

Police Chief of Khorasan-e-Razavi Province Majid Shoca in a Statement Said Iran Had Deported Around 18,000 Illegal Afghan Migrants to Afghanistan Through

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Border Officials on Thursday Deported Another 48 Pakistani Immigrants Who Had Illegally Entered the Country and Were Handed Over to Pakistan's

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IMF Expects Major Drop In Iran Inflation in 2024

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects that the soaring inflation rates in Iran would fall significantly with an increase in demand for Iranian oil in major Asian economies and amid a gradual drop in consumer prices around the world.

Figures from an IMF report cited by Iran's official IRNA agency on Wednesday showed that the international lender expects Iran's inflation rate would drop to around 30% in 2024, down from 49% in 2022 and lower than a figure of 42% estimated for this year.

It said the IMF expects more than 76% of the world's economies would experience a gradual drop in their inflation rates in 2023 and in next year.

However, regional economies like Turkey would still face higher inflation rates compared to Iran in the two years to the end of 2024.

The IMF report projected that Iran's economy would continue to expand at a stable rate of 2% in 2023 and in 2024, half a percentage point lower than the growth figure reported for last year.

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Russia Could Use Iran as Part of INSTC to Export Grain

TEHRAN (MNA) - Russia could use the Iranian territory and its railroad and port infrastructure as part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) to export its grain and other products, an Iranian lawmaker says.

"With the INSTC and railroad networks of the Eurasian Economic Union as well as Iran's railroad running from its northern provinces to the southern port of Chahbahar ... one can be confident that this corridor can be a great route for shipments of Russian grain in future ... In future, Iran could be a corridor for transit of goods from Russia, including grain and many other products that are easier for transport through the south," Zabiollah Azami-Sardoui told Sputnik on Thursday.

He also said that such transit through Iran is much cheaper than any other route.

The INSTC is an international multi-mode network nearly 4,500 miles (7,200 kilometers) long, connecting Russia's St. Petersburg and India's Mumbai. The corridor is an alternative to the sea route connecting Europe, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean countries via the Suez Canal. There are three routes, namely, the Trans-Caspian using railroads and ports, Western and Eastern both using land routes.

Iran, Zimbabwe Ink Record 12 MoUs



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi wrapped up his three-nation African tour with a visit to Zimbabwe where the two sides signed 12 memorandums of understanding to strengthen bilateral ties.

Raisi, who visited Kenya and Uganda earlier in the week, met Thursday with Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa who urged nations targeted by Western sanctions to band together.

The two presidents signed "a record" 12 agreements on topics ranging from energy to telecommunications, Mnangagwa said. These will help Zimbabwe access innovation and technology from Iran and envisage the creation of a tractor factory to support agricultural mechanization, he added.

The two countries also signed cooperation agreements for energy, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and telecommunications as well as research, science and technology projects.

In a joint press conference with his Zimbabwean counterpart, Raisi said that Tehran is ready to boost cooperation with Harare in all fields including politics and economy.

He hailed efforts by Tehran and Harare to develop their relations, saying that the two nations share commonalities such as fighting colonialism.

The Iranian president said that Iran seeks to have interaction will all countries, not just Western states.

He also criticized certain countries, including the United States, for imposing sanctions on other nations.

Raisi noted that the Islamic Republic is opposed to sanctions and unilateralism, adding that sanctions are like a military tool that causes harm to nations.

He also touched on U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran and Zimbabwe, saying the Islamic Republic would work hard to forge closer economic ties.

"It is critically important that we, the victims of Western sanctions, are talking to each other... that we show them that we're united," Mnangagwa told a press briefing after talks with Raisi.

"I am happy you have come to show solidarity," Mnangagwa told President Raisi on arrival, calling him "my brother".

Hundreds of people waving Zimbabwean and Iranian flags had gathered at Robert Mugabe International Airport in Harare during the morning to greet President Raisi.

Meanwhile accompanying President Raisi during the chief executive's tour of Africa, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has described Iran's attitude towards the continent and the prospect of the Islamic Republic's cooperation with African states.

"Iran's view on Africa is quite different from that of neo-colonialism or its older version," the top Iranian diplomat said in exclusive remarks to Press TV in the Zimbabwean capital of Harare on Thursday.

"We seek to transfer technology to Africa and empower the continent," Amirabdollahian added.

Resistance's 2006 Victory Over Israel Defeated America's Mideast Project

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement says the resistance front managed to thwart America's so-called Greater Middle East project through its victory in the 2006 war on Lebanon waged by the Israeli regime.

Speaking at a televised address, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said the 2006 war was a key part of America's Greater Middle East project, which he said aimed to solidify Israeli dominance over the region under American influence. Nasrallah made the address on the 17th anniversary of the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon.

He said the victory of the resistance front in 2006 also foiled the so-called Greater Israel Project and put the regime on the decline.

Nasrallah said the 2006 war's goal was to crush the Lebanese resistance and to subjugate Lebanon, but such goals were never realized and Israelis and the Americans both admitted the failure of the war on Lebanon on several occasions.

He said the 2006 victory marked a defining moment in Lebanon's history, shaping its destiny in the region for the years to come, adding that the victory also laid the groundwork for putting up deterrence that continues to exist to this day and has led to the erosion of Israeli deterrence.

Commenting on the recent desecration of a copy of the Holy Quran in Sweden, the Hezbollah leader said the act of sacrilege was committed with the goal of "sowing division between Muslims and Christians."

The perpetrator of the heinous act of profanity "is in liaison with [the Israeli spy agency] Mossad and sought to create division between" the people of the two faiths, Nasrallah stated.

The Christian clergy, however, stepped in and condemned the sacrilege, thus contributing much towards the prevention of sedition, he noted.

The Hezbollah chief, meanwhile, called on the people of the region to demand their respective governments to adopt more decisive stances on the issue of the desecration of the Muslim holy book.

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Tehran Rejects Baseless NATO Claim of Supplying Drones to Russia

TEHRAN (Dispatches)- Iran has categorically rejected the allegations it is providing drones to Russia, raised this time by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), urging member states of the military alliance to refrain from leveling such accusations.

Iran's embassy in Brussels said in a statement on Thursday that Tehran maintains a neutral position in the Ukrainian conflict and remains fully committed to the principles of the UN Charter and international law, which includes respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries.

It came a day after NATO urged Tehran to stop its alleged military support to Russia, including the supply of drones to be used in the war against Ukraine.

The embassy said the "baseless" accusations are motivated by "short-sighted gains."

The statement also noted that Iran has suffered great losses due to the actions of some NATO members who have actively fueled unrest in the country by offering refuge and support to terrorist elements and organizations, disregarding Iran's adherence to international legal principles.

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Minister Calls on ECO Members to Bolster Communications

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Communications and Information Technology Issa Zarepour has emphasized the need for utmost collaborations among the member states of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in the field of communications and information technology.

Zarepour made the remarks in the opening ceremony of the third meeting of the communications ministers of the ECO member countries on Thursday.

Pointing to the situation of the ECO member states, he noted that they achieve significant developments in the field of communications and information technology at the international level and that they can make utmost usage of state-of-the-art technologies to improve welfare.

Iran attaches importance to the Economic Cooperation Organization, he said, noting that the Islamic Republic made efforts in past years to utilize its capabilities to boost cooperation with the ECO member states.

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Pakistanis Call for Building Strong Energy Links With Iran

LAHORE (Dispatches) - A seminar was conducted by the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore on the theme of "Pakistan's Foreign Policy Choices in the Evolving Global Order". The seminar featured a keynote address by Ambassador (Retd) Javid Husain who underscored the need for a pragmatic approach in Pakistan's foreign policy towards the great powers, regional countries, and especially the neighboring states.

Ambassador (Retd) Naghmana Hashmi dwelt in detail on how to further deepen Pakistan's strategic ties with China. Ambassador (Retd) Riffat Masood in a video message, reflected on policy options vis a vis India and Pakistan's representative on Afghanistan, Ambassador (Retd) Asif Durrani emphasized the utmost importance of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan.

The statements of the guest speakers were followed by an extensive question-and-answer session. Earlier, in the beginning, Ambassador (Retd) Muhammad Haroon Shaukat, Director, Foreign Affairs CASS, made an introductory statement. President, CASS, Lahore, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd) made the concluding remarks while summing up the recommendations.

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Enemies Target Chastity, Hijab of Iranian, Muslim Women

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian Parliament Speaker said that the enemies have targeted the chastity and hijab of Iranian and Muslim women.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf in a statement issued on the occasion of the Hijab and Chastity Day in Iran (July 12) considered hijab and chastity as one of the most important Islamic and Iranian values.

Stating that the enemies of Iran and Islam plan to polarize society on this matter and undermine social solidarity, Qalibaf added, "We have a greater responsibility than in the past to commemorate this religious obligation."

Many Iranians across the country gathered in their cities to commemorate Hijab and Chastity Day in Iran on Wednesday.

Iran Ready To Share Experiences With Uganda

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi lauded the start of work of Iran's Innovation and Technology Office in Uganda and the very good capacities of the Islamic Republic, especially in the fields of medicine, science and technology, and agriculture.

The Iranian president pointed to Iran's readiness to share its experiences in different fields and in the form of broadening trade cooperation and emphasized economic with Uganda.

He pointed to the commonalities between Iran and Uganda as the anti-colonial nature of the Islamic Revolution and the freedom-loving and independence-loving movement of Uganda, and said that western countries attacked are based on the family, promoting the ugly phenomenon of homosexuality, the spread of extremism and terrorism, and the use of human rights as a tool, they put pressure on independent countries.

"In this regard, the expansion of cultural interactions and cooperation between Iran and Uganda will be very fruitful in confronting the plan of the enemies of the two nations," he added.

He hailed Iran's Innovation and Technology Office in Uganda and the very good capacities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially in the fields of medicine, science and technology, and agriculture, and voiced Iran's readiness to share its experiences in these fields and in the form of developing commercial and economic cooperation with Uganda.

Raisi also welcomed the Ugandan president's proposal about using Iran's experiences to process and create added value in the energy sector and emphasized Iran's readiness in this field.

President Yoweri Museveni, while expressing his satisfaction with the visit of the Islamic President of Iran, emphasized his country's interest in promoting economic cooperation with Iran in various fields.

Meanwhile high-ranking officials of Iran and Uganda have inked four cooperation agreements in the presence of President Raisi and his Ugandan counterpart President Museveni in a ceremony in the Uganda's capital Kampala.



The signing ceremony of agreements came on Wednesday during President Raisi's state visit to Uganda while senior officials of the two countries put their signatures on the documents.

The four documents signed covered visa waiver, agricultural cooperation, the formation of a joint permanent intergovernmental commission, and a joint political statement.

