

Iran Has Set the Official Selling Price for Light Crude, Which It Supplies to Asian Buyers in August 2023, at “\$3.5” Above the Regional Base Price of Oman/Dubai, Up “15 Cents” Compared With July

IRAN NEWS

TEDPIX, the Main Index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Dropped 64,633 Points to 1.956m on Monday, as Per Report, Over 9.783b Securities Worth 58.233 Trillion Rials (About \$119m) Were Traded

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Alcaraz Defeats Djokovic To Win First Wimbledon Title



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Iraq Responsible for Prosecuting Perpetrators of Soleimani Killing

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights says Iraq stands responsible for the prosecution of those behind the assassination of the revered anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Kazem Gharibabadi also underscored that the United States is the principal sponsor of terrorism across the world.

The Iranian official was meeting with a group of presidents and professors of Iraqi universities in Tehran on Sunday as they exchanged views on the West's instrumental use and politicization of human rights.

Gharibabadi described Iran and Iraq as two victims of sanctions and terrorism. "Iran and Iraq are victims of sanctions and terror. In Iraq, 500,000 innocent children lost their lives as a result of U.S. and Western sanctions; there was even an embargo placed on students' blackboard chalks."

"Thousands of people fell victim to terrorism in Iran and Iraq; many people were plagued by the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in Iraq. Who created the group? The very same countries claiming advocacy of human rights," Gharibabadi said. **See Page 7**

Washington Urged to Avoid Any Provocative Moves in Region

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran urged the United States to refrain from any "provocative" moves in the region, especially close to the country's borders, stressing that Tehran reserves the right to take "deterrent measures" under international law.

Speaking during a weekly press conference in Tehran on Monday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said that the U.S. government's role regarding the issue of regional security has never been peaceful and constructive.

"Iran monitors with sensitivity and accuracy any illegal and unconstructive act that affects the security of the region, and it will ... pay special attention to any provocative and illegal moves, especially near its borders," he added.

Kanaani also warned that the Islamic Republic will use its "inalienable rights" in response to the U.S. moves.

Iran "reserves the right to take due deterrent measures under international law, rules and regulations given the capability of its Armed Forces in protecting the security of borders, as well as that of navigation and aviation in the Persian Gulf region," he said. **See Page 7**

President Opens Home-Grown Petrochemical Complex



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has launched a petrochemical complex with the largest degree of reliance on home-grown industries.

The Gachsaran petrochemical complex, a project that has cost some \$1.4 billion, was inaugurated on Monday in a ceremony in the presence of President Ebrahim Raisi in the southwest city of Gachsaran in Iran's Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province.

Raisi said in the inauguration ceremony that the fact that the Gachsaran petrochemical plant, which has mostly relied on the potentials of Iranian experts and companies, is a true example of Iran's resistance in the face of [US-imposed] sanctions.

Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji said that over 83% of the project has been constructed by the local companies and workforce, saving Iran over 269 million euros.

Owji said some 70 Iranian firms have contributed to designing, building, and installing vital equipment in the project.

Following the plans of the second round of the provincial trip of the government to Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province, Raisi opened the Chamshir Dam as the highest roller concrete dam in West Asia and also ordered start of operation of the first unit of the dam's power plant.

The studies for the construction of this dam started in 1994 and the implementation operations started from 2012 by obtaining the necessary permits from the relevant organizations and with a credit of about 230 million Euros, but its construction operations were stopped and slow, but with the 22-month efforts of the Popular Administration and the allocation of special credit, it has been completed and reached the operational stage.

Chamshir Dam with a height of 151 meters and a crown length of 580 meters has a reservoir with a volume of 2.3 billion cubic meters, a lake with a length of 48 kilometers and a lake area of 51 square kilometres at normal level.

After the official opening of this dam, the President was present for a few minutes among the employees of this complex and while talking and listening to their views and demands, he issued orders to meet their demands.

The President described Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad as a province with good capacities in the fields of agriculture and tourism and stated, "This province has good capacities that we will try to use in the development of the province to meet the needs of the people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad and increase people's hope and trust".

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province has hardworking people/ Nomads as one of the productive sectors of the country should be given special attention

Speaking upon arrival in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province, which is the second trip of the Popular Administration to this province, Raisi stated that Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad has hardworking people.

He said, "With the efforts of hardworking officials and managers and with the management of the governor generals of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, some projects approved during the first visit of the Popular Administration to this province have come to fruition, the report of which will be presented to the people during this visit".

Pointing out that in the second visit of the Popular Administration to the province, broader issues are considered than the essential issues of the first visit, the President added, "In that trip, there were some essential issues that have now come to fruition, and in this trip, in addition to following up on the remaining projects from the resolutions of the first trip, the new needs that have been identified for different parts of the province will be followed up".

Raisi further described Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad as a province with good capacities in the fields of agriculture and tourism and stated, "This province has good capacities that we will try to use in the development of the province to meet the needs of the people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad and increase people's hope and trust".

The President also referred to the nomadic nature of the province and stated, "According to Imam Khomeini, the nomads are the valuable resources of the country, which should be given special attention as one of the productive parts of the country, and the necessary measures should be taken to serve them and the nomadic life".

Raisi pointed out, "In this trip, unlike the first trip, where it was not possible to attend public gatherings due to coronavirus, we will also be present in public and, in addition to informing about the measures taken for the development of the province, the plans being implemented and also the new measures that must be implemented to meet people's demands will be followed up".

France Extends Aid to Afghan Refugees in Iran

PARIS (Dispatches) - The French government has announced a significant financial aid package of € million to support the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in its critical programs for Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

The funding aims to enhance the provision of lifesaving assistance and protection for vulnerable refugees and their local host communities. The announcement was made through a press statement issued on Monday.

In Pakistan, € million of the funding will be allocated to bolster primary and secondary education, reinforce skills and vocational training, and improve access to public healthcare in host communities throughout 2023. The focus will be on supporting women and girls.

This funding is in addition to the € million contribution made in 2022, which has already yielded positive results in increasing girls' access to education and expanding skills training for women. **See Page 7**

ViewPoint
By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Cluster Bomb Or Cluster Crime?

For years many international bodies have tried to control war crimes through restricting deadly weapons and weapons of mass destruction which threatens the life of people but each time big powers and mainly the U.S. and its allies have violated what has been approved by those bodies to save the life of people through banning any deadly and mass destruction weapons.

The U.S. has been the main violator of any approved law and decision in protecting humanity and this country which claims of supporting human rights and values has passed all red lines. Washington who is now at odd with the Islamic Republic of Iran over the peaceful nuclear program has been the first and the only country used nuclear bomb during the World War II. Of course this country has tried all of its deadly weapons during the wars in any part of the world.

Cluster bomb is one of the weapons which has been banned by the international bodies but we see the U.S. forces use it wherever they want and nobody dares to question it, but if some independent and non-Western country uses it suddenly the world roars against it.

Cluster bombs have been banned by over 100 countries — of course as usual the U.S. has not signed the pact — due to the significant risk they pose to civilian populations. These munitions release smaller bomblets that have a high failure rate, leaving unexploded remnants that can remain dangerous for years and detonate unpredictably. But we see the U.S. gives no damn to what the world says and it wants to supply this bomb to Ukraine for using it against Russia.

President Joe Biden confirmed the decision to send cluster bombs to Ukraine as part of a military aid package worth \$800 million. He acknowledged the difficulty of the decision but emphasized Ukraine's need for ammunition. He also stated that he had discussed the matter with allies beforehand.

A cluster bomb is a type of weapon that is designed to disperse smaller bombs over a large area. They are also known as cluster munitions, with the smaller bombs referred to as sub-munitions or bomblets, CBC News said. **See Page 7**

Mr Naghashian Esteemed Owner of Sokhan-Gostar Institute

We express our deepest condolences over the demise of your esteemed brother-in-law Haj Mohammad Reza Javaherian and May God rest his soul on peace and pray for patience for his bereaved family.

By the way a commemoration ceremony will be held for the late Javaherian at 11-12.5 a.m., Friday July 21 at Al-Ghadir Mosque at Mirdamad Street.

Sokhan-Gostar Institute Staff

Ms. Fatemeh Javaherian, Esteemed Managing Director of Sokhan-Gostar Institute

We express our heartfelt condolences over the demise of your beloved brother Haj Mohammad Reza Javaherian and may God rest his soul on peace and pray for your bereaved family.

Sokhan-Gostar Institute Staff



Sokhan Gostar Institute

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Iran, Italy's Ambassadors in Iraq Meet to Boost Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (IP) - The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mohammad Kazem Al-Sadegh, and the Ambassador of Italy, Maurizio Greganti, held a meeting in Iraq to expand bilateral relations.

In the meeting, Al-Sadegh criticized the double standards policy of some European countries regarding human rights and the crimes of the Israeli regime.

The two sides emphasized the expanding relations, pointing to the historical ties between the two countries.

The two countries' ambassadors praised the Prime Minister and the Iraqi government's actions as positive and assessed the prospects for bilateral and multilateral collaboration.

Leader Congratulates Volleyball Players Over World Championship

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Leader of the Islamic Revolution extended his congratulations on Iran's national volleyball team's victory in FIVB Men's U21 Volleyball World Championship.

In a message on Monday, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei congratulated the recent victory of the world title by Iran's under-21 national volleyball team.

In his message the Leader said: "Dear young volleyball champions," You brought joy and happiness to the hearts of the nation with your good effort in playing the match. Thank you."

