (77 degrees Fahrenheit) could be record-breaking in parts of Canada in spring, but might be below average for the same period in the Middle East.

What role does climate change play?

"Greenhouse gases trapping heat are at the root of the problem," said Martin Jucker, a lecturer at the University of New South Wales' Climate Change Research Centre.

Gases like carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide play a crucial role in stopping heat from being reflected or lost from our atmosphere.

When this process is balanced, it keeps the planet at a liveable temperature.

But an unsustainable increase in the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere means more heat is being trapped, creating an overall global warming effect and other climate anomalies.

For example, warming air holds more moisture, which produces stronger and more frequent storms.

Overall, climate change is strengthening the duration, intensity and geographical reach of heatwaves, scientists say.

What about human interventions?

The problem is made worse in some places by the way cities are built — the so-called heat island effect, where urban conglomerations are warmer than surrounding rural areas.

This happens because cities with too little greenery and too much concrete, asphalt and other building materials absorb heat and often offer insufficient shade.

The use of cooling technologies like air conditioners creates surging demand for energy, including the fossil fuels that are behind the climate crisis in the first place.

Are all heatwaves linked to climate change?

To determine climate change's role in any given event, experts use a technique called attribution science.

They simulate a world with and without climate change, using historical and more recent measurements, or computer models.

Comparing the two then "gives us a measure of how much more likely a given extreme is under climate change", Jucker told AFP.

Findings for over 500 events have been collected by the organisation Carbon Brief, with most shown to have been made more severe or more likely because of climate change.

Just a handful, including some floods, droughts and extreme cold, have been found to have no clear link to human activity, while in other cases experts found the evidence inconclusive.

"Every heatwave in the world is now made stronger and more likely to happen because of human-caused climate change," according to Friederike Otto, a scientist at Imperial College London and pioneer of attribution methodology.



The Global Battle Against Forever Chemicals



PARIS (Dispatches) - Chemicals giants have agreed to pay billions of dollars to end lawsuits over contamination from toxic "forever" chemicals found in everyday products such as non-stick frying pans and waterproof clothing.

Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), chemicals that take a very long time to break down in nature, have been linked to cancer, infertility and environmental damage, among other complaints.

On Thursday, US industrial conglomerate 3M said it would pay up to US\$12.5 billion to settle numerous claims from US public water systems accusing it of tainting their supplies with the pollutants.

Here is a look at the biggest PFAS settlements to date:

Record US water deal

3M says it will pay between US\$10.5 and US\$12.5 billion over 13 years to public water systems across the United States to test and treat water for PFAS.

The deal, which has to be approved by a judge, is the largest involving drinking water in US history.

It centres on 3M's use of firefighting foams containing PFAS, which are accused of polluting groundwater.

3M, which also produces post-it notes and Covid face masks, said in December that it would stop manufacturing PFAS substances by the end of 2025.

Dutch, Belgian cases

In July 2022, 3M agreed to a settlement of €571 million (US\$612 million) with the Belgian region of Flanders over alleged PFAS pollution from its Zwijndrecht plant, near the city of Antwerp.

Flemish authorities released a study showing that people living near the plant had high levels of a type of PFAS in their blood.

Facing Housing Crunch, Toronto Cuts Into Once-Protected Lands

TORONTO (Dispatches) - A billboard at the foot of a field on Toronto's far outskirts heralds the coming construction of new homes, but it also highlights a broken promise never to permit encroachment into this vast green space, and the backlash which has ensued.

Among the many anti-development protesters, a group led by concerned grandmothers has staged demonstrations outside Ontario lawmakers' offices decrying the loss of swaths of this so-called "Greenbelt" around Canada's largest metropolitan city.

"My (trust) in the democratic process is destroyed by this move," says protestor Christine Hutchinson. A resident of Oakville, west of Toronto, she adds that she is, however, heartened to see pushback from several area municipalities affected by the policy switch.

By opening 3,000 hectares for new housing in recent months, Doug Ford, the province's conservative leader with close ties to local developers, went back on a 2018 election pledge not to touch what the foundation tasked with its conservation describes as "the world's largest" greenbelt.

The horseshoe-shaped 810,000-hectare ring of fertile farmlands, forests and wetlands edge Toronto and nearby cities that hug the north and west shores of Lake Ontario — the most densely populated and industrialised region of Canada.

A mix of private and public lands, they have been protected since 2005 in an effort to limit urban sprawl.

"These lands should be used to feed the local population, as food supply problems increase with climate change," said Brigitte Sopher, a resident of Whitevale, close to one of the new building areas.

The Ford government has designated 15 locations to build 50,000 homes and contribute to the goal of adding 1.5 million new residences in Ontario by 2031.

To justify his reversal, Ford cited soaring real estate prices and a flood of newcomers needing to be housed, as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government aims to boost annual immigration to Canada to 500,000, the majority of whom are likely to settle in large urban centres.

The Canadian housing crunch is most acute in the Toronto area, which is expected to see its population rise from 6.8 million to 10.2 million in the next 25 years, according to government projections.

The average price of a house in Ontario, meanwhile, has almost tripled since 2011 and rent for a two-room apartment now exceeds C\$2,500 monthly.