At a joint press conference with his Ugandan president after their meeting, President Raisi stressed the importance of avoiding exports of raw materials to the West, as desired by the imperialist countries.

"Imperialism and the West prefer countries to export oil and raw materials, allowing them to convert these resources into value-added products. Therefore, our efforts in Iran are focused on preventing raw material exports."

The Iranian president further called for expanding and strengthening relations with African countries in various fields, especially with Uganda.

In response, President Museveni expressed the need to learn from Iran's valuable experiences in countering the Western hegemony.

He shared an example of Uganda's recent oil and gas discoveries, where initially experts advised against building refineries due to perceived lack of profitability. However, upon visiting Iran, he realized Uganda needed to establish its own refineries, as Iran and other countries have done.

It is the first time in 11 years that an Iranian president is paying a visit to Africa.

Terrorist Arrested in Sistan And Balouchestan Province

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian security forces arrest a member of the so-called Jaish al-Adl terrorist group before carrying out a terror attack.

The terrorist was identified and arrested by the operatives of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' intelligence in Sistan and Balouchestan Province.

Jaish al-Adl is the same terror group that carried out a deadly attack in the provincial city of Zahedan several days ago.

The attack on a police station killed two security forces. All four attackers were also killed in the incident that was claimed by the group.

Jaish al-Adl is responsible for a series of terrorist attacks in Iran that killed a number of people.

The deadliest attack happened in 2016 and targeted a bus carrying Iranian soldiers in Sistan and Balouchestan Province, killing 27.

The terror entity openly says it is a separatist group and seeks to cede Sistan and Balouchestan from Iran.

UAE Releases

15 Iranians From Prison

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says 15 Iranian prisoners, who had been pardoned by United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, will soon return home.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said the release followed last month's visit by Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian to the UAE, where he held consultations with high-ranking Emirati officials.

The ministry also emphasized that it will seriously continue its consular and judicial support for the Iranians abroad and pursue the fulfillment of their rights, including the prisoners.

On June 22, Amirabdollahian visited the UAE, where he discussed bilateral relations and ways to enhance cooperation in separate meetings with Emirati President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The trip followed stops in Qatar, Kuwait and Oman amid a flurry of diplomatic moves by the Islamic Republic to improve ties with neighbors and secure the region.

Recently, 11 Iranians were released from Kuwaiti jails and seven more from Qatari prisons.

Iran Summons Italian Ambassador

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Ministry of Foreign Affairs has summoned Italy's Ambassador to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone to protest a meeting between members of Italian parliament and an anti-Iran terrorist.

Director General of Western Europe Majid Nili Ahmadabadi emphasized Italy's international obligations in the fight against terrorism, noting that meeting of several Italian legislators with a terrorist is a clear example of promoting terrorism; so, the Islamic Republic does not tolerate it in any shape by anyone and categorically censures it.

Undoubtedly, the Islamic Republic urges the Italian government to show its seriousness in preventing the country turning into a safe haven for terrorists.

Support for terrorism will not guarantee Italy's interests in benefiting from constructive ties with Iran, and such a move will extremely tarnish the state's image in the eyes of public opinion.

The Italian ambassador replied that he will inform his country's capital of the issue as soon as possible.

Russia's Stance on Iran Three Islands "Naïve"

TEHRAN (IP) - A senior advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution has said it was naïve of Russia to fall into the trap of the PGCC regarding the three islands of the Lesser Tunb, the Greater Tunb, and Bu Mousa, which are an integral part of Iran.

Ali Akbar Velayati, Senior Advisor to Ayatullah Khamenei, leader of the Islamic Revolution, was referring to the joint statement of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council member states and Russia in support of the United Arab Emirates' claim to the islands.

Addressing Russia, Velayati said, "Don't be naïve".

He further cited the historical records that confirm Iran's sovereignty over the islands, saying the Russians fell into the same trap that the Chinese did several months ago.

Velayati noted that the Russians think they will have profitable economic ties with the Emiratis if they support such irrelevant claims.

He said the Russians just do not have a deep understanding of the regional countries.

Russian Ambassador to Tehran Alexey Dedov was summoned to Iran's foreign ministry on Wednesday following Russia-PGCC's joint statement over Iran's trio islands in the Persian Gulf.

People Should Know Deadly Effects of Using WMD

TEHRAN (IP) - The chargé d'Affaires of the Japanese embassy to Iran said that the world should get informed about the destructive effects of using weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Kenjo Murakami, Chargé d'Affaires of the Japanese Embassy to Iran, attended the conference on Sardasht victims of the chemical bombing on Wednesday.

Iraqi army of the Baath regime dropped mustard gas bombs on Sardasht, West Azerbaijan, Iran. In two separate bombing runs on four residential neighborhoods, the attack killed 130 people and injured 8,000. The gas attacks occurred during the Iran-Iraq War when Iraq frequently used chemical weapons against Iranian civilians and soldiers.

Murakami added that using chemical weapons, such as nuclear weapons, is against international law.

According to Murakami, Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) should not be used, and the Japanese government is trying to spread lasting peace in the world.

Japanese people, attacked by nuclear weapons, are familiar with the sufferings of weapons of mass destruction.



On 6 and 9 August 1945, the United States detonated two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively. The aerial bombings together killed between 129,000 and 226,000 people, most of whom were civilians, and remain the only use of nuclear weapons in an armed conflict. Japan surrendered to the Allies on 15 August, six days after the bombing of Nagasaki and the Soviet Union's declaration of war against Japan and the invasion of Japanese-occupied Manchuria. The Japanese government signed the instrument of surrender on

2 September, effectively ending the war.

The conference awarded the Sardasht honorary citizen badge to the Japanese Chargé d'Affaires to Iran.

Saddam's army used chemical weapons On June 28, 1987, and bombed four densely populated areas of Sardasht city in West Azarbaijan province, northwestern Iran.

People in these areas (Sardasht) were exposed to toxic gases and suffered chemical injuries.

Sardasht City, with a population of 120,000, is located in the south of West Azarbaijan, northwest of Iran, on the adjacent borders with Iraq.

The city with 856 martyrs and more than 4,000 disabled veterans has been called one of the cities, being the victim of using weapons of mass destruction.

Iran Progress Despite Embargo Eye-Catching



ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - President of Pakistan Arif Alvi has underscored that the development of Iran despite sanctions is eye-catching and source of happiness.

The Pakistani President made the remarks in a ceremony of receiving the credentials of the new Iranian Ambassador to Islamabad Reza Amiri Moghadam on Thursday, emphasizing the great importance of relations between the two neighboring countries.

The new ambassador met with President Alvi at the Presidential Palace in Islamabad and presented his credentials to the Pakistani chief executive.

The ambassador emphasized that Iran attaches special importance to expansion of all-out collaborations with Pakistan.

Amiri Moghadam also pointed to the latest bilateral relations and his plans for expanding ties between Tehran and Islamabad, particularly the improvement of economic and trade cooperation.

The envoy conveyed warm and sincere greetings of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to his Pakistani counterpart, adding that interaction with friendly and Muslim nations, especially with neighboring states such as Pakistan, is a priority in Iran's foreign policy.



Esfahan steel company

Brief Notice of International Two-Stage Enquiry No 145792



Esfahan steel company

It is hereby notified that Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) intends to purchase **780 ton Graphite Electrode with Nipple** as per the required conditions and technical specifications through two-stage international Enquiry. Accordingly, all the prospective bidders are kindly requested to visit ESCO's website www.esfahansteel.ir so as to obtain the tender document no later than **22.07.2023**

and upload their techno-commercial offer to ESCO's website (through Sourcing Field) max. up to **22.07.2023 at 23:00 p.m**

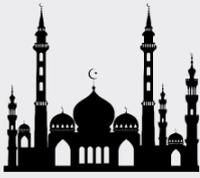
It is evident that this letter is only for notification purpose

Yours Respectfully

S.J.Rafiei

Refractory Materials Purchasing Management

Esfahan Steel Company



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:41
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:18
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:00

115. If anyone contends with the Messenger even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that becoming to men of Faith, We shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell, - what an evil refuge!

116. Allah forgiveth not (The sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with Allah, Hath strayed far, far away (from the right).

Surah 4. Women (115 - 116)

Call for Taking Steps for Broadening Trade Between Iran and Ivory Coast

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Hossein Salahvarzi in meeting with Ambassador of Ivory Coast to Tehran Mr. Ouattara Tamakolo called for taking executive steps for broadening trade between Iran and Ivory Coast.

Both sides in the meeting explored ways for increasing the level of trade cooperation between the two countries.

In the meeting Tamakolo for his part felicitated Salahvarzi for being elected as the head of the ICCIMA and expressed hope during the leadership of Salahvarzi in the chamber the cooperation between the chambers of commerce of both countries would enhance and it helps increase in the level of bilateral trade because Iran and Ivory Coast have a large number of capacities for cooperation but the level of trade cooperation between the two countries do not match these capacities.

He then pointed to his visits to the provinces of Iran and talked with governors and heads of chambers of commerce of the provinces to get acquainted with the trade capacities of the provinces and in return presenting economic potentials of Ivory Coast. He further said that although the launch of the trade office of Iran in city of Abidjan and grant of credit line to businessmen of both states were of the positive actions for enhancing the level of bilateral cooperation, there are still serious problems to this end.

Tamakolo further said that lack of shipping lines from Bandar Abbas to Abidjan and direct flights between the two countries has led to the decline in the trade exchange between Iran and Ivory Coast.

He said that Ivory Coast economy is agriculture-centered and this country in the field of producing cocoa and cotton and it is among the top countries in those fields, adding that until 2011, exhibition on Iranian products was held in Ivory Coast and reiterated that he wants Iran to resume holding of such an exhibition with diverse products. He noted that in October 2024 a specialized exhibition on Iranian products will be held in Ivory Coast, adding that by the way this October an international exhibition on agriculture will be held in his country and invited Iranian activists in agro sector to take part in this event.

Tamakolo then pointed to the strategic location of Ivory Coast along with 8 other countries with political and economic stability has a joint currency and in covers 82m people. He noted that Iranian businessmen can via Ivory Coast to have access to this big market and currently Iranian products enter Ivory Coast market via the third party country like Turkey and the question is why these products should not directly enter the market by Iranian companies.

Then Salahvarzi, for his point, pointed to the transport and banking obstacles in way of trade between Iran and Ivory Coast and emphasized that both countries should very fast take executive steps for more mobility in the bilateral trade like activities in the field of exporting technical and engineering services.

He also welcomed efforts of Tamakolo for getting acquainted with the capacities of provinces, adding that the chamber and government have a new round of activities on the agenda to broaden ties with Africa and especially Ivory Coast and consider it important.