Earlier in a message, President Ebrahim Raisi congratulated the young Iranian volleyball players on becoming world champion.

expressed gratitude to the young Iranian volleyball players for bringing joy and happiness to the Iranian nation after winning the world title.

"The commanding, hopeful and undefeated victory of our country's under-21 national volleyball team in the world championship competition in Manama was achieved after displaying the capabilities and talent of our country's youth. It became a source of joy and happiness for our dear people," President Raisi said in his message.

"I congratulate the honorable Iranian nation on this valuable achievement. I sincerely appreciate all the coaches and everyone in the national volleyball team, especially our country's competent youth who increased Iran's prestige after hoisting the holy flag of the Islamic Republic at the top of the world. May God Almighty continue their victories in other sports competitions," he added.

Iran had beaten Italy on Sunday to win the title of the Men's U21 World Championship 2023.



The Iranian U-21 volleyball team managed to win Italy 3-2 (25-21, 23-25, 23-25, 25-16 and 15-9).

The 2023 FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship was held in Manama, Bahrain, on July 7-16. Iran remained undefeated after securing eight consecutive victories over their opponents.

Iran's national youth volleyball team won the world championship with eight consecutive victories and stood on the first podium for the second time.

Iran's Embassy in Libya Ready To Provide Services

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Iranian embassy in Libya is ready to provide consular services, the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA) reported Sunday, quoting the head of Iran's diplomatic delegation in the North African country.

"Given the closure of the Iranian embassy in Libya over the past years, we are currently preparing and organizing its building. Fortunately, the embassy is ready to accept clients," Einollah Souri told the ISNA when commenting on the latest developments in Iran's diplomatic relations with Libya.

Over the past days, good meetings were held between the Iranian delegation and Libyan officials, which is indicative of the two countries' determination to expand relations, particularly in the areas of economy and trade, he said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, the country's national maritime carrier, has also resumed its operations in Libya, with its first ship berthed at Libya's Misrata port on Wednesday after about 10 years, according to the senior Iranian diplomat.

Souri expressed hope that Iran would be able to restore relations with Libya to the past level in the short term.

Iran-Azerbaijan Economic Commission Begins Work

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN (IP) - The meeting of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Commission began with the participation of the Iranian Minister of Road and Urban Development and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister.

The meeting began in Astara Port, northern Iran, and mainly addressed the grounds for more cooperation in the North-East corridor's joint railroad and land route projects.

Iran's Road and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazr-Pash and Shahin Mustafayev, First Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan, met at Astara as the heads of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Commission.

On Monday, Mehrdad Bazr-Pash, welcomed Shahin Mustafayev, First Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan, at the Iran-Azerbaijan Border in Astara.



On June 21, Bazr-Pash and Mustafayev, in a telephone call, talked about the development of economic relations between Iran and Azerbaijan and the completion of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). As the head of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Commission, Bazr-Pash emphasized implementing projects which had been on the agenda.

Bazrpashand Shahin Mustafayev, the Azeri deputy PM, is scheduled to visit Astrachai concrete and metal bridges, the railway port of Astara, and the customs terminals in Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan accelerated after the two countries' presidents' meeting on the sidelines of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit in Ashgabat on November 28, 2021.

Iran Ready to Back Any Regional Initiative on Afghanistan



TEHRAN (PressTV)- Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has announced the Islamic Republic's readiness to contribute to the advancement of regional initiatives on the issue of Afghanistan under the auspices of the United Nations.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks during a meeting with Feridun Hadi Sinirlioglu, the UN Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the independent assessment process on Afghanistan, on Monday.

He said the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan and fighting against terrorism are important, emphasizing the need to support regional initiatives, particularly the framework of neighbors, in order to resolve the challenges in the war-torn country.

"Afghanistan needs urgent solutions and if the international community does not pay serious attention to the security challenges of this country caused by the movements of terrorist groups, its negative consequences will affect the region and the world," the top Iranian diplomat said.

Amirabdollahian further described Sinirlioglu's mission as "difficult," expressing hope that due to his experience, the UN official will have a more accurate assessment of the realities on the ground in Afghanistan and accomplish his mission successfully.

Sinirlioglu, for his part, presented his assessment regarding the developments in Afghanistan and the country's situation in various fields.

He also reaffirmed the UN's determination to support the regional initiatives for Afghanistan to help form an inclusive government in this country.

Gov't Adopts Bill to Support Iranians Living Abroad

TEHRAN (IRNA)- The government has passed a bill aimed at encouraging and engaging Iranians living abroad to invest in the economy and facilitate their return to the country.

The bill, titled "Support for Iranians Abroad", was drafted in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice and was sent to Parliament for approval on Sunday. The proposed legislation includes various measures to provide effective support to Iranians residing overseas, including provision of legal services, e-government services, and judicial affairs assistance.

According to the bill, the judiciary is required to establish a system within three months of the law's enactment to review complaints and requests for amnesty from those Iranian expatriates who have been convicted by Iranian courts, as stated in Article 96 of the Islamic Penal Code.

Facilitating the return of Iranians living abroad and leveraging their scientific and specialized capabilities for the benefit of the nation is deemed crucial and has garnered significant attention from both experts and officials.

The bill's implementation could pave the way for a stronger bond between Iranians living abroad and their homeland.

Denmark Continues to Invest in Iran Despite Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Danish ambassador to Iran said that despite the sanctions against Iran and the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, Denmark is among the countries that have continued to invest in Iran.

Jesper Vahr made the remarks in a meeting with the governor of Isfahan province.

Stating that Isfahan is a cultural province with very high potential, the Danish official said "Our cultural interactions with Iran have been at an ordinary level."

Iran, Pakistan Stress Joint Fight Against Terrorist Groups

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian foreign minister and Pakistan's Army chief stressed boosting cooperation at the shared borders and combating terrorist groups.

Hossein Amirabdollahian and Pakistan's Army chief Lieutenant-General Syed Asim Munir met and held talks on bilateral regional and international issues in Tehran on Sunday.

Amirabdollahian expressed appreciation for the positive and constructive role played by the Pakistani army commander in border security cooperation and the fight against terrorism. He also stressed the need to turn the shared borders into economically thriving borders and to expand border markets in order to benefit the citizens on both sides of the borders and contribute to the development of the provinces located on the shared borders.

Stressing the new dynamics prevailing in the region, the Iranian minister expressed hope that the two countries, by adopting a strategic approach to Islamic world issues, take greater steps in deepening their bilateral relations.

Lieutenant-General Syed Asim Munir, for his part, referred to the religious, cultural and historical commonalities between the two countries, adding that Pakistan is pleased to have a neighbor like Iran and welcomes the expansion of relations in all areas.

The Pakistani army chief stressed the importance of the agreements reached with Iranian officials during the trip, expressing hope that the people of both countries would see the effects of this cooperation as soon as possible.

During the meeting, the two sides also discussed expanding economic relations, the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline and electricity exports.

Referring to the huge tourism potential in Iran and Isfahan, he said, "Iran has one of the most densely populated historical attractions in the world, and the leading province in this regard is Isfahan."

"The first area of interaction could be in the field of music, and we are interested in collaborating in this area," he added.

He also called for joint exhibitions between Denmark and Isfahan to host works of artists. According to Vahr, Denmark is a pioneer in protecting natural resources, combating carbon dioxide emissions, and preserving water resources worldwide.

"Memorandums of understanding between Denmark and Iran are being negotiated, and we hope to have good cooperation regarding the protection of energy resources," he further said.



Iran Claims Complete Security on Western Borders

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

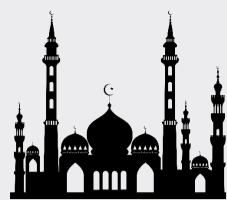
TEHRAN - The chief of staff of Iran's military claimed that "complete security" has been established on its western borders with the Kurdistan Region during a visit to East Azerbaijan province, nearly two months away from an Iranian ultimatum to Baghdad to secure the borders.

Iranian cross-border strikes against Kurdish opposition groups based in the Kurdistan Region are temporarily suspended after Baghdad agreed to a September 22 deadline to disarm the groups and secure the border regions.

"Investigations show that there is complete security on the borders of East Azerbaijan province with neighboring countries," Chief of Staff of Iran's armed forces Major General Mohammed Bagheri said.

Tehran has long accused the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of harboring opposition groups it considers "terrorists" and allowing them to use the border areas as a launchpad for attacks against the Islamic republic. Iranian armed forces have carried out many attacks on the alleged positions of these groups, including using both ballistic missiles and drones.

On Sunday, Iraqi National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji met with Iranian ambassador to Iraq Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq in Baghdad, discussing "border security measures taken by the two countries regarding border control and the exchange of information," Iraqi state media said.



PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 12:10 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 19:39 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 03:21 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 05:02 |

123. Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail): whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper.

124. If any do deeds of righteousness, - be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.

Surah 4. Women (123 - 124)

Tehran, Madrid Can Have Joint Cooperation In Various Fields

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) hosted a forum on acquaintance with trade opportunities in Spain and all participants reiterated that there are various fields for joint economic co-operations between the two countries.

The international affairs department of the ICCIMA hosted the event with presence of officials from Embassy of Spain as well as economic activists who were interested in business in Spain.

In the meeting, the caretaker of ICCIMA Ms. Niloofa Asadi emphasized necessity for boosting the trade relation of Iran with different countries like Spain and said that enhancing the level of relation and facilitating the condition for trade connection is the goal of the department and reiterated that in this sector, using capacities of embassies for finding required solutions will be effective.