The greenbelt lands "play a vital role for flood protection. We know that with climate change we will face more risks of extreme weather and by doing so, the rainwater is going to end up in our basements," said Mike Schreiner, the first and only Green Party member of the Ontario legislature.



The Age Of Yoga Has Come



PARIS (Dispatches) - Superstar yoga teacher Sadhguru has more than 10 million followers online and he sees no limit to how many people will become adherents in the coming years.

"I think in 25 years you will have probably 60 to 70 per cent of the world doing some form of yoga," he told AFP during a visit to Paris this week.

"Yoga is a science that was first transmitted by the first yogi 15,000 years ago but until now no generation was ready to address their well-being — and all aspects of who they are — in a scientific manner using these tools," he added.

Millions discovered 65-year-old Sadhguru, real name Jagdish "Jaggi" Vasudev, during the Covid-19 pandemic, when his daily videos on Instagram became a vital resource to get through lockdowns.

Punctuated by bursts of laughter, they combine lessons on life, yoga practice and humorous reflections.

Yoga is increasingly recognised worldwide for its health benefits, particularly in combatting stress and maintaining physical flexibility.

Dressed as usual in a turban and a huge light-coloured shawl, Sadhguru said yoga's "internal tools" of meditation, postures, breathing and mantras were "within everyone's reach".

"More people are intellectually active than ever before in the history of humanity... This generation and the coming generations are really ready for yoga," he said.

"It's only now we are able to understand ... our relationship to the world around us," he added.

Sadhguru has many celebrity fans, from Will Smith and Matthew McConaughey to Paris Hilton and Andrea Bocelli, who welcome the way he gears ancient teachings to their materialist world.

He is also close to nationalist Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has made yoga a central part of his image.

Rouble Opens at 15-Month Low vs Dollar

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Russian rouble opened at a near 15-month low against the dollar in early morning trade on Monday, responding for the first time to an aborted mutiny by heavily armed mercenaries over the weekend. The rouble was 2.1% weaker against the dollar at 86.50, after earlier hitting 87.2300, its weakest point since late March 2022. It had lost 2.2% to trade at 94.37 versus the euro and shed 2.1% against the yuan to 11.95. Russian mercenaries led by Yevgeny Prigozhin withdrew from the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don overnight on Saturday under a deal that halted their rapid advance on Moscow but left unanswered questions about President Vladimir Putin's grip on power.



China Refiners Stoke Petrochemical Glut in Market-Share War

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China is relentlessly adding new petrochemical capacity despite a global glut as the country's refiners diversify from transport fuels, threatening to depress margins worldwide through 2024 as weak economic growth saps demand.

In an ominous sign for producers of the chemicals used in plastic packaging, polyester clothing and auto parts, refiners' profit margins on processing naphtha to make ethylene turned negative last week for the first time since October.

The profit crunch is being driven by China's refiners boosting output of olefins such as ethylene to offset an expected decline in sales of petrol and diesel as electric vehicle take-up accelerates. Their capacity expansion is outpacing growth in demand for the chemicals. Global demand for ethylene and propylene is forecast to surge 29% from 2023 to 426.8 million metric tons by 2030, while capacity is expected to jump 25% from 2023 to 485.9 million metric tons by 2030, research firm Wood Mackenzie (WoodMac) estimates.

New capacity in China is expected to make up more than half of that growth, according to the International Energy Agency.

In 2023, WoodMac sees China's output growth creating a local surplus of 4.24 million metric tons of ethylene and an even bigger oversupply of propylene at 8.69 million metric tons.

"The surplus of olefins will be pushed onto the water to clear elsewhere in Asia or further afield in Europe and the U.S. at steep discounts," Energy Aspects analysts said in a note.

"This poses more risk to utilisation rates in the rest of Asia and Europe, which are more sensitive to margin compression."

Newly launched refinery complexes by state giant PetroChina's Guangdong Petrochemical and privately-run Jiangsu Shenghong Petrochemical have added to surging petrochemical supply from mega refiners Zhejiang Petrochemical Corp and Hengli Petrochemical that has come online in recent years.

Despite margin pressure, Chinese producers are likely to keep plants operating to protect market share and prevent deeper losses that would result from shutting units, a Chinese refining source said, declining to be named.

Producers are already feeling the pain in their battle against each other for market share. Asia's largest refiner, China's state-run Sinopec Corp, warned in its first-quarter report that its chemicals business faced pressure from competing new supply and a tepid recovery in demand.

Independent refiner Hengli Petrochemical's net profit slid nearly 76% in the first quarter due to "high operating costs and low industry demand," the company said in April.

Rongsheng Petrochemical and Hengyi Petrochemical swung to net losses in the first quarter.

The world's largest producer and consumer of petrochemicals, China has been unable to absorb the extra output as its domestic market has struggled to recover from three years of strict COVID-19 curbs and weaker global demand for its exports.

Since the pandemic, Chinese consumption patterns have prioritized socializing over spending on goods, Ganesh Gopalakrishnan, TotalEnergies's global head of petrochemical trading, told Reuters last month.