Salahvarzi emphasized that despite some problems like transport and banking exchanges, both countries should very fast take executive steps for more mobility in bilateral trade. He added that both countries can cooperate in the field of technical and engineering services and construction of the infrastructures like road construction,



housing, developing power plant, refinery and launch of gas stations. He stated that both countries can also have good cooperation in the field of medicine production, medical equipment, petrochemical products and food products packing.

He then said that the chamber will encourage Iranian companies to have active presence in the 2023 and 2024 exhibitions in Ivory Coast and will support them financially. He also pointed to the efforts of the ICCIMA for holding a joint video conference with chamber of commerce of Ivory Coast for presenting capacities of both countries and exchange of primary information between the private sectors of both countries and said he invites head of chamber of commerce of Ivory Coast and his trade delegation to visit Tehran and the ICCIMA is also interested in sending a trade delegation to Ivory Coast.

Turkish Private Sector Keen to Continue Cooperation With ICCIMA

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN President of Union of Chambers and Commodities Exchanges of Turkey (UCCET) Mr. Rifat Hisarciklioglu in a message felicitated Hossein Salahvarzi for being elected as the Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and reiterated the private sector of Turkey is interested in continuing cooperation with the ICCIMA.



Hisarciklioglu in his message emphasized that UCCET as an organization at the head of the private sector and representative of the trade community of Turkey has always been eager to increase trade and economic cooperation between Iran and Turkey.

He added that he has no doubt that the close cooperation of UCCET and the ICCIMA will continue in all fields.

Iran Now an Exporter of Furniture



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (TCCIMA) says Iran once an importer of furniture has now turned into a furniture exporting country.

On Wednesday, Head of TCCIMA Mr. Mahmoud Najafi Arab inaugurated the 32nd International Specialized Export Exhibition of Furniture Industry at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground in presence of activists of this industry.

In this 4-day event over 250 production units of Iran's furniture industry have participated where they have put on display their products.

In the opening ceremony, Head of TCCIMA Mr. Najafi Arab pointed to the place of furniture industry in the national job creation based on the statistics noting that furniture industry accounts for almost 10% of occupation in the country and emphasized easing business and activities in this industry and reminded that furniture production of the

country has this capacity to have a lion share of Iran's non-oil exports.

He urged the related bodies to support this industry in order that furniture producers to have colorful presence in the export markets. He added that Iran once furniture importer has now become an exporting country.

Meanwhile on sidelines of opening ceremony head of furniture producers and exporters association Mr. Hassan Ahmadian pointed to the exports of home and office furniture of Iran and said it can earn over \$500m per year, reiterating that two decades ago Iran used to import annually some \$400m of furniture and this is almost being zeroed and Iran's production and industrial unit in this industry just needs to provide some part of their raw materials and import it and this industry has earned some \$80m of forex for the country through the exports.

He reiterated that if the condition is facilitated for this business in the country, Iran can export furniture to countries like Iraq, the UAE, Qatar, Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as the Central Asian states.

Iran, Iraq Ministers of Communications Hold Talks

TEHRAN (MNA) – Minister of Information and Communications Technology Issa Zarepour held talks with the Iraqi Minister of Communications, Hiyam Al-Yasri.

The meeting between Iranian and Iraqi ministers took place on the sidelines of a third meeting of telecommunication ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Tehran.

Both sides called for further strengthening cooperation in the field of telecommunication.

The two countries also exchanged views on facilitating communication for the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

The ECO currently has 10 members, namely Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Its stated goal is to provide a platform to discuss ways to improve development and promote trade and investment opportunities in the region.

Iran, Pakistan Sign MoU to Expand ICT Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Minister of Information and Communications Technology of Iran and Pakistan Minister of State and Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Information Technology and Telecommunication have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to expand cooperation in the field of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).



Issa Zarepour met and held talks with Sadiq Iftikhar on the sideline of the third meeting of telecommunication ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Tehran, Iran on Wednesday.

At the end of the meeting, the two sides signed a MoU to bolster ties in the fields of space, infrastructure, platforms and messengers, data transit, post and financial post, education and innovation, regulation, and information technology.

A third meeting of telecommunication ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) kicked off on Wednesday morning to find ways to expand bilateral and multilateral cooperation on communications issues between ECO member countries, among other objectives.

Founded as the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in 1964 by Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, the forum was renamed the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1985. The organization currently has 10 members; namely, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Its stated goal is to provide a platform to discuss ways to improve development and promote trade and investment opportunities in the region.

IRISL Resumes Service To Misrata Free Zone Port

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL) Group resumes service to Misrata Free Zone port – contributing to increased transit shipping and trade

The Director of the Media Office of the Misrata Free Zone (MFZ), Alaeddin Baba, confirmed in an exclusive statement to Libya Herald that the Iranian shipping line IRISL has resumed its service to the MFZ through its local shipping agent, the Germa Shipping Agencies Company.

Baba stated that the free zone inaugurated the operation of this line in a ceremony held yesterday, at the MFZ port, in the presence of the MFZ Chairman and MFZ General Manager, the Chairman of the Libyan Ports Company, the Chairman of Germa Agency, and the representative of the Iranian shipping line.

Baba pointed out the arrival of the first voyage of the IRISL to the MFZ port, to contribute to increasing navigation traffic, maritime transit and transit trade from Libya to the Mediterranean countries and sub-Saharan African countries, in order to achieve the strategy of making the MFZ an international commercial center for transit shipping and transit trade.

90% Recession in Home Appliances Market

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of the Iranian Home Appliances Trade Union Mr. Akbar Pazouki says recession has dominated the home appliances market admitting that the home-made products are unable to compete with their foreign rivals in terms of price.

Speaking to ILNA, Pazouki said that purchasers expect with the strength of national currency against dollar the price of the goods to decrease at the same level but the rules of the market is different and for decrease in the price of a product we need different factors simultaneously happen.

He went on to say that currently home appliances market in the country is struggling with 90% recession, adding that purchasing power of the people has declined and purchasers expect the prices of the products to slow down with the national currency gaining strength against dollar but it does not happen in the market because several factors are needed to happen for the decrease in the price of the products.

Pazouki reiterated that people are waiting the prices of the products to be determined, adding that removal of the sanctions is just at the early stage and for seeing its positive impacts they need at least one year. He added that although the price of dollar has declined in the market and people expect the price of the products to decrease but producers have purchased their raw materials with the then price of dollar and therefore they cannot decrease the price of their products.

Touching upon the possibility of exporting home appliances to Saudi Arabia, he said that the industry can pin hopes on the growth of export that the price and quality of the products can compete with their international rivals.

He added that currently Iranian products have no problem in terms of quality but some factors like the forex rate and raw materials deprive Iranian producers of being able to compete with their rivals in the neighboring countries. Pazouki said that Iran is able to produce some luxurious products and it is currently continuing their production. He reiterated that rise in the cost of productions like salary and rent as well as the taxes have caused price hike in the products and their sales, admitting that because of the prices and people's losing their purchasing power, this industry is seriously in the recession mode and it is challenging with 90% recession.



UN Court Rejects Nicaragua Claims In Colombia Sea Row

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) - The UN's top court dismissed Nicaragua's claims against Colombia in a decades-long Latin American legal battle over an oil and fish-rich swathe of the Caribbean Sea.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) said it "rejects" Nicaragua's arguments against an earlier 2012 ruling that gave it a large chunk of the Caribbean, while awarding seven small islands to Colombia.

Nicaragua, in Central America, went back to the Hague-based ICJ in 2013 to argue that its territory should extend beyond the 200 nautical miles (230 miles, 370 kilometres) from its coastline that is customary under international law.



Russian General in Ukraine Removed for Strategy Criticism

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's military leadership has reportedly dismissed Major-General Ivan Popov, commander-in-chief of Russia's 58th Combined Arms Army stationed in southern Ukraine, over his concerns for troops fighting without rest and criticism of Russian battlefield strategy.

Popov addressed soldiers in a voice message that was circulated on the Telegram messaging app on Wednesday, saying he had been relieved of his post for criticising Russia's military inefficiencies in Ukraine. "I drew attention to the greatest tragedy of modern war - the lack of artillery reconnaissance and counterstrikes and the multiple deaths and injuries caused by enemy artillery," Popov said, according to the message circulated on the Telegram channel of Duma legislator Andrei Gurulyov.



Hundreds Arrested Following Kenya Protests



NAIROBI (Dispatches) - Kenya's interior ministry said more than 300 people including a lawmaker had been arrested following violent anti-government protests that left nine dead.

There were violent clashes and looting on Wednesday in parts of the East African nation as protesters took to the streets over tax hikes and economic pressures in defiance of a government ban.

Police have been accused of a heavy-handed response and criticized for using tear gas against civilians, including at a school where dozens of children were hospitalized.

Opposition leader Raila Odinga, who called the protests, has vowed to keep up the street action until cost of living pressures come down.

But the interior ministry said that "acts of lawlessness... can neither be accepted nor tolerated".

"There is no relationship between lowering the cost of living and destruction of critical infrastructure built using public funds. That is hooliganism, lawlessness, and a recipe for anarchy," Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki said.

"Security officers are directed to enforce the law firmly and decisively and deal with all criminals, including economic saboteurs, looters, and vandals, who are destroying private and public property."

He said 312 people "who directly or indirectly planned, orchestrated, or financed" the protests had been arrested and would be charged, including a member of parliament.

"The search for more culprits is on," he added.

The unrest has claimed nine lives, according to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), an independent watchdog created by parliament, which said the figures were shared by the police.

The rights body on Thursday called for an investigation into reports of looting, vandalism and incidents of police brutality, warning the country was "teetering on the brink of anarchy".

"It is essential for leaders across the political spectrum to prioritise the interests of the nation and its citizens over partisan interests," it said, urging the two sides to find a solution.

One man died in clashes between rival groups in Sondu on the border of Kericho and Kisumu, the latter an Odinga stronghold.

"One person succumbed to injuries at the hospital," Kericho police commander Geoffrey Mayek told AFP.

Six people lost their lives when police opened fire on demonstrators in the towns of Mlolongo and Kitemanga on Nairobi's outskirts, and in Emali along the highway to Mombasa.

Two others were killed in Migori and Busia in western Kenya, KNCHR said.

In Nairobi's Kangemi slum, dozens of children were hospitalised, some unconscious, after teargas was fired near their classrooms.

The National Gender and Equality Commission, a state authority, strongly condemned the incident.

"School children... who should be shielded from such chaos, were tragically caught in the crossfire," it said, deploring the vandalism and rights abuses linked to the protests.

Odinga initiated a string of anti-government rallies this year after losing to William Ruto in presidential elections last August -- a vote he claims was "stolen".