She went on to say that dispatch of trade delegations and efforts in line with production and joint investment is the priority of the chamber during the international relations of the country. She stipulated that Iran and Spain have had from the very past till today broad relations in different fields like tourism, hotel construction, agriculture and processing industries, renewable energies, pharmaceuticals and medical and due to this background it is required to make effort on course to improve and revival of relation between the two countries. She stated that in this relation, the cooperation between the governments of both countries for defining barter trade mechanisms and using the capacity of the joint commission which is to be held very soon.

Then Head of Iran-Spain Joint Chamber Mr. Mohammad Taheri, for his part, expressed his hope regarding the improvement of trade relation with Spain and said that the chamber is working to remove the existing hurdles although the main problem is sanctions and restriction in transfer of the forex.

He added that Iran and Spain have the experience of \$3b trade volume and today Iran's exports to Spain are around \$150m while Spain's imports from Iran are around \$200m. He reiterated that the required grounds exist for cooperation



between the two states and broad capacities for trade and joint investment can be define but it first requires all required infrastructures to be provided and the chamber is doing its best on this course.

Then Ambassador of Spain to Tehran Mr. Ángel Losada Fernandez, for his part, said identifying the opportunities for trade cooperation between the two countries is very important and said that Tehran and Madrid have good capacities for cooperation and since Spain now holds the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, it is a good opportunity for both countries to enhance their ties.

He also pointed to the energy as a field for cooperation between the two countries following the Ukraine-Spain war. He also announced efforts of Embassy of Spain in Tehran to reinforce trade between the two countries, adding that through the history the relation between Tehran and Madrid has continued although it has faced some ups and downs because of the condition, however, both sides have remained committed to maintain their relation and try to facilitate their bilateral trade.

Then Spain Embassy's Commercial attaches to Tehran Mr. Inigo Gil-Casares, for his part, said that the economic capacities for boosting bilateral trade between Iran and Spain is broad, emphasized that Spain is the 14th world economy and fourth economy in Europe. He further said that tourism industry is the most important and money making industry of Spain in the country's GDP and the country attract foreign investments, admitting that major part of development of the country is through attracting foreign investment. He recommended Iranians to cooperate in the field of renewable energies and creating big cluster of new technologies for using in industries.

Gil-Casares said that one cannot ignore the impacts off sanctions and said that there are a large number of opportunities for cooperation between Iran and Spain although they have a tough job ahead. He also said that both countries can cooperate in the automotive sector as Spain is the second biggest car producer in Europe as auto industry accounts for 18% of this country's export.

He then explained how Iranians can invest and launch company in Spain and taxation process in the country.

Tehran, Beijing to Begin Implementation of Some Joint Projects

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi has said Iran and China are going to begin execution of some joint projects agreed upon in February by the presidents of the two countries, as of the next month, Mehr News Agency reported.

According to Khandouzi, the necessary follow-ups regarding the mentioned projects have been made over the last five months and the final decisions for the start of their implementations were made during a joint business event on Thursday.

"President Raisi had an important trip to Beijing last winter and good agreements were made with the president of China; in this regard, the necessary follow-ups were made by various ministries during the last five months, and on Thursday the first joint committee between Iran and China was held after 4.5 years," Khandouzi said.

"China is Iran's largest trading partner and the most important destination for the export of Iranian goods and an important part of our imports are also from China. Last year, China's share in Iran's (non-oil) trade was 24 percent," the minister added.

Iran and China inked twenty cooperation documents and MOUs during President Raisi's visit to Beijing in February.

The documents of cooperation and MOUs were in various fields including crisis management, tourism, communication and information technology, environment, international trade, intellectual property, agriculture, export, healthcare, media, sports, and cultural heritage.

An Iran-China Business and Investment Forum was held in Beijing on Thursday, during which officials and businesspeople from both countries reviewed the enhancement of bilateral exchanges.

Addressing the forum, Khandouzi hailed the huge participation in the event as a sign of interest on both sides to further promote ties.

He also welcomed the reopening of an office of the Iran-China Chamber of Commerce in Beijing.

Rapeseed Output Up 6% in 4 Months

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Executive Director of Iranian Government Trading Corporation (GTC), Saeed Rad has emphasized that Iran's rapeseed output increased 6% in four months to mid-July compared with last year's corresponding period.

Saeed Rad said on Sunday that \$104,000 metric tons of rapeseed had been outputted in 4 months to mid-July which shows a 6 percent growth as compared to the corresponding period of the year before.

Stating that half of the country's rapeseed has been outputted in two provinces of Khuzestan and Golestan, he said that Khuzestan and Golestan stood in the first and second places, respectively in the country's rapeseed output with 30 percent and 20 percent.

Mazandaran province ranks in third place with 9 percent of rapeseed production, he noted.

Referring to the unprecedented growth of rapeseed output in the provinces of Kordestan and Khorasan Razavi, Rad noted that rapeseed output in these provinces hike 10 and 9.5 times, respectively compared with last year's corresponding period.

With the onset of spring, rapeseed yellow blossoms create eye-catching views in Iran, and at the end of the first months of spring cultivation of rapeseed begins in the country.

TCCIMA Puts Forward 3 Proposals for Broadening Trade With Pakistan

TEHRAN – Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) hosted a meeting with a delegation of senior Pakistani state officials on Monday, during which the two sides discussed ways of expanding economic exchanges between the two countries' private sectors.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary General of the TCCIMA Bahman Eshghi, and TCCIMA Deputy Head for International Affairs Hessamedin Hallaj.

At the beginning of this meeting, Eshghi introduced TCCIMA as the largest chamber of commerce in the country, noting that the business enterprises based in the capital Tehran account for about 50 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

He pointed to the historic relations between Iran and Pakistan and said: "After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, Iran-Pakistan relations have been very friendly both in the period before Iran's Islamic revolution and after the revolution."

Eshghi described the extent of the economic cooperation between Iran and Pakistan as broad and said: "The continuation and development of this cooperation require the exchange of knowledge and experiences of the parties, and the chambers of commerce can become the center of such exchanges and communications."

Referring to the pressures of Western sanctions on both countries, he called this situation a common point for reviewing bilateral relations and considered it the

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



duty of the private sectors of the two countries to resolve problems and improve trade relations despite the sanctions.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Eshghi put forward three proposals for improving the trade relations between Iran and Pakistan and said: "The first step to realizing this goal is to deepen the relations between the businessmen of the two countries. The TCCIMA will be active in this regard and it is necessary for the Pakistani side to take measures as well."

He, next, underlined the necessity of preparing a list of exchangeable goods and products between the two countries, saying that the two neighbors, despite having a long relationship, have little knowledge of each other's market needs.

Finally, the official stressed the need for promoting joint investment by the two sides, noting that joint cooperation does not necessarily require large investments, and small companies can also pioneer in the path of such joint investments.

Then Muhammad J. Afaqi, Dean of National Management College (NMC) of National School of Public Policy of Pakistan for his part said that today by a click in the internet one can get information about countries but some information is obtained through such meetings. He then pointed to the deep cultural and religious relation between Iran and Pakistan and expressed hope the economic relations between the two countries improve after the meeting.

Iran Steel Output Up 10% in Q1

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The statistics of the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) indicate that the country's steel production volume in the first three months of the current Persian calendar year (March 21 to June 22) registered a 10.5 percent growth compared to the same period last year.

The ISPA said 9,478,000 tons of steel were produced in the country in the first quarter of the current year, showing a 10.5 percent hike compared to last year's corresponding period. In this period, the total production volume of steel products recorded a five percent growth and the production of sponge iron also registered an 8.2 percent hike compared to a year earlier.

The report added that 5,957,000 tons of steel products were produced from March 21 to June 22, 2023. Also 3,413,000 tons and 2,543,000 tons of lengthy and flat steel products were produced in the country in the first quarter of the current year respectively.

According to the statistical report of the association, sponge iron producers produced 9,974,000 tons of this product in the first three months of the current year, showing an 8.2 percent hike compared to the same period last year.

Iran, China Stress Accelerating Trade Exchanges in Agricultural Sector

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Officials from Iran and China emphasized the need for accelerating the trade exchanges in the field of agriculture.

During a visit by Iran's deputy minister of agriculture for economic and planning affairs, Shapour Alaei Moghaddam, to China at the head of a delegation, carrying out trade exchanges and import and export of agricultural products between the two countries were emphasized. Alaei Moghaddam participated in the meeting of the Iran-China Joint Trade-Economic Commission co-chaired by Iranian Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Seyed Ehsan Khandouzi and China's minister of commerce.

To accelerate the trade exchanges and import and export of agricultural products between the two countries, expert-level talks were held between Alaei Moghaddam as well as President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mohammad Rezvanifar and the head of China's Customs Office.

A joint meeting was also held between the Iranian deputy minister of agriculture and the CEO of China's Fisheries Association on developing the export of fisheries products and joint investment in the fishing industry between the two countries.

SP Gas Field Phase 11 To Go on Stream Soon

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An oil project will be inaugurated in the country every month, Iran's oil minister said, adding that Phase 11 of the South Pars Gas Field will be inaugurated in the near future.

Semi-finished oil and gas projects will be completed and inaugurated by the end of the current Persian calendar year (March 20, 2024), Javad Owji stated.

Speaking at a ceremony held to launch the Gachsaran Petrochemical Complex, the oil minister announced the inauguration of 68 semi-finished oil and gas projects by the yearend.

Once these projects are launched, the oil and gas output volumes will increase to 130,000 barrels per day (bpd) and 40 million cubic meters respectively, Owji continued.