BOJ Member Called for Early Tweak to YCC, Yen Worries Resurface

TOKYO (Dispatches) - A Bank of Japan (BOJ) policymaker called for an early revision to its controversial yield curve control, a summary of opinions at the June meeting showed on Monday, suggesting the central bank's ultra-loose monetary settings may be at a crossroads.

While analysts see the communication as reflecting only a minority view of the BOJ board, investors are watching to see if similar such commentary comes in the near-term, potentially heralding a shift in policy.

The bank's summary of opinions came as Japan's top currency diplomat escalated his warning against falls in the yen on Monday, a signal to markets that authorities could intervene to slow the decline.

"The Bank should maintain the overall framework of monetary easing for the time being," one of the nine board members was quoted as saying in a summary of opinions at the June meeting.

"That said, a revision to the treatment of YCC should be discussed at an early stage," taking into account the need to prevent sharp fluctuations in interest rates in the future phase of an exit from current monetary policy, the member said.

It was the first time the BOJ summary showed a board member explicitly mentioning the need for an early debate of a tweak to YCC, which contrasts with Governor Kazuo Ueda's remarks ruling out any imminent change in policy.

The yen rose 0.3% to 143.27 per dollar on Monday after the BOJ summary's release, though it was not far from a more than seven-month low of 143.87 hit on Friday.

"Although one member called for change in YCC, we need to see if others including Ueda may follow suit, which would make it a big movement," said Daisaku Ueno, chief currency strategist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities.

Under YCC, the BOJ guides short-term interest rates at -0.1% and the 10-year bond yield around zero as part of efforts to sustainably achieve its 2% inflation target.

The yen has come under renewed pressure in recent weeks as investors focused on the contrast between the BOJ's ultra-dovish stance and hawkish central banks elsewhere.

Some market players bet the central bank could tweak YCC, such as by widening the allowance band set around the 10-year yield target, as early as July to address market distortions caused by its huge bond buying.

YCC is also blamed by some analysts for causing an unwelcome yen fall that pushes up raw material import costs.

In a sign of renewed concern over the weakening yen, Japan's top currency diplomat Masato Kanda warned on Monday that recent moves were "rapid and one-sided."

Dollar Tentative as Investors Eye Global Rates, Economic Outlook

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - The dollar was on the back foot on Monday, though it found some safe haven support on lingering worries that the protracted monetary tightening cycles from major central banks would further hurt the global economic outlook.

Dramatic weekend events in Russia also kept investors on guard, though reaction in the currency market was subdued as they assessed the implications of the aborted mutiny.

The euro pared some of its losses from last week and was up 0.05% to \$1.0901 in Asia trade.

The single currency had fallen to a one-week low on Friday after data showed that euro zone business growth virtually stalled in June amid a deepening downturn in manufacturing activity and a slow expansion of the bloc's dominant services industry. Sterling, reversing some of its 0.8% fall last week after an outsized 50-basis-point rate increase from the Bank of England stoked fears of a British recession.

Flash Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) data on Friday showed Britain's economy displayed signs of a slowdown this month but inflation pressures stayed high.

Meanwhile, U.S. business activity fell to a three-month low in June and the contraction in the manufacturing sector deepened, though the overall picture indicated economic growth ticked up a notch in the second quarter.

"Again, (there was) another set of weak PMI data coming out of Europe," said Carol Kong, a currency strategist at Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA). "By contrast, PMI data in the UK and the U.S. continue to be pretty solid in the face of aggressive interest rate hikes."

S&P Retains India's Growth Projection at 6% for FY24

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - S&P Global Ratings retained India's GDP growth forecast at 6 per cent calling it the fastest growing economy among Asia Pacific nations. In its quarterly economic update for Asia-Pacific, S&P Global Ratings forecasted the same growth for Vietnam and the Philippines alongside India on Monday.

In its latest report, S&P has kept the GDP growth forecast for India unchanged for the current and the next fiscal, FY25 partly on account of domestic resilience.

"The medium-term growth outlook remains relatively solid. The Asian emerging market economies remain among the fastest growing ones in our global growth outlook through 2026," PTI quoted Louis Kuijs, Asia-Pacific chief economist at S&P Global Ratings.

While the agency expects RBI to cut interest rates only early next year, it has said that retail inflation is likely to soften to 5 per cent this fiscal from 6.7 per cent citing normal monsoon and softer crude prices as primary reasons.

However, India's retail inflation eased to a 2-year low of 4.25 per cent in May on an annual basis as against 4.70 per cent in April.

In the recent Monetary Policy Meet (MPC) which concluded on June 8, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) too, revised down the inflation forecast for FY24. The RBI had cut the inflation aim to 5.1 per cent from 5.2 per cent forecast in April policy.

The decision came amid recent dips in inflation readings, but the print is seen to remain above the 4 per cent target for this fiscal year while there are upside risks to food and commodity prices from potential supply cuts.

"The inflation and rate hike cycles have peaked, in our opinion. But we expect the Reserve Bank of India to cut rates only in early 2024, as it wants to see consumer inflation moving to 4 per cent--the centre of its target range," Kuijs said.

Earlier this month, Chief economic adviser (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran also said that India's economy will grow at 6.5% for the rest of the decade, with an occasional 7% growth in a year or so.