Last week, protests in several cities also saw six people killed.

Already hit by soaring inflation, many Kenyans say the country can ill afford the disruption caused by the demonstrations. Each day of protest costs the economy an average of three billion shillings (\$21.8 million), according to an estimate by the Kenya Private Sector Alliance.

Spain Poll Outcome Risks Raising Catalan Separatist Tensions

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Spain's right, in power during Catalonia's failed 2017 secession bid, is trying to regain ground in the vote-rich region ahead of this month's early general election with a more conciliatory tone.

But a return to power for the conservative Popular Party (PP), which is leading in the polls, risks reigniting separatist tensions -- especially if the party needs the support of far-right Vox to govern.

PP leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo has visited Catalonia multiple times before the July 23 vote and has vowed to be the head of government of "all Catalans".

The northeastern region, one of Spain's richest whose capital is Barcelona, accounts for 48 seats in the country's 350-seat parliament.

The PP, which adopted a hard line against Catalonia's separatist push, held only two of these 48 seats in the outgoing assembly and has room to grow in the region.

Feijoo vowed during an interview published in daily newspaper El Mundo on July 2 that if he becomes prime minister, he will tell the separatists still in power in Catalonia that he is "available to talk".

The tone contrasts with that of former PP prime minister Mariano Rajoy who was in power in 2017 when the Catalan government pushed ahead with a banned independence referendum, and then issued a short-lived independence declaration.

Rajoy responded by abolishing Catalan autonomy, while the region's leaders either fled abroad or were arrested and later sentenced to lengthy jail terms.

It was one of Spain's worst political crises since the country returned to democracy following the death of longtime dictator Francisco Franco in 1975.

Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who came to power less than a year later, has repeated on the campaign trail that he "quelled the conflict" by taking "risky decisions". His government in 2021 pardoned the jailed Catalan separatists behind the failed independence bid, a concession seen as unacceptable by the right which sees itself as the defender of Spanish unity.

"Feijoo learned the lessons of the management of the conflict by Mariano Rajoy," said Ana Sofia Cardenal, a politics professor at the Open University of Catalonia. "He will try to calm spirits down with words" even if he will not significantly change the PP's policy on Catalan separatism, she added.

Feijoo has vowed to pass a law if he comes to power to punish the staging of an independence referendum and to re-establish the crime of sedition which was used to sentence the Catalan leaders.

Sanchez's government removed the crime of sedition from the penal code as an olive branch to the Catalans after the disputed referendum.



Germany Bolsters Approach to More Assertive China

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany adopted a tougher strategy toward a more "assertive" China, its top trade partner, in a move Beijing warned could "damage cooperation and mutual trust".

Seeking a balance between competing interests of the EU's biggest economy, the document overhauls Germany's stance toward China as a "partner, competitor and systemic rival".

"We want to reduce critical dependencies in future," Chancellor Olaf Scholz tweeted, saying Berlin had "reacted to a China that has changed and become more assertive".

The 64-page blueprint, which the government said was embedded in the European Union's approach to China, showed the government was "realistic but not naive", Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said.

The document is the product of months of wrangling within the German government over its strategy toward China. While Baerbock of the Greens has pushed for a more hawkish line and a greater emphasis on human rights, Scholz, a Social Democrat, has backed a more trade-friendly stance he calls "de-risking but not decoupling".

The new China policy marks a finely calibrated balance of the two within the ruling coalition, the product of what Baerbock called "finding compromises... the lifeblood of democracies".

However it drew a strong reaction from Beijing, which said "viewing China as a 'systemic competitor and rival' is not in line with the objective facts, nor with the common interests of the two countries".

A statement from the embassy in Berlin cautioned that "an ideological view of China... will only intensify misunderstandings and misjudgments, and damage cooperation and mutual trust".

The German paper noted that "whereas China's dependencies on Europe are constantly declining, Germany's dependencies on China have taken on greater significance in recent years". The government said it did not intend "to impede China's economic progress and development".

"At the same time, de-risking is urgently needed," it said.

"I don't think NATO has ever been stronger," he told reporters at the palace, adding later that this week's summit was a reminder of member nations' common values and challenges. "The vision for the world that we all share ... is one that's more free, more secure," he said, adding opportunities should be open to all.

"Because we know that when other countries do well, particularly those countries that are struggling, we all do better."

Niinisto said Finland's NATO membership heralded "a new era in our security", and applauded Biden for "creating unity" at the Vilnius summit which focused on uniting behind Ukraine.

Biden and the Nordic leaders said in a statement following the talks that they would continue to support Ukraine for as long as necessary.

Biden also welcomed Sweden's prospective entry to NATO. Sweden had applied to join NATO alongside Finland, but its bid was held up by Turkey, which says Sweden is doing too little against people Ankara sees as terrorists. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan dropped objections to its application this week.

Biden Welcomes Finland to NATO, Meets With Nordic Leaders

HELSINKI (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden welcomed Finland to NATO and recalled the military alliance's common values, while visiting the bloc's newest member that shares a border with Russia.

Biden travelled to Helsinki to participate in a summit with the leaders of Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Norway. He came directly from this week's NATO summit held in Vilnius, Lithuania, where he said Russia's invasion of Ukraine had only made the alliance stronger.

Finland's decision to join NATO broke with seven decades of military non-alignment and roughly doubled the length of the border NATO shares with Russia.

The country repelled an attempted Soviet invasion during World War Two but lost territory. It maintained accommodating relations with Russia until Putin's Ukraine invasion.

Ahead of a bilateral meeting with Finnish President Sauli Niinisto, Biden hailed Finland's as an "incredible asset" to the NATO military alliance.

"I don't think NATO has ever been stronger," he told reporters at the palace, adding later that this week's summit was a reminder of member nations' common values and challenges. "The vision for the world that we all share ... is one that's more free, more secure," he said, adding opportunities should be open to all.

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Thailand's Pita Vows to Fight On After Blow to PM Bid

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thailand's Pita Limjaroenrat vowed not to quit in his quest to become prime minister, after suffering defeat in a parliamentary vote fraught by abstentions and no-shows as conservative forces closed ranks to keep him at bay.

The leader of the progressive Move Forward Party, the surprise winners of the May 14 election, was unopposed in the showdown in the bicameral parliament, but fell 51 votes short of the top job after being thwarted by a Senate appointed by the royalist military after a 2014 coup.

Another vote is expected next week, which 42-year-old Pita can contest if nominated again by his eight-party alliance. To win he needs the votes of more than half of parliament's 749 members.

"I accept it but I'm not giving up," he told reporters.

"I will not surrender and will use this time to garner more support."

The vote was a critical test of Pita's political clout and a gauge of opposition to his party's anti-establishment agenda, which includes removing the military from politics, dismantling business monopolies and changing a law that prescribes long jail terms for insulting the monarchy.

Move Forward and its alliance partner, Pheu Thai, thrashed conservative pro-military parties in the election, seen widely as a resounding rejection of nearly a decade of government led or backed by the military.

The defeat was the latest blow in a torrid two days for the U.S.-educated Pita, who saw two legal complaints against him gain momentum on the eve of the vote, including a recommendation to disqualify him, prompting hundreds of demonstrators to gather and warn of moves afoot to keep Move Forward from power.

The cases are the latest twist in a two-decade struggle for power fraught with coups, court interventions, party dissolutions and at times violent street protests.

Political uncertainty has pulled Thailand's main stock index (.SETI) down by 11% so far this year, versus a 5% gain for MSCI's global emerging markets index (.dMIEF00000PUS), with foreign investors net sellers for five straight months to the end of June, offloading more than \$3 billion net of Thai shares.

Pita's determination to pursue Move Forward's controversial agenda has put him at odds with a powerful nexus of conservatives and old-money families with influence over democratic institutions, which has loomed large over Thai politics for decades.



NASA Celebrates Webb Telescope Anniversary With Close-Up of Stellar Birth

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Jets of red gas bursting into the cosmos, and a glowing cave of dust: NASA marked a year of discovery by the James Webb Space Telescope Wednesday with a spectacular new image of Sun-like stars being born.

The picture is of the Rho Ophiuchi cloud complex, the nearest stellar nursery to Earth, whose proximity at 390 light-years allows for a crisp close-up by the most powerful orbital observatory ever built.

"In just one year, the James Webb Space Telescope has transformed humanity's view of the cosmos, peering into dust clouds and seeing light from faraway corners of the universe for the very first time," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson.

"Every new image is a new discovery, empowering scientists around the globe to ask and answer questions they once could never dream of."

Webb's image shows around 50 young stars, of similar mass to our Sun or smaller.

Some have the signature shadows of circumstellar disks — a sign that planets may eventually form around them.

Huge jets of hydrogen appear horizontally in the upper third of the image, and vertically on the right.

"These occur when a star first bursts through its natal envelope of cosmic dust, shooting out a pair of opposing jets into space like a newborn first stretching her arms out into the world," the US space agency said in a statement.

"At the bottom of the image, you can see a young star that's energetic enough that it's blowing a bubble in the cloud of dust and gas from which it was born," Christine Chen, an astronomer at the Space Telescope Science Institute, which operates Webb, told AFP.

It does so through a combination of its light and a stellar wind linked to it, she added.

Interstellar space is filled with gas and dust, which in turn serves as the raw material for new stars and planets.

"Webb's image of Rho Ophiuchi allows us to witness a very brief period in the stellar life cycle with new clarity. Our own Sun experienced a phase like this, long ago, and now we have the technology to see the beginning of another star's story," said Webb project scientist Klaus Pontoppidan.

Webb was launched in December 2021 from French Guiana, on a 1.5 million kilometers (nearly one million mile) voyage to a region called the second Lagrange point.

Its first full color picture was revealed by President Joe Biden on July 11, 2022: the clearest view yet of the early universe, going back 13 billion years.

The next wave included "mountains" and "valleys" of a star-forming region, dubbed the Cosmic Cliffs, in the Carina Nebula; and a grouping of five galaxies bound in a celestial dance, called Stephan's Quintet.

Webb boasts a primary mirror measuring more than 6.5 meters that is made up of 18 hexagonal, gold-coated segments, as well as a five-layer sunshield the size of a tennis court.

Unlike its predecessor Hubble, it operates primarily in the infrared spectrum, allowing it to look back nearer towards the start of time, and to better penetrate dust clouds where stars and planetary systems were formed on Wednesday.

Key discoveries include some of the earliest galaxies formed a few hundred million years after the Big Bang, identifying at unprecedented resolution the atmospheric compositions of planets outside our solar system, and, in our own neck of the woods, stunning new views of the planet Jupiter.

Webb has enough fuel for a 20-year mission, promising a new era of astronomy.