All stages for the construction operations of Phase 11 of the South Pars Gas Field have been implemented by expert domestic engineers and would become operational in the near future.

24 MOUs Signed for Accelerating National Housing Movement

TEHRAN (MNA) - National Land and Housing Organization (NLHO) of Iran has signed 24 memorandums of understanding (MOU) with government and private sector institutions and organizations in order to speed up land supply for the National Housing Movement, IRNA reported.

According to the Iranian Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, the Executive Headquarters of Imam Khomeini's Order, Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters, Mostazafan Foundation, Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Security, Armed Forces, Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, Astan Quds Razavi, Central Insurance, Tehran Municipality, Iran Fisheries Organization, and National Retirement Fund are among the organizations and institutions with which the NLHO has signed MOUs for facilitating the progress of the National Housing Movement.

As reported, NLHO has been following new strategies for the acceleration of the construction of National Housing Movement units across the country. One of the mentioned strategies has been to allocate unused government-owned lands for the construction of housing units under the framework of the mentioned movement. In this regard, so far, 50,000 hectares of land from the Transport Ministry have been provided for the National Housing Movement.

Libya Border Guards Rescue Migrants Near Tunisia

AL' ASSAH (Dispatches) - Libyan border guards have rescued dozens of migrants who have been left in the desert by Tunisian authorities without water and food, and their numbers are "rising", an officer said.

Hundreds of migrants from sub-Saharan African countries were forcibly taken to desert and hostile areas bordering Libya and Algeria after racial unrest in early July in Sfax, Tunisia's second-largest city.

An AFP team at the Libyan-Tunisian border saw migrants who were visibly exhausted and dehydrated, sitting or lying on the sand and using shrubs to try and shield themselves from the scorching summer heat that topped 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).



Kyiv Reports Intensified Combat as Putin Says Counteroffensive Failing



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine said fighting had "intensified" on the eastern front as Russian President Vladimir Putin deemed Kyiv's counteroffensive a failure.

Putin is yet to decide if Russia will renew the grain deal -- expiring late Monday -- that allowed the resumption of Ukrainian exports through the Black Sea, temporarily halted when the invasion began in February 2022.

Ukraine last month began its highly anticipated fightback after stockpiling Western weapons and building up its offensive forces.

It has however admitted difficult battles and called on the United States and other allies to provide long-range weapons and artillery.

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Ganna Malyar said "the situation has somewhat intensified in the east."

"For two days in a row, the enemy has been actively attacking in the Kupiansk sector in the Kharkiv region. We are on the defense," Malyar wrote on Telegram.

She nevertheless said Ukrainian forces were "gradually moving forward" near the eastern city of Bakhmut, which Russian forces seized in May.

She said Ukrainian soldiers were advancing south of Bakhmut and trying to hold their positions in the north.

On the front near Bakhmut, a commander of the artillery battalion of the 22nd separate mechanised brigade told AFP he was satisfied with the counteroffensive but said progress was painful.

"Any day that we take back 10, 20, 100 metres is already a big win and achievement," said the commander under the call sign "Bulat".

Battery commander "Volyna" told AFP "we are encircling Bakhmut, kicking out (Russians) of Klyshchyvka," a village south of the hotspot city.

Bakhmut, once home to 70,000 people and known for its sparkling wine and salt mine, has been destroyed by the longest and bloodiest battle of the war.

"In Bakhmut itself, we are shelling the enemy, and the enemy is shelling us," Malyar said.

On Friday Ukraine said it had over the past week advanced nearly two kilometres around the southern city of Melitopol, occupied by Russia shortly after the war began.

"People should understand what price we pay for (advancing)... There are a lot of enemies. We need time to grind them," commander "Bulat" told AFP.

In a televised interview broadcasted Sunday, Putin said the Ukrainian military made no progress.

"All enemy attempts to break through our defences... they have not succeeded since the offensive began. The enemy is not successful," Putin said.

On Tuesday the Russian army announced that it advanced 1.5 kilometres (0.9 miles) near the town of Lyman in eastern Ukraine.

In the televised interview, Putin "positively" assessed the course of his special military operation.

Putin has not yet said if Russia would renew the deal under which Moscow allowed Ukraine to ship its grain across the Black Sea.

Set to expire late Monday, the deal brokered by the United Nations and Turkey, signed by Moscow and Kyiv in July 2022, established a protected sea corridor allowing Ukraine's agricultural goods to reach global markets.

Russia however says obstacles to its own exports remain, and threatens to pull out of the grain deal over the issue.

On Saturday, Putin said Russia still had concerns about the deal.

Kerry in China to Restart Stalled Climate Talks

BEIJING (Dispatches) - U.S. special envoy for climate John Kerry arrived in Beijing for a three-day visit aimed at renewing bilateral cooperation on climate change between the world's two biggest polluters. His trip follows on the heels of two other high-profile visits by US officials in recent weeks after years of tension between Beijing and Washington.

Kerry's trip to Beijing is his third as President Joe Biden's climate emissary and could mark a reboot of climate negotiations between China and the United States after a year of impasse. Beijing cut off key ties - including cooperation on climate matters - with Washington in August 2022 after then US House speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, angering Beijing.



EU, Tunisia Announce Progress In Building Ties

TUNIS (Dispatches) - European leaders and Tunisia's president announced progress in the building of hoped-for closer economic and trade relations and on measures to combat the often lethal smuggling of migrants across the Mediterranean Sea.

The leaders of Italy, the Netherlands and the European Commission made their second visit to Tunis in just over a month. They expressed hope that a memorandum newly signed with Tunisia during the trip would pave the way for a comprehensive partnership.

On their last visit in June, the leaders held out the promise of more than 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) in financial aid to rescue Tunisia's teetering economy and better police its borders, in an effort to restore stability to the North African country and to stem migration from its shores to Europe.

Tunisian officials say at least 15 migrants have been found dead off the country's coast and at its border with Algeria this week. Aid agencies say at least 500 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa have been transferred back to Tunisia after being pushed into a dangerous no-man's-land on the Libyan border.

Tensions have spiked dangerously in a Tunisian port city after three migrants were detained in the death of a local man.

Tunisia's president says his country doesn't want to become Europe's border guard or a land of resettlement for migrants rejected from elsewhere.

This time, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte didn't detail the full monetary value of EU aid on offer to Tunisia, in statements they made after talks with Tunisian President Kais Saied.

But Von der Leyen said the latest trip secured agreement on "a comprehensive package of measures that we will now put into practice swiftly."

Specific aid that she announced included a 10-million euro (\$11 million) program to boost exchanges of students and 65 million euros (\$73 million) in EU funding to modernize Tunisian schools.

On migration, Von der Leyen said: "We need an effective cooperation more than ever."

Japan, S Korea, U.S. Hold Joint Drills After N Korea's ICBM Launch

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan, South Korea and the United States have held a joint naval missile defence exercise to counter North Korea's "nuclear and missile threats", days after Pyongyang launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

The drill on Sunday was conducted in international waters between South Korea and Japan and brought together destroyers equipped with Aegis radar systems from the three countries, the South Korean Navy said.

A naval officer said the exercise focused on practising procedures to detect and track a computer-simulated ballistic target and share related information.

North Korea fired its latest Hwasong-18 missile, which Pyongyang describes as the core of its nuclear strike force, off its east coast on Wednesday in what it said was a "strong practical warning" to its adversaries.

The launch followed heated complaints from North Korea in recent days, accusing US spy planes of flying over its exclusive economic zone waters, condemning a recent visit to South Korea by a US nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine and promising to take steps in reaction.

Seoul, Tokyo and Washington denounced the ICBM launch, saying it constituted a "clear, flagrant violation" of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions and posed "a grave threat to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and beyond".

The South Korean Navy said Sunday's joint drills "served as an opportunity to enhance our military's response capabilities against ballistic missiles and improve security cooperation" between South Korea, Japan and the US.

"We will effectively respond to North Korea's nuclear and missile threats with our military's strong response system and the trilateral cooperation," it added.

The US and its Asian allies have been working to improve their information-sharing system on North Korea's missiles.

South Korea and Japan are independently linked to US radar systems but not to each other's.

China, Russia to Start Joint Air And Sea Drill in Sea of Japan

BEIJING (Dispatches) - A Chinese naval flotilla set off to join Russian naval and air forces in the Sea of Japan in an exercise aimed at "safeguarding the security of strategic waterways", according to China's defense ministry.

Codenamed "Northern/Interaction-2023", the drill marks enhanced military cooperation between China and Russia since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and is taking place as Beijing continues to rebuff U.S. calls to resume military communication.

The Chinese flotilla comprised of five warships and four ship-borne helicopters, left the eastern port of Qingdao and will rendezvous with Russian forces in a "predetermined area", the ministry said on its official WeChat account on Sunday.

On Saturday, the ministry said Russian naval and air forces would participate in the drill taking place in the Sea of Japan.

This would be the first time both Russian forces take part in the drill, state newspaper Global Times cited military observers as saying.

Gromkiy and Sovershennyi, two Russian warships

taking part in the Sea of Japan drill, had earlier this month conducted separate training with the Chinese navy in Shanghai on formation movements, communication and sea rescues.

Before making port at the financial hub of Shanghai, the same ships had sailed past Taiwan and Japan, prompting both Taipei and Tokyo to monitor the Russian warships.

Days before Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping declared a "no limits" partnership they said was aimed at countering the influence of the United States.

One notable area of the partnership is military cooperation. When China's Defence Minister Li Shangfu met with the head of the Russian navy, Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, in Beijing this month, both sides reiterated pledges to strengthen military ties.