He said capital investment in the country will be higher in this financial year which will help India grow at 0.5 to one percentage point higher than that projected by various ratings agencies.

The World Bank had also predicted that India will remain the fastest-growing major economy in terms of both aggregate and per capita GDP despite the slowdown in growth, reason being "resilience in private consumption and investment, and robust growth in the services sector in India."

Asiana Airlines Inc will temporarily stop flights between Gimpo and Beijing from July 6, and suspend the Incheon to China's Shenzhen service starting July 8, the report said.

Asiana's flights between Incheon and Xian in China have been halted since June 20, Yonhap said.

All the flights are to resume on Oct. 28, Yonhap said. Relations between Seoul and Beijing have soured since the South Korean government denounced China for committing a "serious diplomatic discourtesy" after a Chinese official said recent comments by South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol on Taiwan amounted to verbal meddling, Yonhap reported. Ties between the two countries have never fully recovered after China opposed the US deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense anti-missile defense system about six years ago.

At Asia Energy Event, Officials Warn Against Sacrificing Growth for Transition



KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Hydrocarbons will be an important part of Asia's energy mix, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and industry executives said on Monday, as affordability and energy security remain key concerns for the region.

Achieving net-zero emissions targets should not come "at the expense of economic growth or vice versa", Anwar said at the inaugural Energy Asia conference, hosted by Malaysia's state oil firm Petronas.

"Instead, Asia must take every opportunity to further dialogue and actions around how we can responsibly plan to enable every country (in) its right to development and lower carbon aspirations," he said.

Asia is home to some of the world's largest greenhouse gas emitters and countries have made varying commitments to phasing out fossil fuels and accelerating energy transition, while also demanding adequate financial support from developed emitters.

Anwar said natural gas would play an important role in the energy mix for Malaysia, which is among the world's top five liquefied natural gas (LNG) exporters.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries expects global oil demand to rise to 110 million barrels per day by 2045 and account for 29% of energy supply as the world economy doubles, with the population reaching 9.5 billion, OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al Ghais told the conference.

Oil accounted for 30.9% of global energy in 2021. Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser said at the event that a complete energy transition for the \$100 trillion global economy in just a quarter of a century is a "fanciful" idea, as growth in renewable sources has not met the rise in energy consumption.

The energy equivalent cost of green hydrogen is in the range of \$200 to \$400 per barrel versus current oil price at \$75 a barrel, he said as he warned against putting all "transition eggs in the new energy basket". Nasser urged acceptance in Asia of a "multi-speed transition model" and financial support for developing countries.

Iran Short Film Freeloader Awarded in American Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian short film “Freeloader” by Elham Mohammadzadeh has been awarded at Student World Impact Film Festival (SWIFF) in the US.

Hamoon Seyyedi, Roshanak Khosravi, Sahar Nassaji Kashi, and Vahid Qazi Zahedi are among the cast of the short film.

Written and directed by Mohammadzadeh, the short piece narrates the story of a fake divorce.

The synopsis of the short film reads, “Leila and Reza get into trouble to get rid of financial problems and face a new challenge.”

Over 13,000 films from 120 states were sent to the secretariat of the latest edition of the SWIFF.



World Economy at Critical Juncture in Inflation Fight

LONDON (Dispatches) - The world's central bank umbrella body, the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), called for more interest rate hikes, warning the world economy was now at a crucial point as countries struggle to rein in inflation.

Despite the relentless rise in rates over the last 18 months, inflation in many top economies remains stubbornly high, while the jump in borrowing costs triggered the most serious banking collapses since the financial crisis 15 years ago.

“The global economy is at a critical juncture. Stern challenges must be addressed,” Agustin Carstens, BIS general manager, said in the organisation's annual report published on Sunday.

“The time to obsessively pursue short term growth is past. Monetary policy must now restore price stability. Fiscal policy must consolidate.”

Claudio Borio, the head of BIS's monetary and economics unit, added there was a risk an “inflationary psychology” was now setting in, although the bigger-than-expected rate hikes in Britain and Norway last week showed central banks were pushing “to get the job done” in terms of tackling the problem.

Their challenges are unique by post-World War Two standards though. It is the first time that, across much of the world, a surge in inflation has co-existed with widespread financial vulnerabilities.

The longer inflation remains elevated, the stronger and prolonged the required policy tightening, the BIS report said, warning that the possibility of further problems in the banking sector was now “material”.

If interest rates get to mid-1990s levels the overall debt service burden for top economies would, all else being equal, be the highest in history, Borio said.

“I think central banks will get inflation under control. That is their job – to restore price stability,” he told Reuters. “The question is what will the cost be.”

The Swiss-based BIS held its annual meeting in recent days, where top central bankers discussed the turbulent last few months.

March and April saw a failure of a number of U.S. regional banks including Silicon Valley Bank and then the emergency rescue of Credit Suisse in the BIS's own backyard.

Historically, about 15% of rate hike cycles trigger severe stress in the banking system, the BIS report showed, although the frequency rises considerably if interest rates are going up, inflation is surging or house prices have been rising sharply.

It can even be as high as 40% if the private debt-to-GDP ratio is in the top quartile of the historical distribution at the time of the first rate hike.