It will soon be joined in orbit by Europe's Euclid space telescope, which launched on July 1 on a mission to shed light on two of the universe's greatest mysteries: dark energy and dark matter.



Oceans Changing Color And Climate Change May Be to Blame

PARIS (Dispatches) - Over the past 20 years huge swathes of the world's oceans have changed colour, displaying a subtle greening towards the tropics

that researchers say points to the effect of climate change on life in the world's seas.

In the new research published on Wednesday, scientists said they had detected shifts in colors across more than half of the world's oceans -- an expanse bigger than Earth's total land area.

Authors of the study in Nature think that is down to changes in ecosystems, and particularly in tiny plankton, which are the centerpiece of the marine food web and play a crucial part in stabilizing our atmosphere.

"The reason we care about the color changes is because the color reflects the state of the ecosystem, so color changes mean ecosystem changes," lead author B.B. Cael, of Britain's National Oceanography Centre, told AFP.

The color of the seas when seen from space can paint a picture of what is going on in the upper layers of the water.

A deep blue would tell you that there is not much life, while if the water is greener it is likely to have more activity, specifically from the photosynthesizing phytoplankton, which like plants contain the green pigment chlorophyll.

These produce a significant amount of the oxygen we breathe, are a crucial part of the global carbon cycle and are a foundational part of the ocean food web.

Researchers are keen to develop ways of monitoring changes in ecosystems in order to track climate changes and enshrine protected areas.

But previous studies have suggested you would need three decades of ocean chlorophyll monitoring to detect a trend because of annual variations.

In the latest study, researchers broadened the color spectrum, looking at seven hues of ocean color monitored by the MODIS-Aqua satellite from 2002 to 2022.

These are too subtle for humans to see and would look largely blue to the naked eye.

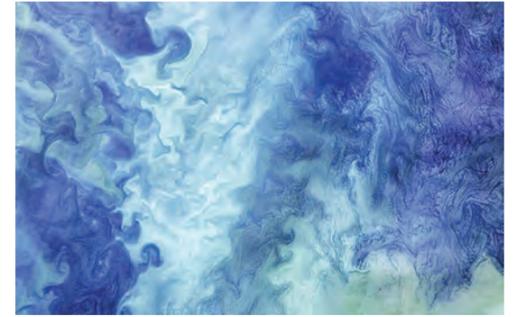
The authors analyzed the observational data to detect a trend above the year-to-year variability and then compared it to computer models of what would be expected with climate change.

They found that the real-world observations tallied closely with the changes predicted.

While the researchers said more work would be needed to find out what exactly those color changes might mean, they said climate change was very likely to be the cause.

"I've been running simulations that have been telling me for years that these changes in ocean colour are going to happen," said co-author Stephanie Dutkiewicz, of MIT's Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences at the Center for Global Change Science.

"To actually see it happening for real is not surprising, but frightening. And these changes are consistent with man-induced changes to our climate."



Arthritis Pain May Vary by State



LONDON (Dispatches) - If you live in West Virginia you're more likely to experience joint pain due to arthritis, according to a new study that looked at the differences in pain across states.

"The risk of joint pain is over three times higher in some states compared to others, with states in the South, especially the lower Mississippi Valley and southern Appalachia, having particularly high prevalence of joint pain," said first author Rui Huang, a doctoral student in sociology at the University at Buffalo in upstate New York.

"We also observed educational disparities in joint pain in all states that vary substantially in magnitude, even after adjusting for demographic characteristics," she said in a university news release.

The study examined moderate or severe joint pain due to arthritis. In all, 6.9% of Minnesotans had arthritis pain, the study found. That compared to 23.1% of West Virginians.

Researchers also noted that percentage point difference between people who did not complete high school versus those who obtained at least a bachelor's degree was much larger in certain states than in others. In West Virginia it was 31.1 percentage points; Arkansas, 29.7; and Alabama, 28.3. That compared to 8.8 in California, 9.8 in Nevada and 10.1 in Utah.

"Education can function as a 'personal firewall' that protects more highly educated people from undesirable state-level contexts, while increasing the vulnerability of less educated individuals," Huang said.

The study notes that states can have dramatically different policies affecting opportunities, resources and social relationships. These factors can influence individuals' pain.

Could Music Help Combat Developmental Language Disorder in Children?

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Learning to speak comes naturally to children. But some find it difficult to communicate through language, despite there being no apparent reason to expect this kind of difficulty. According to a new study, music could help children with speech and language processing difficulties to find their voice.

Researchers at Western Sydney University in Australia and the Lyon Neuroscience Research Center in France have investigated the benefits of music for language learning in very young children. To do this, they conducted an experiment with 15 French-speaking children with developmental language disorder and 18 with no such difficulties, all aged between 5 and 13. They had them listen to regular or irregular rhythms for 30 seconds, followed by several series of six phrases. The children were asked to repeat them back as accurately as possible while the research team recorded them.

These recordings showed that regular musical rhythms improved children's ability to repeat phrases accurately. This was true whether or not they had difficulty expressing themselves orally. "We found that across all of the children — including those with language problems — the sentences were better able to be repeated out loud after the children had heard the regular musical rhythms compared to the irregular musical rhythms," said Dr Anna Fiveash, a cognitive psychologist at Western Sydney University and co-lead author of the study, published in the journal *Science of Learning*, quoted in a news release.

The research team claims that this discovery represents a breakthrough in understanding the acquisition of conversational skills in children. Indeed, it is estimated that 3 to 7 per cent of the world's population suffers from a language disorder. It is vital to detect these difficulties as early as possible, as a lack of verbal communication at an age when other children speak with ease can affect the cognitive, affective and social development of the child experiencing difficulties in expressing themselves. But not all abnormalities in a child's language development are necessarily serious: most correct themselves naturally as soon as children enter kindergarten. The most persistent issues, however, may require referral to a specialist to prevent them from evolving over time and affecting the acquisition of written language.

For study co-author, Dr Enikő Ladányi, these findings could help improve current speech therapy practices. "Limitations in language processing in children with developmental language disorder can result in a struggle to understand their peers, teachers, and parents; making it difficult to efficiently express thoughts, which can lead to lifelong consequences in individuals' academic and social lives. Effective speech-language therapy is essential to mitigate these consequences to improve developmental outcomes for children, and our latest findings could help supplement and improve current speech therapy guidelines and practices," the researcher said in a statement.



Hairdressers, Beauticians at Greater Risk of Developing Ovarian Cancer



LONDON (Dispatches) - When thinking of people in high-risk jobs, hairdressers and beauticians don't immediately come to mind.

But cosmetologists have a much greater chance of developing ovarian cancer than the average woman, a new study reports. Specifically, working for a decade or more as a hairdresser, barber or beautician is associated with a threefold higher risk of ovarian cancer, according to a report published Monday in *Occupational & Environmental Medicine*.

Other jobs also increase a woman's risk of ovarian cancer, including accountancy, construction, the clothing industry, and sales and retail.

The results "suggest that employment in certain occupations and specific occupational exposures may be associated with increased risks of ovarian cancer," the paper co-authored by Anita Koushik concluded. She's an investigator at the University of Montreal department of social and preventive medicine in Quebec, Canada. For this study, her team identified about 490 women diagnosed with ovarian cancer in Montreal between 2010 and 2016, and compared them to nearly 900 who didn't have ovarian cancer.

The women were required to report the details of any jobs they held for at least six months. The researchers used a Canadian job-exposure matrix to calculate participants' exposure to specific chemical agents in the workplace. Calculations showed that holding several types of jobs for a decade or longer might be linked to a heightened risk of ovarian cancer: Construction had a nearly tripled risk, Accountancy had a doubled risk, Work in the clothing industry came with an 85% increased risk, Sales and retail came with a 45% and 59% increased risk, respectively. The researchers also identified 18 agents in the workplace that were associated with increased ovarian risks of 40% or more.

Turkey's Industrial Production Edges Down Slightly in May

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Industrial production in Turkey saw a slight annual decline in May but still jumped on a monthly basis, official data showed.

The output edged down 0.2% year-over-year in May, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said. Month-over-month, the industrial production index jumped 1.1%. Industrial activity bounced back strongly after the initial COVID-19 wave in April 2020 and expanded for over two years.

The output dropped 8.2% in February after devastating earthquakes killed over 50,000 people, toppled hundreds of thousands of buildings and severely damaged the southeastern region's infrastructure.



U.S. Inflation Cools to Over 2-Year Low as Price Pressures Ease

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Consumer price inflation in the United States eased to 3% in June compared to 12 months earlier, its lowest point in more than two years, in a sign that the Federal Reserve's (Fed) interest rate hikes have steadily slowed price increases across the economy.

The inflation figure the government reported was down sharply from a 4% annual rate in May, though still above the Fed's 2% target rate. From May to June, overall prices rose 0.2%, up from just 0.1% in the previous month but still comparatively mild.

Even with the better-than-expected inflation data, the Fed is considered all but sure to boost its benchmark rate when it meets in two weeks. But with price increases slowing – or even falling outright – across a broad range of goods and services, many economists say they think the central bank could hold off on what had been expected to be another rate hike in September, should inflation continue to cool.

"It takes the second hike off the table, if that trend continues," said Laura Rosner-Warburton, senior economist at MacroPolicy Perspectives. "They're probably on hold for the rest of the year."

On Wall Street, investors cheered the encouraging inflation news, sending stock and bond prices sharply higher.

The Fed has raised its benchmark rate by a substantial 5 percentage points since March 2022, the steepest pace of increases in four decades. Its expected hike this month will follow the central bank's decision to pause its rate increases last month after 10 consecutive hikes.

Over the past two months, inflation has slowed rapidly – from nearly 5% in April to just 3% now. Much of that progress reflects the fading of big spikes in food and energy prices that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine last spring.

Other major drivers of higher prices, though, are also beginning to fade. Used car prices sank 0.5% from May to June, after two months of big spikes. And rental costs slowed further in June, reflecting the construction of more apartments across the country.

Excluding the volatile food and energy prices, so-called core inflation was lower last month than economists had expected, rising just 0.2% from May to June, the smallest monthly increase in nearly two years. Compared with a year ago, it does remain relatively high, at 4.8%, but down from a 5.3% annual rate in May.

Some economists have suggested that if inflation keeps slowing and the economy shows sufficient signs of cooling, the July increase could be the Fed's last.

The year-over-year inflation figure for June marked the mildest such increase since March 2021, when the current bout of painfully high inflation began as the economy roared out of the pandemic recession. Used-car prices, among other items, have been falling. Automakers are finally producing more cars as supply shortages have abated. New-car prices, too, have begun to ease as a result.