Chinese military Chief of Joint Staff Liu Zhenli and Russia's top soldier, Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov made the same pledge during a video call in June.



Azerbaijan Says Russia, Armenia Not Fulfilling Ceasefire Deal

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) -

Azerbaijan said that Russia and Armenia are not fulfilling the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave ceasefire deal, hours after the European Union urged Azerbaijan and Armenia to refrain from "violence and harsh rhetoric".

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan and Armenia have fought two wars over Nagorno-Karabakh, a small mountainous enclave that is part of Azerbaijan but populated by about 120,000 ethnic Armenians.

After heavy fighting and a Russian-brokered ceasefire, Azerbaijan in 2020 took over areas that had been controlled by ethnic Armenians in and around the mountain enclave.

"Armenia has not fulfilled many provisions of the statement, and Russia has not ensured the full implementation of the statement within its obligations," the Azeri foreign ministry said in a statement on its website.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have since been discussing a peace deal, in which Russia is also pushing to retain a leading role and in which the two countries would agree on borders, settle differences over the enclave, and unfreeze relations.

EU Council President Charles Michel hosted Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for talks in Brussels aimed at drawing a line under more than three decades of hostilities.

Armenia says the proposed peace treaty should provide special rights for them and guarantee their security. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov rejected that demand in an interview with Reuters in June, saying it was unnecessary and amounted to interference in Azerbaijan's affairs.

"Real progress depends on the next steps that will need to be taken in the near future. As a matter of priority, violence and harsh rhetoric should stop in order to provide the proper environment for peace and normalisation talks," Michel said.

He told reporters: "The population on the ground needs reassurances, first and foremost regarding their rights and security."

Russia said on Saturday that it was ready to organise a three-way meeting with Armenia and Azerbaijan at the level of foreign ministers. This could be followed up with a Moscow summit to sign a peace treaty, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.



Tourists Are Packing European Hotspots Undaunted by Higher Airfares, Hotel Costs

VENICE (Dispatches) - Tourists are waiting more than two hours to visit the Acropolis in Athens. Taxi lines at Rome's main train station are running just as long. And so many visitors are concentrating around St. Mark's Square in Venice that crowds get backed up crossing bridges — even on weekdays.

After three years of pandemic limitations, tourism is expected to exceed 2019 records in some of Europe's most popular destinations this summer, from Barcelona and Rome, Athens and Venice to the scenic islands of Santorini in Greece, Capri in Italy and Mallorca in Spain.

While European tourists edged the industry toward recovery last year, the upswing this summer is led largely by Americans, boosted by a strong dollar and in some cases pandemic savings. Many arrive motivated by "revenge tourism" — so eager to explore again that they're undaunted by higher airfares and hotel costs.

Lauren Gonzalez, 25, landed in Rome this week with four high school and college friends for a 16-day romp through the Italian capital, Florence and the seaside after three years of U.S. vacations. They aren't concerned about the high prices and the crowds.

"We kind of saved up, and we know this is a trip that is meaningful," said Gonzalez, who works at a marketing agency. "We are all in our mid-20s. It's a (moment of) change in our lives. ... This is something special. The crowds don't deter us. We live in Florida. We have all been to Disney World in the heat. We are all good."

Americans appear equally unperturbed by recent riots in Paris and other French cities. There was a small drop in flight bookings, but it was mainly for domestic travel.

"Some of my friends said, 'It's a little crazy there right now,' but we thought summer is really a good time for us to go, so we'll just take precautions," Joanne Titus, a 38-year-old from Maryland, said while strolling the iconic Champs-Élysées shopping boulevard.

The return of mass tourism is a boon to hotels and restaurants, which suffered under COVID-19 restrictions. But there is a downside, too, as pledges to rethink tourism to make it more sustainable have largely gone unheeded.

"The pandemic should have taught us a lesson," said Alessandra Priante, director of the regional department for Europe at the U.N. World Tourism Organization.

Instead, she said, the mindset "is about recuperating the cash. Everything is about revenue, about the here and now."

"We have to see what is going to happen in two or three years' time because the prices at the moment are unsustainable," she said.

The mayor of Florence is stopping new short-term apartment rentals from proliferating in the historic center, which is protected as a UNESCO heritage site, as mayors of Italy's other art cities call for a nationwide law to manage the sector.

In Sao Paulo, Boom of Apartments The Size of Hotel Rooms



SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - Lara Maia types on her laptop perched on a small desk occupying a gap between the fridge and wardrobe in her micro-apartment in Sao Paulo, Latin America's most populated city.

Behind her, the bed also serves as the couch. "I don't need any more: I'm close to everything and I feel free to leave whenever I want with a few bags," the 34-year-old computer scientist told AFP of the 16-square-meter (172-square-foot) apartment near downtown Sao Paulo.

Maia's space on the 16th floor that serves as her home and occasional office is an example of a growing trend of apartments the size of hotel rooms.

Long a way of life in other large cities of the world, in Sao Paulo, Brazil's economic capital, the boom has been a recent one.

From 2016 to 2022, available units up to 30 m² soared from 461 units to 16,261, according to the state housing association Secovi-SP.

The number represents a fifth of all apartments in the city of 11.5 million residents.

Some, with furniture squeezed in as in a game of Tetris, or with the kitchen just inches from the bathroom, have become the subject of jokes on social media.

But this has done nothing to dampen demand, mainly among adults aged 20 to 39, according to a survey by real estate firm Quinto Andar.

"They are young professionals; middle and upper-middle class, at the start of their careers, mostly single, attracted by modern and well-located properties close to jobs or public transport," said Secovi-SP CEO Ely Wertheim.

Raised in a large house outside Sao Paulo, Maia told AFP she could get a bigger apartment in another neighbourhood for the same 2,300 reais (about US\$475) she pays in monthly rent.

But she is gladly giving up space to be closer to family and her job, presential part of the time.



The Culture Ministry will introduce a new ticketing system for the Acropolis this month, providing hourly slots for visitors to even out crowds. But no remedy is being discussed for the parking line of cruise ships on the islands of Mykonos and Santorini on busy mornings.

Spain's tourism minister, Héctor Gómez, called it "a historic summer for tourism," with 8.2 million tourists arriving in May alone, breaking records for a second straight month. Still, some hotel groups say reservations slowed in the first weeks of summer, owing to the steep rise in prices for flights and rooms.

Costs are growing as flights from the U.S. to Europe are up 2% from 2019 levels, according to ForwardKeys.

"The rising appetite for long-haul travel from America is the continued result of the 'revenge travel' boom caused by the pandemic lockdowns," said Tim Hentschel, CEO of HotelPlanner, a booking site. "Big cities within these popular European countries are certainly going to be busy during the summer."

Americans have pushed arrivals in Italian bucket-list destinations like Rome, Florence, Venice and Capri above pre-pandemic levels, according to Italy's hotel association, Federalberghi.

They bring a lot of pent-up buying power: U.S. tourists in Italy spent 74% more in tax-free indulgences in the first three months of the year, compared with same period of 2019.

"Then there is the rest of Italy that lives from Italian and European tourism, and at the moment, it is still under 2019 levels," Federalberghi president Bernabo Bocca said.

He expects it will take another year for an across-the-board recovery. An economic slowdown discouraged German arrivals, while Italians "are less prone to spending this year," he said.

And wallets will be stretched. Lodging costs in Florence rose 53% over last year, while Venice saw a 25% increase and Rome a 21% hike, according to the Italian consumer group Codacons.

Even gelato will cost a premium 21% over last year, due to higher sugar and milk prices.

Perhaps nothing has encouraged the rise in tourism in key spots more than a surge in short-term apartment rentals. With hotel room numbers constant, Bocca of Federalberghi blames the surge for the huge crowds in Rome, inflating taxi lines and crowding crosswalks so that city buses cannot continue their routes.

In Rome and Florence, "walking down the street, out of every building door, emerges a tourist with a suitcase," he said.

While Florence's mayor is limiting the number of short-term rentals in the historic center to 8,000, no action has been taken in Venice. The canal-lined city counts 49,432 residents in its historic center and 49,272 tourist beds, nearly half of those being apartments available for short-term rental.

Inconveniences are "daily," said Giacomo Salerno, a researcher at Venice's Ca' Foscari University focusing on tourism.

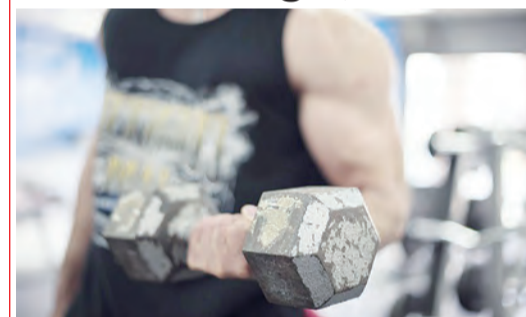
It difficult to walk down streets clogged with visitors or take public water buses "saturated with tourists with their suitcases," he said.

Students cannot find affordable housing because owners prefer to cash in with vacation rentals. The dwindling number of residents means a dearth of services, including a lack of family doctors largely due to the high cost of living, driven up by tourist demand.

Venice has delayed plans to charge day-trippers a tax to enter the city, meant to curb arrivals. But activists like Salerno say that will do little to resolve the issue of a declining population and encroaching tourists, instead cementing Venice's fate as "an amusement park."

"It would be like saying the only use for the city is touristic," Salerno said.