“Very high debt levels, a remarkable global inflation surge, and the strong pandemic-era increase in house prices check all these boxes,” the BIS said.

It estimated too that the cost of supporting aging populations will grow by approximately 4% and 5% of GDP in advanced (AEs) and emerging market economies (EMEs) respectively over the next 20 years.

Absent belt-tightening by governments, that would push debt above 200% and 150% of GDP by 2050 in AEs and EMEs and could be even higher if economic growth rates wane.



Part of the report published already last week also laid out a “game changing” blueprint for an evolved financial system where central bank digital currencies and tokenised banking assets speed up and smarten up transactions and global trade.

Commenting further on the economic picture, Carstens, former head of Mexico's central bank, said the emphasis was now on policymakers to act.

“Unrealistic expectations that have emerged since the Great Financial Crisis and COVID-19 pandemic about the degree and persistence of monetary and fiscal support need to be corrected,” he said.

The BIS thinks an economic “soft, or soft-ish” landing - where rates rise without triggering recessions or major banking crashes - is still possible, but accepts it is a difficult situation.

Analysts at Bank of America have calculated there have been a whopping 470 interest rate rises globally over the past 2 years compared with 1,202 cuts since the financial crash.

The U.S. Federal Reserve has lifted its rates 500 basis points from near zero, the European Central Bank has hiked the euro zone's by 400 bps and many developing world economies have done far more.

The question remains what more will be needed, especially with signs that companies are taking the opportunity to boost profits and workers are now demanding higher wages to prevent a further erosion of their living standards.

“The easy gains have now been reaped and the last mile is going to be more difficult,” Borio said, referring to challenges central bankers now face reeling inflation back to safe levels. “I wouldn't be surprised if there were more surprises”.

Haji Can Foil all Plots of...

FROM PAGE 1

My brothers and sisters who are performing the Hajj! Take advantage of the opportunity that Hajj provides to contemplate and ponder on the secrets and mysteries of this unparalleled obligatory action and make it a provision for the rest of your life. At this juncture in time and more than in the past, unity and spirituality are subject to the enmity and sabotage of the Arrogant Powers and Zionism. The US and other centers of Arrogance are strongly opposed to the unity of Muslims, to the understanding between nations, countries, and Islamic governments, and to the religiosity and commitment to religion of the younger generation in these nations. They are intensely opposed to these and they will fight these with any means they can. It is the duty of all of us, the duty of all nations, and the duty of our governments to stand against this evil scheme of the US and Zionist regime.

Ask the All-knowing, All-powerful God for help. Strengthen the spirit of “Disavowal of the Polytheists” in yourselves, and oblige yourself to spread and strengthen this spirit in the environment where you are living.

I ask Almighty God to grant all of you Iranian and non-Iranian pilgrims, success and an accepted and blessed Hajj, and I wish for all of you the accepted prayers of the great Vestige of Allah remaining on earth [Imam Mahdi (aj)] – may our souls be sacrificed for him.

May God's greetings and mercy be upon you

Seyyed Ali Khamenei

Protecting Mental Security of...

FROM PAGE 1

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed: In this regard if mistakes are made here, if there is a disturbance, the impact will be significant.

He went on to say that “fighting corruption both inside and outside the Judiciary is one of your duties” and said: An overwhelming majority of almost everyone in the judiciary are honorable people, whether judges or employees, with little means. With really little income, they are doing hard work. The honor of these loved ones should not be overlooked. There is also a small minority who abuse the situation; They distort the face of the Judiciary in the eyes of the people.

The Leader stated: This must be dealt with. All members and components of the Judiciary should take care to fight corruption.

Global Energy Report...

FROM PAGE 1

As of 2023, the EI has taken over publication of the Statistical Review of World Energy, a report that was published previously for more than 70 years by oil and gas supermajor bp.

The EI report confirms statements by Iranian government authorities in recent months suggesting that the country has managed to increase its production and exports of crude oil despite US sanctions that ban any international sales of the Iranian oil shipments.

Iran Sealing Deals With...

FROM PAGE 1

The agreement to officially restore diplomatic ties was signed at a ceremony on April 6 in Beijing.

The two countries are scheduled to resume direct flights, allow mutual visits by top officials, and foster security collaboration. The collective West has been set back by the China-sponsored peace.

Its “rules-based” world order hangs by a thread, while the US' dollar supremacy wanes.

The blow was hard for Netanyahu, who just a month prior to the Iran-Saudi deal said that “Israel” and Saudi Arabia were planning to join forces on the basis of a common goal of stopping Iran.

While the US failed to fulfill its security commitments towards Saudi Arabia, the country decided to maneuver into a position backed by Chinese guarantees of security.

Infostellar Awarded as a 2023 Technology Pioneer by The World Economic Forum



LONDON (Dispatches) - Infostellar has been selected from among hundreds of candidates as one of the World Economic Forum's “Technology Pioneers” for their StellarStation that enables GSaaS services to be shared among many ground station owners and satellite operators in a highly innovative and efficient manner.

The World Economic Forum's Technology Pioneers are early-stage companies that are at the forefront of new technologies and innovation and are poised to have a significant impact on business and society.