A sustained slowdown in inflation could bring meaningful relief to American households that have been squeezed by the price acceleration that began two years ago. Inflation spiked as consumers ramped up their spending on items like exercise bikes, standing desks and new patio furniture, fueled by three rounds of stimulus checks. The jump in consumer demand overwhelmed supply chains and ignited inflation.

China Signals Deeper Reforms in Power Sector

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China will double down on power system reforms and shift its focus to reducing carbon emissions, a Communist Party policymaking body said, without giving further details.

The party's commission for deepening reform, an agency responsible for accelerating priority reforms for the leadership, outlined broad proposals for opening up the economy, including the latest effort to improve the country's power networks and oil and natural gas markets, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

China has previously launched several rounds of power sector reforms to improve efficiency, lower electricity prices, and rationalize coal power investment, with the aim of reducing costs for end users that weigh on economic activity.

It will now make further changes in hopes of accelerating the construction of a power system that is "economically efficient, flexible and intelligent in supply and demand coordination", the commission said following a meeting.

However, challenges remain, including provincial government protectionism and a lack of inter-provincial coordination, as well as other regulatory hurdles. Fixed, long-term power trading agreements also limit flexibility in the system.

During a drought in August 2022, fixed, unidirectional power trading agreements forced hydro-dependent southwestern Sichuan province to export power out of the province to fulfil these contracts, even as consumers in the province endured power cuts.

China must also gradually shift its focus from controlling energy consumption to controlling its carbon emissions, the commission said.

No further details were provided on how the shift would be implemented.

China has set targets to cut carbon dioxide intensity by 18 per cent between 2021 and 2025, and energy intensity by 13.5 per cent in the same period. However, it has not set any targets on carbon dioxide emissions.

In the oil and gas markets, China will focus on "improving national oil and gas security capabilities ... and ensure stable and reliable supply", the commission also said.

The proposals come amid an intensified focus on domestic energy security in the country, which is the world's largest crude oil importer.



UK Is Coping With Higher Interest Rates

LONDON (Dispatches) - The Bank of England (BoE) said that Britain's economy is so far proving resilient to a surge in interest rates over the past year and a half, but it will take time for the full impact to feed through.

The BoE last month raised rates to 5%, up from 0.1% at the end of 2021, raising concerns about a hit to households, businesses and the broader financial sector that could push the economy into a recession.

But in a half-yearly assessment of the health of the financial system, the BoE said there was no reason for alarm.

"The UK economy and financial system has so far been resilient to interest rate risk," BoE Governor Andrew Bailey told a press conference.

"We will continue to monitor credit conditions for any signs of tightening which are not explained satisfactorily by changes in the macroeconomic outlook."

The proportion of households with heavy mortgage burdens was rising. But even considering the higher cost of living – with inflation at 8.7% in May – it was likely to remain below the peak seen in 2007.

On Tuesday, average interest rates for new two-year fixed-rate mortgages – the most common form of housing finance – rose above their peak following last September's minibudget to a 15-year high, according to data provider Moneyfacts.

Britain's finance industry estimates 800,000 households will need to refinance onto more expensive mortgages in the second half of 2023, and a further 1.6 million in 2024.

The Bank said the typical mortgage holder refinancing later this year would pay an extra 220 pounds (\$285) a month, and that, by the end of 2026, nearly 1 million households would be paying at least 500 pounds a month more.



Pakistan's \$3b Bailout Program Approved by IMF Board

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) board approved a \$3 billion bailout program for Pakistan, the lender said, which will immediately disburse about \$1.2 billion to help the South Asian country.

Pakistan and the Fund reached a staff level agreement last month, securing much-needed funding for the cash-starved nation.

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The board's approval was needed before disbursing the first tranche of money, with the rest to arrive later in instalments.

"The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a 9-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) for Pakistan for an amount of SDR2,250 million (about \$3 billion, or 111 percent of quota) to support the authorities' economic stabilization program," the IMF said in a statement.

It added the arrangement comes at a challenging economic juncture for Pakistan. A difficult external environment, devastating floods and policy missteps have led to large fiscal and external deficits, rising inflation and eroded reserve buffers in FY23.

Meanwhile Saudi Arabia has deposited \$2 billion into Pakistan's central bank, the government said Tuesday, a much-needed financial boost ahead of a critical meeting of the International Monetary Fund on the new bailout package for the cash-strapped South Asian country.

Countries Agree to Extend Digital Services Tax Freeze Through 2024

PARIS (Reuters) -With the exception of Canada, countries with digital services taxes have agreed to hold off applying them for at least another year as a global multinationals tax deal to replace them was pushed back, the OECD said.

More than 140 countries were supposed to start implementing next year a 2021 deal overhauling decades-old rules on how governments tax multinationals that are widely considered to be outdated as digital

giants like Apple or Amazon can book profits in low-tax countries.

The first part of the two-pillar deal aims to reallocate taxing rights on about \$200 billion in profits from the biggest and most profitable multinationals to the countries where their sales occur.

The more than 30 governments that have or plan national digital services taxes had agreed to put them on ice under a standstill clause until the end of this year, or drop them altogether once the first pillar takes shape.

The second pillar calls on governments to put an end to tax competition between governments to attract investment by setting a global minimum corporate tax rate of 15% from next year.

While the second pillar is moving ahead with over 50 countries already in the process of implementing it, some countries have concerns about a multilateral treaty underpinning the first pillar, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development said after talks in Paris.

The plan is therefore now to nail down the details so governments can sign off before the end of the year with the aim now for the treaty to enter force in 2025, instead of in 2024 as previously planned.

If at least 30 countries sign, then the freeze on national digital taxing rights will be extended through 2024 with an option to further extend through 2025 if needed, the OECD said.

Out of the 143 countries that are party to the deal, only five countries - Belarus, Canada, Pakistan, Russia and Sri Lanka - were not in a position at the meeting to offer their support, OECD head of tax Manal Corwin said.

"Canada was not in agreement with the standstill," Corwin told journalists, citing the only country among the five holdouts with a digital services tax.

The agreement to hold off pillar one implementation by another year puts Canada at a disadvantage relative to countries that have been collecting revenue under their pre-existing digital services taxes, Canadian Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland said on Wednesday.

Int'l Firms Planning \$7.1b Investment In Turkey in Next 6 Months



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Members of Turkey's International Investors Association (YASED) are planning for \$7.1 billion (TL 185.65 billion) of direct investment in the country in the next six months, a top executive said Wednesday.

Turkey attracted around \$13 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2022, according to the Presidential Investment Office data, and officials have said it seeks to take a 1.5% share in global investments in the coming period.

There are other international companies that want to invest in Turkey, but the biggest issues are a lack of macroeconomic stability and regulatory unpredictability, YASED Chair Engin Aksoy said.

"Our desire is to ensure a predictable and stable environment, to ensure that investments are legally secure," Aksoy noted. "The most important risk factor for Turkey is unpredictability."

He said spiraling inflation and a volatile currency compound the negative perspective on the country.

Turkey has changed course since President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was reelected on May 28, overhauling policies after two years of monetary easing to boost growth, production, exports, investment and jobs.

A reshuffle in economy management since the vote saw an appointment of Mehmet Şimşek, the respected veteran policymaker, as treasury and finance minister and Hafize Gaye Erkan, a former Wall Street banker, as central bank governor.

Coupled with other multiple steps, these were seen as initial signs Ankara would revamp policies centered on monetary stimulus and opt for interest rate hikes to combat stubborn inflation, stabilize the volatility in the Turkish lira and rebuild foreign exchange reserves.

Iran's Annual Tourism Revenues at \$6.2b

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A deputy head of the Iranian tourism ministry (MCTH) says Iran's annual tourism revenues have reached \$6.2 billion, adding that tourism is becoming a major source of earning hard currency for the country. Citing figures from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) on Thursday, Ali Asghar Shalbafian did not elaborate if the annual revenue figure was related to 2022 or to the calendar year to late March 2023. Speaking at a ceremony in

the tourist hub of Tabriz in northwest Iran, Shalbafian said tourism revenues had reached levels to equal more than 10% of Iran's annual non-oil export revenues. He said, however, that Iran had invested some 3,650 trillion rials (\$7.3 billion) in recent years to boost its tourism infrastructure, adding that some 360 trillion rials had been spent in Tabriz and cities around it which are normally frequented by tourists from the Republic of Azerbaijan and countries in the Caucasus region.



Recent French Riots Boost Support for Far Right's Anti-Immigration Rhetoric

PARIS (Dispatches) - Widespread riots in France sparked by the police killing of a teenager with North African roots have revealed the depth of discontent roiling poor neighborhoods — and given a new platform to the increasingly emboldened far right.

The far right's anti-immigration mantra is seeping through a once ironclad political divide between it and mainstream politics. More voices are now embracing a hard line against immigration and blaming immigrants not only for the car burnings and other violence that followed the June 27 killing of 17-year-old Nahel Merzouk, but for France's social problems as well.

"We know the causes" of France's unrest, Bruno Retailleau, head of the conservative group that dominates the French Senate, said last week on broadcaster France-Info. "Unfortunately for the second, the third generation there is a sort of regression toward their origins, their ethnic origins."

Retailleau's remarks, which drew accusations of racism, reflect the current line of his mainstream party, The Republicans, whose priorities to keep France "from sinking durably into chaos" include "stopping mass immigration."

"As soon as we want to be firm," Retailleau said Tuesday on RTL radio, "they say, 'Oh la la. Scandal! The fascists are arriving! You're like the National Rally,'" the main far-right party. "We're sick of being politically correct." His response marked the latest fracture in a crumbling concept dubbed the "Republican Front," under which French parties, whatever their political color, used to stand together against the far right.

By linking immigration to the riots, Retailleau violated France's near-sacred value of universality by which all citizens, whatever their origin, are recognized only as French.

The far right appeared to capitalize on a sudden shift in the national mood to make further inroads: Shock and horror at Merzouk's death quickly morphed into shock and horror at the violent unrest, which spread from the outskirts of major urban areas to cities to small-town France. In just four days, an extreme-right crowdfunding campaign raised more than 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million) for the family of the police officer accused of killing Nahel. Far-right figures have long blamed immigration from majority Muslim North Africa, and some immigrants' failure to assimilate into French culture, for France's social problems.

"We suffer an immigration that is totally anarchic," the National Rally's Marine Le Pen, the leading far-right figure in France, said last week on France 2 television. She claimed the riots were the work of "an ultra-majority of youth who are foreign or of foreign origin," and said there was "a form of secession of these youths from French society."

Le Pen's critics note that successive French governments have failed to integrate new arrivals, and that communities with immigrant backgrounds face disproportionately higher poverty, unemployment and deep-seated discrimination.