Lifting Even Light Weights Builds Strength, Muscle



NEW YORK 9Dispatches) - Lifting weights regularly builds strength and muscle -- and it doesn't matter if those weights are heavy or light.

It's the act itself, and being consistent, that pays off, according to a new study.

All forms of resistance training are beneficial, including body-weight exercises such as planks, lunges and push-ups, according to kinesiology at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, who looked at weight, frequency and consistency.

"There are a dizzying number of factors and combinations to consider when creating a weightlifting program to maximize strength and muscle growth," said kinesiology professor Stuart Phillips, who did the study with graduate students Bradley Currier and Jonathan Mcleod. "This is an age-old debate among athletes and strength and conditioning coaches: what combination leads to the best gains?"

For the study, the researchers reviewed 192 studies that included more than 5,000 people in all.

The work capped years of focus on three resistance-training variables: how much you lift; how often; and how many times, including one, two, three or more training sessions per week. The researchers collected and analyzed massive amounts of data.

Many fitness experts say lifting the heaviest weights three to five times is the best way to build strength and that using weights a person can lift eight to 10 times is best for building muscle size, the study authors noted.

McMaster researchers have spent the last decade pushing back on the idea that heavier is best. Their past research found significant gains from lifting lighter weights 20 to 30 times, toward the point of exhaustion.

In this review, the investigators found that lifting heavier weights was the best way to gain strength. To maximize muscle size, however, the weight was less important than repetitions.

Gut Bacteria May Affect Risk for Clogged Arteries

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Your gut bacteria could affect your risk for the fatty deposits in heart arteries -- and future heart attacks, researchers say.

A new study finds a link between the levels of certain microbes in the gut and these coronary atherosclerotic plaques.

Led by researchers from Uppsala and Lund Universities in Sweden, the study analyzed gut bacteria and cardiac images from nearly 9,000 Swedish patients ages 50 to 65 with no known heart disease.

"We found that oral bacteria, especially species from the Streptococcus genus, are associated with increased occurrence of atherosclerotic plaques in the small arteries of the heart when present in the gut flora," said researcher Tove Fall, a professor of molecular epidemiology at Uppsala University.

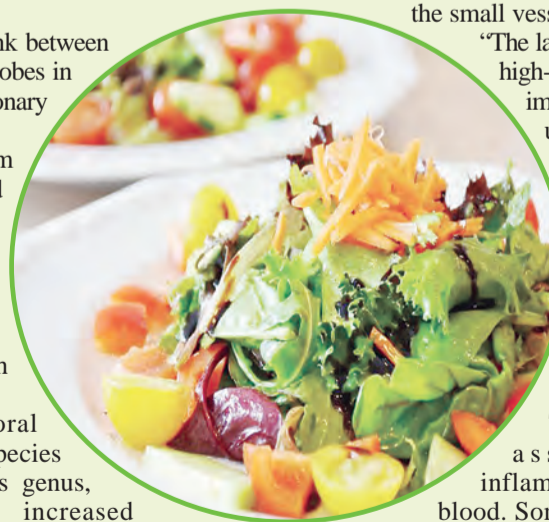
"Species from the Streptococcus genus are common causes of pneumonia and infections of the throat, skin and heart valves," she said in a university news release. "We now need to understand whether these bacteria are contributing to atherosclerosis development."

The authors said advanced technology that allows for sequencing and comparing DNA content in

biological samples aided the analysis. At the same time, improved imaging techniques enable researchers to detect and measure early changes in the small vessels of the heart.

"The large number of samples with high-quality data from cardiac imaging and gut flora allowed us to identify novel associations," said lead author Sergi Sayols-Baixeras, a postdoctoral researcher at Uppsala University. "Among our most significant findings, Streptococcus anginosus and S. oralis subsp. oralis were the two strongest ones." These bacteria were associated with inflammation markers in the blood. Some species linked to fatty deposits in arteries were also linked to the levels of the same species in the mouth.

"We have just started to understand how the human host and the bacterial community in the different compartments of the body affect each other," said senior author Marju Orho-Melander, a professor in genetic epidemiology at Lund University. "Our study shows worse cardiovascular health in carriers of streptococci in their gut. We now need to investigate if these bacteria are important players in atherosclerosis development."



Australia Upbeat on Global Tax Talks at G20 in India

SYDNEY (Reuters) - Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers expressed optimism about progress on a long-awaited overhaul of global corporate taxation at a meeting of Group of 20 (G20) nations in India. "There's been progress made over the years and we want to advance that progress further," Chalmers told ABC television, referring to the meeting Monday and Tuesday of G20 finance ministers and central bankers. More than 140 countries were supposed to start implementing next year a 2021 deal overhauling decades-old rules on how governments tax multinational corporations. The rules are widely considered outdated as digital giants like Apple or Amazon can book profits in low-tax countries.



Artificially High Growth Predicted for China in Q2

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's economic growth is expected to have surged in the second quarter, an AFP survey has forecast, but analysts say today's figures will be misleadingly inflated given the low base of comparison with pandemic-wracked 2022.

A year ago, with restrictions such as sudden lockdowns, travel curbs and factory shutdowns the norm, China posted 0.4 percent on-year growth, one of its lowest quarterly readings in recent years.

This year, an average of predictions from a group of 13 experts interviewed by AFP suggested the economy expanded 7.1 percent in April-June. But this figure is "artificially high because of the low base" in 2022, said Gene Ma from the Institute of International Finance.

The same period last year notably included a lockdown in Shanghai that saw the financial capital of 25 million people completely closed off for two months.

The quarter-on-quarter growth figures, which will also be released on Monday, should give a more realistic view of the world's second largest economy.

In the first three months of this year, it grew 4.5 percent on-year, reflecting a resurgence in activity after the abrupt end of the zero-Covid policy in December.

But the recovery, which has been slow to take hold in some sectors, appears to already be running out of steam.

Despite the post-pandemic reopening, a sluggish job market and general uncertainty over the future mean consumer confidence is at a low.

"From holiday travel to shopping for cars and homes, the macroeconomic data shows Chinese people are now just afraid to open their wallets too widely," said the independent Hinrich Foundation's Stewart Paterson.

In May, one in five young Chinese were unemployed, according to official data, a record that could be broken again on Monday when June figures are announced.

Low demand means companies are hesitating to hire, taking a "wait-and-see" attitude before expanding operations, said Harry Murphy Cruise, an economist at rating agency Moody's.

Memories of 2022's repeated lockdowns and suddenly changing policy shifts were adding to their hesitancy, he said.

"Unfortunately... a revival in business activity is needed for broader demand to lift. That stalemate is keeping business activity weak," he added. That in turn raises the specter of deflation, a decrease in general prices, which would further add to China's economic woes.

Inflation was flat last month, while producer prices sank more than expected, a further sign of weak demand.

Growth is already being hampered by a crisis in the real estate sector.

Once a driving force behind the economy, many developers are now fighting for their survival, exacerbating a crisis of confidence among potential buyers.

Fewer house purchases logically means less spending on related goods like furnishings, and suggests higher saving ratios too -- all of which further drive down activity, pointed out Rabobank's Teeuwe Mevisen.

Brazil Wants 10-Year Pause on Deep Sea Mining

SAN JUAN (Dispatches) - Brazil urged a 10-year precautionary pause on deep sea mining in international waters just days after companies and countries were allowed to start applying for provisional licenses.

The call came during a two-week conference held by the International Seabed Authority, a regulatory U.N. agency based in Jamaica that failed to approve a set of rules and regulations to govern deep sea mining by a July 9 deadline.

The agency has not issued any provisional licenses, nor has it received any applications, although the government of Nauru is expected to apply soon for a license via the Canadian-based Metals Co.

The government of the tiny Pacific island said Friday that it wants to diversify its "limited economic base," but promised it would not sponsor an application during the U.N. conference, which ends July 21.

Nauru noted that its "good-faith decision" does not mean officials are withdrawing their plan to pursue deep sea mining.

"We're no longer in a 'what if' scenario, but 'what now'?" said Margo Deije, Nauru's permanent representative to the International Seabed Authority. A growing number of countries and companies, including BMW and Volvo, support a moratorium on deep sea mining, warning that extracting precious metals from the deep sea that are used in electric car batteries and other green technology could cause environmental damage.

Brazil's representative to the International Seabed Authority, Elza Moreira Marcelino de Castro, said the country supports a precautionary pause for at least a decade.

"Priority must be given to the protection of the international seabed until conclusive and comprehensive studies ... are available," she said.

Scientists have warned that deep sea mining could kick up dust storms and cause light and noise pollution, noting that minerals that grow at such depths take millions of years to form. Companies, however, have said that deep sea mining is cheaper and has less of an impact than land mining, while some countries have said it would allow them to grow and diversify their economy.

On Friday, several council members insisted on more scientific studies before any licenses are awarded.

"Exploitation must not commence until it can be guaranteed that there will be no loss to biodiversity," said Siddharth Shekhar Yadav, Vanuatu's representative.



Singapore Dodges Recession After Slight Growth in Q2

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Singapore's economy narrowly escaped a recession in the second quarter as global demand weakened and China's slowdown dragged on trade flows, leading some economists to cut their growth forecasts for the year.

The Southeast Asian economy grew a seasonally adjusted 0.3% quarter-on-quarter, following a 0.4% contraction in the first three months, preliminary government data showed on Friday. Four economists with quarterly estimates had forecast growth of 0.3% in a Reuters poll.

"I don't think we are out of the woods completely. It is still a half full half empty kind of situation" OCBC economist Selena Ling said, adding she expects the central bank to make no changes to monetary policy in a scheduled review in October.