As a Technology Pioneer, Infostellar CEO Naomi Kurahara will be invited to engage with the World Economic Forum, working with global leaders to help address key industry and societal issues. Technology Pioneers will also be invited to join Forum events and discussions throughout the year, bringing together leading stakeholders from the public and private sector.

This year's Technology Pioneer cohort included startups from 31 economies, with a third led by a woman chief executive. China had the second highest representation with 12 Technology Pioneers, while the U.S. had 29 companies. “We're excited to welcome Infostellar to our 2023 cohort of Technology Pioneers. Infostellar and its fellow pioneers are at the forefront of innovation and disruption needed to help us solve the world's most pressing issues. We look forward to their contribution to the Forum's content work that brings together public and private sector to tackle these global issues.” — Verena Kuhn, Head of Innovator Communities at the World Economic Forum

“Infostellar's driving vision is to connect Earth and space to empower the future, and our core mission is to be the most effective enabler of space business by providing the best access to satellite services. We are quite pleased and honored to have been recognized by the Forum as a Technology Pioneer. It is a great honor to represent the Infostellar team in this incredibly important endeavor. Our team looks forward to working with the World Economic Forum and the Innovators Community to enable the conditions and policies that will democratize access to space by providing reliable, flexible, scalable and affordable access to space.” — Naomi Kurahara, CEO, Infostellar.

Why Chaos in Russia Could Spell Trouble for the Global Economy

NEW YORK (CNN) - Russia is exporting as much oil now as it did before its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It's just selling to different buyers.

After the pandemic and war in Ukraine, and the inflation shock that followed, the global economy is in a precarious state. The last thing it needs right now is another nasty surprise.

That's what it nearly got this weekend as disaffected Russian mercenaries marched toward Moscow, drawing a stark warning from President Vladimir Putin that the country was on the brink of a 1917-style “civil war.”

The armed insurrection has been defused — for now — but the most serious challenge to Putin's authority in 23 years could still usher in a period of turmoil and change.

“Putin has total chaos now,” Yale professor and Russia expert Jeffrey Sonnenfeld told CNN.

Russia has dropped out of the ranks of the top 10 economies in the world, with a gross domestic product roughly the size of Australia's, but it remains one of the biggest suppliers of energy to global markets — including China and India — despite Western sanctions imposed in the wake of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

On Saturday, a fellow global energy power, Qatar, expressed “great concern” about the situation in Russia.

“The escalation of the situation in Russia and Ukraine will have negative repercussions on international security and peace, as well as on food and energy supplies,” Qatar's foreign ministry said in response to news of the rebellion.

Any meaningful loss of Russian energy would force China and India to compete with Western nations for supplies from other producers. If political chaos restricts



exports of other commodities, such as grains or fertilizer, that could also send supply and demand out of whack. And that could push up prices for everyone.

Richard Bronze, head of geopolitics and co-founder at Energy Aspects, said markets would now need to figure out the extent to which prices should rise to reflect the greater risk to Russian supply, a view shared by other analysts.

“This seemingly attempted coup only brings uncertainty, which could be reflected through into higher prices,” Matt Smith, lead Americas oil analyst at Kpler said. “Such upheaval and uncertainty as we have seen in recent days could bring support to prices given the potential for supply disruptions — and the fear of them — that wasn't a consideration prior to the weekend.”

Global energy and food prices shot up in the wake of last year's invasion of Ukraine, turbocharging inflation in Europe and the United States. It has fallen from multi-decade highs since, but the battle to control prices is not over and is now in a decisive phase.

“The last leg of the journey to restore price stability will be the hardest,” the Bank for International Settlements — the bank for central banks — said in its annual report Sunday. There was a “material risk that an inflation psychology will take hold,” leading to what economists describe as a wage-price spiral, it said.

“The global economy is at a critical juncture. Stern challenges must be addressed,” general manager Agustin Carstens told the annual general meeting of the BIS in Basel.

Signs that global energy demand could weaken this year as economies slow have pushed US crude prices down by nearly 14% so far this year to just under \$70 a barrel. (It peaked above \$120 a year ago.) The international benchmark — Brent crude — is down by a similar margin.

Iran Exports to...

FROM PAGE 1

He went on to talk about an increase in the bilateral trade between Iran and the EEU and said that “After the conclusion of the preferential trade agreement with EEU in the first phase, fortunately, our country's exports to those countries grew by 28% in 1401 (March 21-2022-2023) compared to the year before and also 70% increase in the two first months of 1402 (March 21, 2023-2024) compared to the same period last year, with the largest growth in exports to Russia and then Armenia.”

U.S. Reacts to...

FROM PAGE 1

The National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) managing director said on Sunday that Iraq has settled all bills related to imports of natural gas from Iran.

A senior Iraqi foreign ministry official was cited by international media including Reuters on June 11th that Iraq had agreed to pay about \$2.76 billion in gas and electricity debt to Iran after receiving a sanctions waiver from the United States.

On June 10, Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce Chairman Yahya Al-e Es'haq said \$2.7 billion of Iran's assets frozen in Iraq due to US sanctions on Iran were released.