But the far-right leader's voice resonates ever more loudly in France. Le Pen has spent years scrubbing up the image of her National Rally, and gained a powerful perch in parliament in legislative elections a year ago with 88 lawmakers. Le Pen now sits at the heart of institutional France.



Le Pen's party has progressively anchored itself among French voters. She won more than 41% in the runoff presidential vote last year.

"There are practically no more categories of the population immune to a (far-right) vote," polling agency Ifop said after a recent survey showing a steady rise in voters who have cast a ballot for Le Pen's party.

President Emmanuel Macron's centrist government took a tough line against the recent violence, but disputes Le Pen's characterization of those who rioted, with Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin stressing that only 10% were foreigners. At a Senate hearing last week, he noted that some children with immigrant roots enter the police force.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne criticized the GoFundMe campaign for the police officer's family as unhelpful in tense times. But its success appeared to reflect a clamor for security, another prize issue of the far right.

Jean Messiha, a former official in the National Rally and the upstart hard-right Reconquest party, called the enormous response to the fund that he started a "tsunami" in support of law enforcement officers "who in a certain way fight daily so that France remains France." The French far right has many faces, inside and outside the political sphere, ranging from the National Rally to Eric Zemmour's Reconquest, whose vice president is Le Pen's niece Marion Marechal. Both Zemmour and Marechal espouse the racist "great replacement" theory that there is a plot to diminish the influence of white people and replace cultures, particularly through immigration.

On France's fringe is an ultra-rightist movement, which includes conspiracy theorists, whose potential for violence worries authorities.

"The terrorist risk it engenders has grown in recent years within Western democracies — France, in particular," Nicolas Lerner, head of France's internal security agency, DGSI, said in a rare interview published in Le Monde newspaper. The ultras believe, he said, that they must do the job of the state in protecting Europe from terrorists and the "great replacement," and one way to do that is to "precipitate a clash to have a chance to win while there is still time."

Consequences of Planned Policies for Supporting Grand Parent Stocks of Arian Breed

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Poultry meat production in the country has faced serious problems due to the policies of supporting the Arian breed and the industry have been coping with genetic and economic problems related to this breed.

The current bottlenecks of the poultry meat supply in the country were discussed in a televised panel discussion on Wednesday evening of July 12 in Porseshgar show of Education Channel of the IRIB with the presence of Hamid Zolfaghari, expert on knowledge based economic development; Mehdi Masoudi, a media expert in the field of agriculture, and Seyed Mehdi Mirsalimi, a poultry disease specialist.

The host of the program pointed to the wrong policies of the Ministry of Agricultural for equal rationing of hatching between Arian and imported foreign breeds. Accordingly, the policy has resulted in creation of economic rent for the importers of Grand Parent Stocks who possess Arian breed Grand Parent Stocks, corruption in trading quotas, elimination of the Arian flocks under the pretext of disease and cheating in breeding by hatching foreign breeds under the name of Arian breeds.

In the continuation of the meeting, Masoudi rejected the ideas raised in the media and policy environment of the country on the necessity of cutting dependence on importation of foreign breeds due to sanctions by foreign companies, and added, "Importing foreign grand parent stocks have never been sanctioned for Iran, and those who claim such sanctions have never presented any document or evidence to prove their claim." If the monopoly on importation of Ross breed is lifted, there is internal capacity to import Ross 308 and Ross 708, he reiterated. Mirsalimi also acknowledged the absence of sanctions on the importation of grand parent stocks, including laying eggs and broilers, and stated: For example, there is no restriction on the importation of the laying grand parent stocks. Currently, about seven foreign breeds of laying eggs, even American breeds, are imported. If there is no limit to laying stocks, why should the broiler grand parent stocks be restricted?

The host asked why the Kowsar Economic Organization, which owns the Arian production line, is simultaneously importing the Ross breed. Zolfaghari replied: "Without an integrated policy for production, whether Ross or Arian, the producer is confused. Currently the profits of Arian's breeding are lower than Ross because the steps that had to be taken to support Arian have not been properly taken. In addition, existing scientific reports show that there is no meaningful difference between the Food Conversion Ratio (FCR) in Arian and Ross breeds. In response, Masoudi said that the results in the mentioned report were due to the use of Ross rooster in the Arian flocks. Mirsalimi, a critic of the supporting policies, said at the end of the panel: "According to the evidence and reports of the industry and the National Veterinary Organization Arian breed has genetic flaws, lacks the ability to compete with similar breeds and cannot be revived. Why should the government pay for Arian's line, whose production status is unknown, out of pocket of the poultry industry? To remove the problems of the country's chicken meat supply, the distribution of Arian stocks should be stopped and the importation of the grand parent stocks of foreign breeds must start immediately."

World Hunger Stops Rising But Remains Elevated

PARIS (Dispatches) - World hunger stopped rising in 2022 after growing for seven years but remains above pre-pandemic levels and far off track to be eradicated by 2030, UN agencies said.

Between 691 million and 783 million people faced hunger last year, with a midrange of 735 million, the five agencies said in a report. The proportion of people facing chronic hunger rose from 7.9 percent of the world population in 2019 -- before the pandemic -- to 9.2 percent in 2022.

The annual rise "has stalled", however, with the total falling by about 3.8 million people between 2021 and 2022, according to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report.

"There is no room for complacency though, as hunger is still on the rise throughout Africa, Western Asia and the Caribbean," they warned.

The report is "a snapshot of the world still recovering from a global pandemic and now grappling with the consequences of the war in Ukraine, which has further rattled food and energy markets."

Since 2019, those crises have plunged an additional 122 million people into hunger, according to the UN, with women and those living in rural areas hit particularly hard.

The post-pandemic economic recovery helped improve the situation, "but there is no doubt that the modest progress has been undermined by rising food and energy prices magnified by the war in Ukraine," said the report.

The report was prepared by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization.

The estimates indicate that hunger "is no longer on the rise at the global level" but it remains "far above pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels and far off track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2" of a world free of hunger, the report said.

The UN agencies warned that if the world fails to redouble and better target its efforts, the "goal of ending hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms by 2030 will remain out of reach."

Russia's Stance on Iranian Islands Not in Interest of Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has criticized the Russian position regarding Iran's trio islands in the Persian Gulf, saying such a stance is not in the interest of bilateral relations.

"I would like to address our friends in Russia; our stance on the baseless and threadbare claims of the UAE regarding the Iranian islands is clear, but irrelevant positions against Iran in Moscow are not in the interest of bilateral relations. Iranian support for Moscow is conditional," Vahid Jalalzadeh said in a tweet.

The warning came after Russian Ambassador to Tehran Alexey Dedov was summoned to Iran's Foreign Ministry following a joint statement issued by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council P (GCC) and Russia,

regarding the Iranian islands of the Greater and Lesser Tumbs and Abu Musa.

In their final statement at the end of the sixth joint ministerial meeting of the strategic dialogue between the (P)GCC and the Russian Federation in Moscow, council members reiterated their support for all peaceful efforts, including the United Arab Emirates' initiative to resolve the issue of the Iranian islands through negotiations and based on international law.

The three Persian Gulf islands have historically been part of Iran, proof of which can be found and corroborated by an abundance of historical, legal, and geographical documents in Iran and worldwide. However, the UAE has repeatedly laid unfounded claim to the islands.

Resistance's 2006 Victory...

FROM PAGE 1

Nasrallah, meanwhile, said Israel had suffered defeat in its recent operation against the city of Jenin and its refugee camp in the northern part of the occupied West Bank.

"The goal sought by the Israelis in the aggression against Jenin was [creation of] deterrence," he said.

"However, the Israelis obtained a very opposite image," said the Hezbollah leader, noting that "continuation of the resistance's operations in the West Bank serves as the evidence of the defeat of the [Israeli regime's] incursion in Jenin."

Nasrallah, meanwhile, condemned the Israeli regime's setting up of barbed wires and erection of a wall in the border village of Ghajar, considering the move to be a "re-occupation" of the village in question.

"Sovereignty [over the village] cannot be divided up," he said, warning that the resistance would not remain silent on the issue. "The village is part of Lebanon's soil and should return to Lebanon without any condition."

IMF Expects...

FROM PAGE 1

However, the lender stipulated that high economic growth rates expected for countries like China and India would translate into increased demand for Iranian oil and would boost the country's economic prospects next year despite the fact that oil prices are expected to fall to levels below \$70 a barrel in 2024.

The IRNA report said that lower oil prices would hardly impact Iran's economy in the near future as the country has significantly cut its reliance on oil revenues.

It said, however, that Iran's accession earlier this month to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a major political and economic bloc of countries led by China and India, would create major trade and economic benefits for Iran given that those economies are expected to expand at a record pace in the near future.

Tehran Rejects Baseless...

FROM PAGE 1

"Iran has also played a constructive role in assisting regional governments in countering destabilizing forces that often receive support from external sources," it said.

The statement further urged NATO member states to honor their commitments under the UN Charter and to stop making baseless accusations against Iran.

In a final declaration at a summit in Lithuania on Wednesday, the 31-member alliance called on Iran "to cease its military support to Russia, in particular its transfer of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) which have been used to attack critical infrastructure, causing widespread civilian casualties." This comes as Both Iran and Russia have repeatedly denied claims that Tehran has provided Moscow with drones to be used in the Ukraine war.

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

Minister Calls on...

FROM PAGE 1

Experts active in communications and information technology have reached appropriate decisions, he said, expressing hope that the ministerial meeting would endorse them to pave the way for more progress in the ECO countries.

The minister also said that today is the birth anniversary of great Iranian scholar Khwarizmi, who lived in the Islamic Golden Age and played an important role in modern mathematics, which is the basis of computer science; therefore, the occasion has been designated as the National Day of Information Technology in Iran.

Pakistanis Call for...

FROM PAGE 1

Following are some of the key takeaways of this important seminar:

Recognizing the vital importance of economic health for national security, the seminar speakers emphasized the need to attach high priority to economic diplomacy; The need for adopting a pragmatic approach in policies was stressed; There was a unanimous view that Pakistan should continue to attach utmost importance to further deepening and diversifying its strategic partnership with its all-weather friend and iron brother China and to fast track CPEC; Pakistan should eschew the cold war era block politics, and promote mutually beneficial relations with great powers.

A reset of relations with the US is desirable and efforts should be made to strengthen ties with Russia; The seminar underscored the importance of a peaceful neighbourhood and reiterated Pakistan's desire for good neighbourly relations with India on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect and the peaceful settlement of all outstanding issues, especially the Jammu and Kashmir dispute; Pakistan's search for peace with India should not be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Pakistan should continue to pursue peace with dignity; As a neighbor and brother, Pakistan should continue to play a role in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan and urge the Taliban regime to deal with terror groups, especially TTP, operating from its territory, firmly; The seminar advocated building stronger economic, commercial and energy links with Iran; The seminar advocated the need for special efforts to deepen relations with brotherly countries of the Islamic world, especially Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey and Qatar, making economic cooperation as the centerpiece of bilateral relations; The need to reinvigorate Pakistan's traditional leadership role in multilateral organizations, especially the OIC, UN, ECO, and SCO was also emphasized.