She said that while Singapore had escaped a technical recession for now, there was a possibility that final GDP figures for the second quarter could be revised lower due to recent signs of softening growth in China.

China's reopening had fuelled hopes for a sustained recovery in commerce and tourism for the region, especially Singapore's export-dependent economy, but demand has weakened in the wake of higher interest rates and strong inflationary pressures.

On an annual basis, the economy expanded 0.7% in the second quarter, data from the Ministry of Trade and Industry showed. That compared with 0.4% growth in the prior quarter and a 0.6% expansion forecast in a Reuters poll.

UAE, India Ink Landmark Agreement for Trade Exchange in Dirhams and Rupee

ABU DHABI (Dispatches) - The UAE and India have officially signed three key Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), each aimed at deepening cooperation and fostering ties under the comprehensive strategic and economic partnerships between the two nations.

The signing ceremony was overseen by President His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the UAE, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India.

The MoUs, exchanged at Al Watan Palace in Abu Dhabi, include an agreement to enable trade exchange in local currencies (UAE Dirham and Indian Rupee), and a plan to link fast payment systems, cards, and messaging systems.

The first MoU, promoting trade exchange in local currencies, was exchanged by Khaled Mohammed Balama, Governor of the Central Bank of the UAE, and his Indian counterpart, Shaktikanta Das, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. This move is expected to bolster trade relations, reduce transaction costs, and increase economic stability.

In addition to currency exchange, the Central Banks of both nations also agreed on another MoU focusing on cooperation in fast payment systems, card networks, and messaging systems.

The agreement was again exchanged by Balama, and Das, aiming to modernize and enhance the safety, efficiency, and speed of financial transactions between the two countries.

Lastly, a MoU was signed between the Department of Education and Knowledge in Abu Dhabi, the Ministry of Education in India, and the Indian Institute of Technology - Delhi (IIT-Delhi), marking a step forward in educational collaboration.

The agreement involves the establishment of the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi - Abu Dhabi, symbolizing the shared commitment to nurturing human capital and fostering knowledge exchange. This memorandum was exchanged by Sara Awad Issa Musallam, Minister of State for Early Education and Chairperson of the Federal Authority for Early Education Sunjay Sudhir, Ambassador of India to the UAE, and Prof. Rangan Banerjee, Director, IIT Delhi.

The landmark agreements signed today signify a new era of strengthened cooperation between the UAE and India, fostering economic growth and educational advancement within the framework of the strategic partnership that brings them together.

U.S. Banks Point to Resilient But Slowing Economy

NEW YORK (Reuters) -Some of the largest U.S. banks said they got a profit boost from higher rates and painted a picture of a resilient economy, with sparks of hope in some businesses like deal-making that have been in the dumps of late.

But they also warned of risks ahead, with U.S. consumers pulling back on spending and losses building up in areas such as credit cards and office commercial real estate.

Investors brushed aside their initial enthusiasm for results from JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo and Citigroup, fearing things were as good as they would get for a while.

"We're in a very unusual environment - higher inflation, these rate levels and a strong labor market," Citigroup CEO Jane Fraser said. But she added, "I don't think we should be overly concerned here about the health of the U.S. consumer."

JPMorgan Chase and Wells Fargo reported sharp increases in net interest income, which measures the difference between what banks earn on loans and pay out on deposits, that drove up profits.

For Citigroup, however, weakness in its trading business overshadowed gains in interest income. That's a headwind that other banks more dependent on Wall Street businesses, such as Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, are also likely to face when they report results next week.

Separately, BlackRock, the world's biggest asset manager, handily beat second-quarter profit estimates but showed a slowdown in money inflows.

U.S. custodian bank State Street Corp beat profit estimates for the second quarter after interest income climbed 18% year-on-year, though it fell on a quarterly basis by 10% due to lower average non-interest bearing deposit balances.

State Street warned of a further decline of 12-18% on net interest income on a sequential basis on its earnings call, driven by lower deposit levels. Deposits at large banks have been dropping as consumers move money in search of higher yields.

State Street shares closed down 12%, while JPM's shares rose 0.6%. Wells shares were down 0.3%, while Citi fell 4% and BlackRock fell 1.5%.

"If interest rates rise, Brian Mulberry, client portfolio manager at Zacks Investment Management.

The bank results provide the latest insights into the health of the U.S. economy. Investors have been worried that an aggressive rate hike campaign by the U.S. Federal Reserve to fight inflation will tip the economy into recession but the outlook remains highly uncertain.

"The U.S. economy continues to be resilient," JPMorgan Chief Executive Jamie Dimon said. But he added that consumers are "slowly using up their cash buffers."

Sri Lanka Not Averse to Using Indian Rupee as Common Currency



COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka would want to see the Indian rupee used as much as the U.S. dollar, President Ranil Wickremesinghe has said, days ahead of his first official visit to New Delhi.

Mr. Wickremesinghe, also the cash-strapped country's Finance Minister, made this remark while addressing the Indian CEO Forum here this week.

"Just as East Asia, including countries like Japan, Korea and China, witnessed significant growth 75 years ago, it is now India's turn, along with the Indian Ocean region," Mr. Wickremesinghe said.

Mr. Wickremesinghe is expected to visit New Delhi next week, his first since becoming President a year ago amidst unprecedented economic and political turmoil in the island nation.

Mr. Wickremesinghe's comments were in response to the chair of the Forum, T.S. Prakash, who in his address had called for the enhanced use of the Indian rupee in the Sri Lankan economy.

"It makes no difference to us if India (the Indian rupee) becomes a common currency. We will have to figure out how to go about it. We must become more open to the outside world", Mr. Wickremesinghe said.

"The world is evolving and India is undergoing rapid development, particularly under Prime Minister Modi's leadership", he added.

He also said that Sri Lanka benefits from its proximity to India, coupled with a rich history, cultural heritage and longstanding trading relationships spanning 2,500 years, The Daily Mirror newspaper quoted him as saying.

Mr. Wickremesinghe has steered the island nation out of the economic crisis and said the economy is recovering despite its slowness.

“Connect” Streamlines Linking With Overseas Experts

TEHRAN (MNA)- An online platform dubbed “Connect” has been launched aiming to facilitate the cooperation of overseas Iranian experts and researchers with domestic universities.

Some 6,500 Iranian elites from the world’s top universities are now cooperating with the country and around 450 are back to their homeland and recruited as faculty members using the platform, Mehr reported. Launched by the Vice

Presidency for Science and Technology, “Connect” provides the opportunity for implementing post-doctoral projects, conducting research, inviting professors, delivering specialized lectures, holding workshops, establishing start-ups, and working in technological companies instead of military service.

Researchers, experts, and international entrepreneurs registered on the platform can benefit from a 3–10-year residence permit in the country.



Artificial Sweetener Aspartame Possibly Carcinogenic

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The World Health Organization said that artificial sweetener aspartame, a common additive in diet beverages and food, is possibly carcinogenic but it is not altering its safe daily intake recommendation limit.

The global health body released the findings of complementary studies by its International Agency for Research on Cancer and its Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives into the potential carcinogenic hazard and other health risks posed by aspartame.

The IARC report classified aspartame as “possibly carcinogenic to humans” over limited evidence that links it to a type of liver cancer. It also found limited evidence for cancer in animals and to “the possible mechanisms for causing cancer.”

The JECFA concluded that evidence shows there’s “no sufficient reason” to change the previously established acceptable daily intake of between 0-40mg of aspartame per kilogram of body weight, stating it is safe for a person to consume within this limit.

The findings have prompted doctors at the two WHO agencies behind the studies to call for further investigations.

“The assessments of aspartame have indicated that, while safety is not a major concern at the doses which are commonly used, potential effects have been described that need to be investigated by more and better studies,” Dr. Francesco Branca, director of the Department of Nutrition and Food Safety at the WHO, said in a statement.

Dr. Moez Sanaa, the WHO’s chief of the Standards and Scientific Advice on Food and Nutrition Unit, added that the evidence of cancer risk in connection to aspartame consumption has been ruled “not convincing” by the JECFA and that further studies are needed.

“We need better studies with longer follow-up and repeated dietary questionnaires in existing cohorts,” Sanaa said. “We need randomized controlled trials, including studies of mechanistic pathways relevant to insulin regulation, metabolic syndrome and diabetes, particularly as related to carcinogenicity.”



Aspartame is a common sugar replacement widely used in “sugar-free” and “diet” food as well as a wide range of products from breakfast cereal to toothpaste.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration first approved use of aspartame as a tabletop sweetener and in chewing gum, cereal and others products, such as beverages and instant coffee, in 1974.

In response to the WHO’s findings, the FDA issued a rare rebuke, saying in a statement to The New York Times that it “disagrees with IARC’s conclusion that these studies support classifying aspartame as a possible carcinogen to humans.”

“Aspartame being labeled by the WHO as ‘possibly carcinogenic to humans’ does not mean that aspartame is actually linked to cancer.”

Tajikistan Needs to Import Iranian Medicine, Medical Equipment



TEHRAN (MNA) - Jamoliddin Abdullo Abdullozoda, the Minister of Health and Social Protection of Tajikistan, has said importing medicine and medical equipment from Iran is a necessity.

“Holding retraining courses for our specialists by Iranian professors and importing medicine and medical equipment from Iran are among our needs,” he said on Monday in a meeting with Iranian Health Minister Bahram Einollahi in the city of Dushanbe.