Iraqi Minister of Electricity Ziyad Ali Fadel has also said Baghdad has paid all its gas debt to Tehran.

Ineos Hail Crash Victim Bernal

PARIS (Dispatches) - Ineos Grenadiers hailed 2019 Tour de France winner Egan Bernal's "character and resilience" in battling back from a near-fatal road accident to make their team for this year's race announced.

Getting to the starting line-up in Bilbao on Saturday represents a significant achievement in itself for the Colombian who almost died in a training crash in January 2022.

The 26-year-old specialist climber suffered multiple broken bones when he hit a stationary bus at speed near Bogota.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com
ISSN 1024-6053
P.O. Box: 15875-8551
Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St.,
Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran
Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
printed by: Omid Nashr Chap Iranian
Distributed by:
Cities of Iran Cultural and
Artistic Institute
Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Bradley Claims Travellers Championship Title

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Keegan Bradley survived a spate of late bogeys to claim an emotional victory at the Travellers Championship, the PGA Tour event in Connecticut that the New Englander considers his home tournament.

Bradley led by six strokes after back-to-back birdies at the 11th and 12th and even three bogeys in the space of four holes — starting with a tee shot into the water at 13 — couldn't prevent him from lifting the trophy.

Murray Makes Retirement Confession as Brit Gears Up For Wimbledon

LONDON (Dispatches) - Andy Murray has revealed that he would call time on his professional tennis career in the event of another significant injury blow as he prepares to return to Wimbledon next week. The Scot has struggled to stay fit over the last few years due to an ongoing hip problem, which forced him to undergo two surgeries in 2018 and 2019 in a bid to correct the issue.

Murray has since managed to rebuild his career by getting himself back into the world's top 40, a feat he achieved by winning the Nottingham Open earlier this month after tasting success at Surbiton a week earlier. He will have high hopes of performing well at Wimbledon but remains wary that another major injury could force him to give up on his career for good if he is struck down again in the not-too-distant future.

When asked by Sky Sports if he will be making his last appearance at Wimbledon this year, Murray said: "I hope not, but you never know. It's why athletes need to make the most of it while they're still able to because if I was to have another big injury or if something happened to the metal hip that would be me finished."

"I wouldn't try to come back from another operation or major surgery again so I want to keep playing a bit longer. I know it's not going to be going on forever but I have an idea of when I would like to finish and it's not this year's Wimbledon."

Murray fell as low as 839th in the world rankings after undergoing his first hip surgery and it seemed as though his career at the highest level of the sport was done and dusted, but he has since proved his doubters wrong by returning to prominence over the last few months. However, it remains to be seen how he will fare on the biggest stage of all at Wimbledon, where he will be vociferously supported by the British fans in attendance for as long as he stays in the tournament.



The 36-year-old went on to explain that he is still unsure when he will decide to step away from professional tennis but underlined his desire to bow out on his own terms, rather than retiring prematurely because of another injury setback.

We use your sign-up to provide content in ways you've consented to and to improve our understanding of you. This may include adverts from us and 3rd parties based on our understanding. You can unsubscribe at any time.

Meanwhile, Murray will warm up for Wimbledon with a match against rising star Holger Rune at the Giorgio Armani Tennis Classic at Hurlingham on Wednesday.

I want to finish my career on the tennis court. It's something I have an idea about when it is I would like to stop and a plan for that - certainly nothing immediate.

The two-time former Wimbledon champion has opted for some extra match play following his first-round exit to Alex De Minaur at Queen's Club last week.

World number six Rune, 20, reached the semi-finals at Queen's before also losing to De Minaur and should provide strong opposition for Murray at the exhibition event.

Hurlingham frequently attracts the world's best players and will also host world number one Carlos Alcaraz, top British player Cameron Norrie and defending Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic.

Modric Extends Real Madrid Contract Until 2024

MADRID (Dispatches) - Veteran Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric will stay at the club for another season after renewing his deal until June 2024, the Spanish side said.

Modric, 37, remains a key player for Madrid and decided to stay despite strong interest from Saudi Arabia, looking to recruit him at the end of his previous contract, which expires this month.

The Croatian follows Toni Kroos, Dani Ceballos and Nacho Fernandez in extending his time at Madrid this summer.

"In his 11 seasons defending our shirt, he has played 488 games and won 23 trophies," said Real Madrid in a statement.

Modric has lifted the Champions League five times with Madrid since joining in 2012 from Tottenham, as well as La Liga on three occasions and two Copas del Rey.

Turning 38 in September, 2018 Ballon d'Or winner Modric faces stiff competition next season at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Madrid signed England international Jude Bellingham from Borussia Dortmund for over 100 million euros (\$109 million) earlier in June, while Kroos, Ceballos, Eduardo Camavinga, Aurelien Tchouameni and Fede Valverde are jostling for places.



Kipchoge Sets Sights on Olympic Marathon Treble

KAPTAGAT (Dispatches) - Two months on from his disappointing performance at the Boston marathon, Eliud Kipchoge tells AFP he is determined to keep on writing history -- and secure a third Olympic marathon crown next year.

The Kenyan widely regarded as the greatest marathon runner of all time has set himself many challenges in his dazzling career, and remains insatiable despite his two Olympic titles, his world record of 2:01:09 in Berlin in 2022 and an incredible 15 wins in 18 marathons he has entered.