The seminar stressed the vital importance of self-reliance, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development, good governance and political stability which facilitate a more proactive and independent foreign policy. In the end, President CASS, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), summed up the key observations and recommendations of the seminar and conveyed a vote of thanks to the speakers and the participants of the seminar.

PSG Sign Benfica Teenager Cher Ndour

PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris Saint-Germain announced the arrival of Benfica teenager Cher Ndour on a five-year deal. The 18-year-old Italian midfielder is the French champion's sixth signing since Luis Enrique replaced Christophe Galtier as coach last week. Ndour moves to the Parc des Princes after winning the Portuguese league title with Benfica, and is currently on duty for Italy at the Under-19 Euros in Malta. He joins Enrique's other new recruits — Lucas Hernandez, Manuel Ugarte, Milan Skriniar, Marco Asensio and Lee Kang-in at PSG.

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King Kazu Extends Portugal Deal Aged 56

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Kazuyoshi Miura will continue playing aged 56 after the former Japanese international extended his loan deal with Portuguese second-division outfit Oliveirense. Oliveirense said on social media that the forward, who has made three appearances for the club after joining from Japan's Yokohama FC in February, will stay with them next season. Miura turned 56 in February and wants to keep playing until he is 60.

Vondrousova Downs Svitolina to Meet Jabeur In Wimbledon Final

LONDON (Dispatches) - Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic became the first unseeded player in 60 years to reach the Wimbledon women's final, crushing the title dreams of Ukraine's Elina Svitolina.

World number 42 Vondrousova came through 6-3, 6-3 and will face last year's runner-up Ons Jabeur for the title on Saturday.

Left-hander Vondrousova will be playing in her second Grand Slam final after finishing runner-up at the 2019 French Open.

The 24-year-old was rewarded for her attacking approach, breaking serve six times and unleashing 22 winners to Svitolina's nine.

"I cannot believe it. I am very happy that I made the final. Elina is such a fighter and a great person. It was a tough match," said the Czech. "I was crazy nervous. I was nervous the whole match. I was leading 4-0 in the second set and she fought back."

Reaching the final comes after a miserable time for the Czech -- she underwent a second surgery on her wrist last year, which ruled her out for most of 2022.

"I didn't play for six months last year and you never know if you can be at that level again," she said. "I'm so happy to be back out here."

Svitolina, taking part in her second successive Grand Slam semi-final since returning from maternity leave in April, dropped serve three times in the opening set.

She managed to retrieve the first to level at 3-3 but the Czech broke again in the seventh and ninth games to edge ahead in the tie.

An error-plagued Svitolina quickly fell 4-0 down in the second set.

However, Vondrousova, who had seen off four seeded players to reach the semi-finals, suddenly suffered mid-set jitters as she handed back the breaks to allow Svitolina to pull to 3-4.

Svitolina then undid all her hard work to be broken again in the eighth game before pushing a forehand long to hand her opponent a place in the final.

Meanwhile Jabeur fought back from a set down to beat defending Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in a three-set thriller on centre court.

The Tunisian lost last year's Wimbledon final at the hands of Rybakina, but remains on course for a maiden title at SW19 after avenging that defeat in a brilliant contest.

"I wish we can exchange this match from the final last year if I can," she told an adoring crowd.



"I'm very happy with the performance. There was a lot of emotion out there especially playing someone who serves really well. It's frustrating to return but I'm glad I did everything, shouted, got angry then got calm and focused. Hopefully I can keep managing my emotions like this for the next few matches."

Rybakina broke her opponent's serve at the second time of asking in the opening set with her typically high-intensity tennis, but Jabeur broke straight back with an emphatic game to love as Rybakina's forehand unravelled.

Jabeur then looked to have stolen the set, breaking Rybakina's serve at 5-5 with a sizzling backhand pass and sumptuous volley. But after throwing away set point at the net, Rybakina broke back brilliantly after fighting on from deuce.

Rybakina looked ice cool during the tie-break with Jabeur a little rattled after so many unforced errors. The Kazakhstani then conjured up three set points with a fizzing volley, and took the third with a monstrous first serve to seal the set in 44 minutes. But Jabeur rallied, and Rybakina had to save three break points to keep the second set on serve after the opening two games.

Eventually, the Tunisian found a way through, grabbing a break at 5-4 with two delicious forehands, levelling the match to the delight of centre court.

Rybakina simply couldn't contend from then on as her serve-centric style struggled to make a dent in Jabeur's court coverage. Jabeur broke at the second time of asking, and then again to go 5-1 up. On serve, she took her first match point in front of an exhilarated crowd.

She now faces Sabalenka in the semi-finals on Thursday after the Belarusian bested Keys in straight sets.

Mount Says Wants To Make Man United Fans Proud



MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester United midfielder Mason Mount promised to make the fans proud after playing his first match for the club, a 2-0 win against Championship side Leeds United in a friendly in Oslo.

The 24-year-old England international joined United earlier this month from Chelsea for £55 million, according to British media reports.

"When we turned up last night and when we turned up at the stadium today, the support has been amazing. They came out and showed up for us today and it's amazing to see," he told MUTV after playing the first 45 minutes of the match.

"This is what we want to play for and we want to make them proud."

Manager Erik ten Hag praised the club's first close-season signing, with the Dutch manager looking to strengthen his squad ahead of United's return to the Champions League.

"Oh (he was) great, but we could expect this. He has so many skills and I'm sure we will take so much joy from him. He will contribute to our performance, absolutely," he said, adding that there was more to come from Mount on the pitch.

United kick off their Premier League campaign on August 14 at home against Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Panama to Face Mexico In Gold Cup Final

MIAMI (Dispatches) - Panama stunned the United States by winning their CONCACAF Gold Cup semi-final 5-4 on penalties in San Diego to set up a final with Mexico.

Mexico, record eight-times Gold Cup champions, reached Sunday's decider with a 3-0 win over Jamaica in Las Vegas.

Mexico will start as favourites against a Panama team that have never won the regional competition for North and Central America and the Caribbean --- but have reached the final twice before, losing to the USA in 2005 and 2013.

The USA, who selected a squad without their main Europe-based players, miss out on a place in the final for only the second time since 2003.

They bowed out on penalties after the game ended 1-1 after extra-time.

"Getting into this final is the dream of every Panamanian. We had to suffer to get this victory but that is how it is best savoured," said Panama coach Thomas Christiansen.

The USA started brightly in the late afternoon Californian sunshine, with Cade Cowell hitting the post in the first minute.

Panama had an effort from Edgar Barcenas in the 29th ruled out for offside and American goalkeeper Matt Turner had to be alert in the 53rd minute to keep out a header from Ismael Diaz.

Brandon Vazquez, given a start after three goals in the tournament as a substitute, then missed a good opportunity, firing high from close range after good work from Cowell.

There was drama in stoppage time when Diaz had the ball in the net but was flagged for offside. Panama claimed that Djordje Mihailovic had handled the ball but VAR found nothing and backed the offside call.

The USA had needed extra-time and penalties to get past Canada in their quarter-final, but they were short of creativity against a determined Panama.

Panama grabbed the lead in the ninth minute of the first period of extra-time when Adalberto Carrasquilla lofted the ball over the top and Ivan Anderson went round the out-rushing Turner and slotted into the unguarded goal.



Torres Joins Emery at Aston Villa

LONDON (Dispatches) - Spanish international defender Pau Torres has been reunited with Aston Villa manager Unai Emery after joining the Premier League club from Villarreal.

Torres, 26, will join Villa for a reported fee of £35 million.

The center-back was a key part of the Villarreal side that won the Europa League under Emery in 2021 and reached the Champions League semi-finals the following year.

Torres, who has been capped 23 times by Spain, was a product of the Villarreal youth academy and made 123 appearances for his boyhood club.

He becomes Villa's second signing of the transfer window after the arrival of Belgian international midfielder Youri Tielemans from Leicester.

Villa are in Europe next season for the first time since 2010 after Emery oversaw a remarkable transformation in his first season in charge.

A seventh-place finish in the Premier League was enough to secure a place in the Europa Conference League.

Villa sat just outside the relegation zone when Emery replaced the sacked Steve Gerrard in October.

James Says No Intention of Retiring Yet

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - NBA star LeBron James ended speculation over his future, saying that he is not yet ready to retire and maintains his love for basketball.

James responded to his team, the Los Angeles Lakers, losing the Western Conference final to eventual champions Denver in May, by saying he had "a lot to think about" amid reports he was considering walking away from the sport.

But in a speech at the ESPY awards ceremony on Wednesday, James settled any fears he may be ready to quit.

"I don't care how many more points I score, or what I can or cannot do on the floor," James said after receiving the award for Best Record-Breaking Performance for passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the league's all-time leading scorer.

"The real question for me is: Can I play without cheating this game? The day I can't give everything on the floor is the day I'll be done. Lucky for you guys, that day is not today," he said.

"In my 20 years playing this game and all the years before, I've never, ever cheated the game and I will never take it for granted," he added.

James, who will be 39 in December, dismissed suggestions that he wanted to continue playing in the NBA with one or both of his son's -- his eldest son Bronny James, who will play college basketball next season at the University of Southern California, and could conceivably enter the NBA in time for the 2024-2025 campaign.

But he said that coaching his sons has helped to maintain his enthusiasm.



Messi Mulls Int'l Retirement, But Not Quite Yet

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina World Cup winning captain Lionel Messi says he has no idea when he will finally call time on his international career.

"Even I don't know when. It'll happen when it happens," the 36-year-old said in an interview broadcast on Argentine television.

"After winning everything I want to enjoy the moment and wait for time to tell me when it's the moment," said the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner.

"Logically, given my age, one would expect it to be soon, but I don't know for sure."

"Now that we are American champions (Argentina won the 2021 Copa America) and world champions we have to enjoy that."

He reiterated earlier comments that he was unlikely to be in Argentina's squad when they defend their World Cup title in 2026.

The interview was conducted in China last month, when Messi scored the quickest goal of his career after just 79 seconds in a 2-0 friendly win against Australia in Beijing.

On Tuesday, Messi arrived in Florida to put the final touches on his move to US Major League Soccer club Inter Miami from Paris Saint-Germain.

He is expected to put pen to paper on a two-and-a-half year deal, reported to be worth US\$60 million a year, before being presented to fans at a stadium event on Sunday.