Currently, the medicine required by Tajikistan is supplied by 11 Iranian pharmaceutical companies, Abdullozoda said, adding that the capacity of herbal and medicinal plants of Tajikistan can also be provided to Iranian pharmaceutical specialists, the Health Ministry’s website reported.

“My trip to Iran brought many experiences in the field of health, healthcare, and treatment, especially dental and laboratory equipment were worthy of attention in Iran.”

In October 2022, Einollahi and Abdullozoda inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand medical and health cooperation.

Einollahi stated that one of our major goals is a broad and strong relationship with the neighboring countries, especially Tajikistan, to develop practical cooperation.

“To carry out joint activities in the fields of information and knowledge exchange, control of communicable and non-communicable diseases, health insurance, medical education, medical equipment as well as cooperation with the World Health Organization, we are fully prepared,” he noted.

Study Links Social Isolation With Shrinking Brain

LONDON (Dispatches)- Older adults who regularly spend time with family and friends may have bigger brains to show for it, a new study suggests.

Healthy brain aging is a complex matter, and researchers are still trying to understand which factors keep the mind sharp and which ones feed declines in memory and thinking.

But a number of studies have suggested that social life matters. Social stimulation is thought to help support mental acuity; on the other hand, social isolation in the golden years has been linked to an increased risk of dementia.

So for the new study, researchers led by Dr. Toshiharu Ninomiya, of Kyushu University in Japan, asked a different question: Is social isolation connected to older adults’ brain volume?

The brain naturally “shrinks” to a degree as people age, reflecting the loss of nerve cells and their connections. But that tissue loss is accelerated during the dementia process.

If older people who are isolated tend to have smaller brains, the researchers reasoned, that might help explain the link with dementia. It turned out there was indeed a relationship, although not a causal one, according to findings published Wednesday in the journal *Neurology*.

Among nearly 9,000 Japanese adults aged 65 and older, more than 600 said they “seldom” saw or spoke with friends or relatives outside their household. And those participants typically showed a smaller brain volume on MRI scans, versus those who were more socially active.

Specifically, they had less tissue in certain brain structures involved in memory and known to be affected in the early stages of dementia.

Experts not involved in the study stressed that it does not prove social isolation shrinks the brain. One possibility is that the brain shrinkage came first, said Dr. Joel Salinas, a neurologist at NYU Langone Health in New York City, and chief medical officer of Isaac Health, an online memory clinic.

People in the early stages of the dementia process could have had some subtle symptoms and changed their behavior (including staying home more), said Salinas who had no role in the study.

On the other hand, there are plausible reasons that social connections, or lack thereof, could affect brain volume.

Washington Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

On Friday, a senior American defense official said the U.S. will send F-16 fighter jets to the Persian Gulf region this weekend in a bid to “protect ships” from “Iranian seizures.”

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, claimed that the F-16s will give air cover to the ships moving through the strategic Strait of Hormuz and increase the US military’s visibility in the area, the Associated Press reported.

Also in his media briefing, Kanaani emphasized that Iran has never considered negotiable the issue of its territorial integrity and sovereignty over the three islands of Abu Musa, the Greater and Lesser Tunbs in the Persian Gulf.

Thus, Iran “views the interference of any party, including the UAE and Russia, as unacceptable and

rejects it,” he said, noting that the country will give a strong response to such moves.

The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Russia challenged Iran’s sovereignty over the three islands in a joint statement issued last week.

In their statement, the ministers said the issue should be settled through bilateral negotiations or the International Court of Justice, in accordance with the rules of international law and the United Nations Charter.

The senior Iranian diplomat said Tehran has officially protested to the Russian government in this regard.

“Political, inaccurate, and unconstructive positions will not throw a wrench in Iran’s indisputable and non-negotiable sovereignty over the three Iranian islands,” he asserted.

France Extends Aid to...

FROM PAGE 1

For UNHCR’s programs in Iran, France has allocated €1 million for 2023. This funding will further strengthen ongoing efforts to provide lifesaving assistance, healthcare, education, and protection services to Afghan refugees and host communities. France had previously contributed a similar amount of €1 million to UNHCR Iran in 2022.

The government of France’s support is highly valued by UNHCR, as it demonstrates their commitment to addressing one of the world’s most enduring refugee crises. The financial aid reflects France’s recognition of the urgent need to alleviate the suffering of millions of displaced Afghans and underscores the importance of international solidarity and responsibility-sharing in finding sustainable solutions.

Nicolas Roche, the French ambassador to Iran, emphasized the commitment to supporting the Afghan people and the resilience of the local Iranian population through this assistance. France has consistently been one of the top 10 donors to UNHCR and is known for providing predictable and flexible contributions. Earmarking 20 percent of the annual contribution in 2022 allowed UNHCR to effectively respond to emerging crises or underfunded situations.

With over 9.2 million Afghans in Iran and Pakistan, including 2.3 million registered refugees, these countries have demonstrated their commitment to upholding principles of hospitality and protection despite limited resources and strained economies. The international community is urged to rally behind and support Afghanistan’s neighboring countries to enable them to maintain and expand their progressive policies.

Nicolas Gale, the Ambassador of France to Pakistan, expressed solidarity and gratitude towards the governments and people of Pakistan for their four decades of hospitality to Afghan refugees. The funding also reflects France’s commitment to increasing cooperation and solidarity with refugees and host countries, as showcased during its co-convenor role at the Global Refugee Forum in December.

UNHCR is dedicated to supporting Afghanistan’s neighboring countries and providing protection to millions of Afghan women, men, and children. With the support of the French government’s funding, UNHCR’s work will not only continue but also expand in the years to come.

Cluster Bomb...

FROM PAGE 1

Cluster bombs, employed in World War II, can be dropped from air or fired from ground/sea, dispersing dozens or hundreds of bomblets across a large area. These explosions pose a grave threat to anyone in the vicinity, causing death or severe injuries.



Furthermore, some bomblets fail to detonate immediately, leaving behind unexploded ordnance that can harm or kill people for years to come. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the sub-munitions failure rate — referred to as the “dud rate” — has varied from 10% to 40% in recent conflicts.

Also unexploded bomblets can resemble toys, posing a grave risk to children who might handle them and suffer injuries or fatalities.

But a recent report shows that the U.S. forces have repeatedly used cluster bombs in Afghanistan while the international bodies have been silent.

The globally-banned, mass-destructive cluster bombs dropped by U.S. military forces in Afghanistan during their 20-year occupation of the country continue to wreak havoc among Afghans with the unexploded bomblets still remaining a major life-threatening risk to local civilians.

There are currently 195,000 registered maimed individuals in Afghanistan, the majority of whom are victims of cluster bomb and drone strikes across the country during the US-led military occupation, the Afghan Ministry of Martyrs and Disable Affairs has declared as cited in a Saturday report by China Global Television Network (CGTN).

It is estimated that during the first three years of the destructive invasion, American forces dropped more than 1,500 cluster bombs across the impoverished nation torn by terror and foreign military occupation.

Unexploded ordnances from cluster bombs dropped by the U.S. military continue to cause fatalities and injuries years and even decades after the munitions were launched, a senior official of the ministry pointed out.

The U.S. -- despite its purported and hyped up advocacy for “human rights” -- remains among the countries of the world that has refused to sign the convention banning the use of cluster munitions due the long-term risk they pose to civilian lives even after a conflict concludes.

“We don’t have exact data on the number of Afghans maimed by the use of cluster bombs but in fact, many cases of disabilities -- including those suffered by the Mujahideen -- are a result of air strikes, including drone attacks and cluster bombs, said the ministry’s Chief of Staff Qari Shah Mohamd, referring to fighters resisting the US-led invasion.

“The U.S. has committed various war crimes in Afghanistan, except for the use of nuclear bombs,” Mohamd further emphasized.

We Iranians have a proverb saying death is good for the neighbor which is equivalent to “long live the snake that doesn’t bite me!” and the West and mainly the U.S. is ardent fan of this proverb and anybody dislikes Washington’s policy or does not follow that policy will face consequence of its disobedience and the U.S. feels it is entitled to commit any crime or use any cluster of crimes to dictate your policies on others.

The report of crimes of the U.S. in Afghanistan is nothing new, and we may see it likely to continue in Ukraine-Russia war if the world does not stop the U.S. from supplying this deadly weapon to Ukraine which has turned into a tool to put the U.S. pressure on Russia.

Iraq Responsible for...

FROM PAGE 1

The Iranian official praised the sacrifices and services of General Soleimani and his Iraqi counterpart Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in the fight against terrorism. “The distinguished heroes of the fight against terror did a grand service.”

The two commanders, Gharibabadi said, stood by the people of Iraq and Syria in eliminating Daesh and other terrorist groups despite the fact that those groups had Western support.

Gharibabadi said the assassination of the two commanders was a “crime against humanity,” and the United States’ government must be held legally accountable to that end. Iran’s top rights official said “martyr Soleimani was the Iraqi government’s official guest and the crime was committed on the Iraqi soil.”

“The responsibility of pursuing the case rests with the Iraqi government to prosecute the perpetrators.”

“Three and a half years have passed since the assassination and we expect that Iraq arrange the trial as soon as possible.” General Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and his Iraqi trenchmate, Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), were martyred along with their companions in a US drone strike on January 3, 2020.

Richardson Outsprints Jackson In Silesia Diamond League

CHORZOW (Dispatches) – U.S. sprint star Sha'Carri Richardson creled in Jamaican Shericka Jackson to claim a morale-boosting victory in the women's 100m at the Silesia Diamond League.

Richardson and