He broke the mythical two-hour barrier over the 26.2 mile (42.195 kilometre) distance in Vienna in 2019, with a time of 1:59:40, but the feat was not recognised as an official world record as it was not in open competition.

Victory has eluded the 38-year-old in the Boston and New York marathons, which if he won would make him the first man to have all six major titles under his belt.

"The priority now is to focus on the Olympics and win a third time. The other (challenges) will come later," Kipchoge says in an interview with AFP at the renowned Kaptagat training camp in Kenya's Rift Valley.

His two Olympic marathon gold medals in 2016 and 2021 put him at level pegging with Ethiopia's Abebe Bikila (1960, 1964) and Waldemar Cierpinski of East Germany (1976, 1980).

A third gold at the Paris Olympics in 2024 would make Kipchoge the undisputed marathon giant at the Games, and bring him a victory steeped in symbolism.

The French capital was the city where he won his first international crown in 2003 at the age of 18, clinching the 5,000 metres world championship title ahead of sporting legends Hicham El Guerrouj of Morocco and Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele.

However, Kipchoge does not rule out giving up on his other goals.

"If time comes in to hang the racing shoes, I will say bye to other big things in sport."

Koulibaly Begins Chelsea Exodus to Saudi Pro League



LONDON (Dispatches) - Senegal captain Kalidou Koulibaly became the latest star name to head to Saudi Arabia as he joined Al-Hilal from Chelsea, the Premier League club confirmed.

Koulibaly joined the Blues just last year from Napoli for a reported £33 million (RM197.1 million).

However, the 32-year-old struggled in the Premier League as Chelsea finished 12th — their lowest league finish since 1994.

"Kalidou Koulibaly has left Chelsea after

completing a permanent transfer to Saudi Professional League side Al-Hilal," Chelsea said in a statement.

"We would like to thank Kalidou for his contributions on and off the pitch during his time at Stamford Bridge and wish him well for the next stage of his career."

Backed by the nation's sovereign wealth fund, the Saudi Pro League is luring big names from the major European leagues with the promise of huge salaries.

Cristiano Ronaldo's move to Al Nassr in January started the trend.

His former Real Madrid teammate Karim Benzema and French World Cup winner N'Golo Kante of Chelsea have recently joined Al-Ittihad.

Chelsea could be set to further profit from the Saudi investment.

Goalkeeper Edouard Mendy is reportedly close to joining Al Ahli, while Moroccan winger Hakim Ziyech is on the brink of a move to Al Nassr.

Barcelona Confirm Gundogan Signing From Man City

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Ilkay Gundogan has signed for Barcelona on a free transfer at the end of his Manchester City contract, the Catalan club said.

The German midfielder, 32, has agreed a two-year deal with the option for a year's extension and a release clause of €400 million.

"He is bringing his presence, nose for goal and reading of the game which has made him one of the best midfielders of the past decade," said Barcelona in a statement.

Gundogan has been an influential presence for Pep Guardiola's City side since joining in 2016, captaining the team to a stunning treble this season.

The midfielder netted twice in the FA Cup final win over rivals Manchester United and Guardiola admitted City were trying to renew his deal.

Manchester City are poised to seal the arrival of Mateo Kovacic from Chelsea to help replace Gundogan, who won five Premier League titles during his time at the club, as well as helping them earn their first ever Champions League win this season.

"This club made me realize all my dreams and I will forever be thankful for this opportunity," Gundogan told Manchester City's club website.

"I will carry City always in my heart. Once a blue, always a blue."

Gundogan was the first signing Guardiola made after arriving at City, joining for around £20 million.

He moved to City from Borussia Dortmund, where he won the Bundesliga and German Cup in 2012.

Gundogan scored 60 goals in 304 appearances for the club, winning 12 major trophies.



Djokovic Still Wimbledon Favorite

LONDON (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz believes he is capable of winning Wimbledon after claiming his first title on grass by beating Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-4 in the final at Queen's Club.

The Spaniard's fifth title of the season also takes him back to the top of the world rankings, but he said Novak Djokovic remains the favourite to win Wimbledon for an eighth time next month.

Alcaraz was playing on the grass for just the third tournament in his career and showed an impressive development through the week at Queen's after nearly falling to French lucky loser Arthur Rinderknech in the first round.

The US Open champion won his next four matches without dropping a set and is confident of going beyond the fourth round at Wimbledon for the first time.

"I have quite a lot of confidence heading into Wimbledon. I ended the week playing at a high level, so right now I feel one of the favourites to win Wimbledon, but I have to get more experience on grass," said Alcaraz.

"Novak is the main favourite to win Wimbledon, but I will try to play at this level to have chances to beat him or make the final."

"I saw a statistic that Novak has won more matches at Wimbledon than the other top 20 players (combined). What can you say about that you know? Novak is the main favourite to win Wimbledon. That's obvious."

"But I will try to play at this level, to have chances to beat him or make the final at Wimbledon." Djokovic has reigned supreme in SW19 since 2018. He has not lost on Centre Court in 10 years since losing to Andy Murray in the final.

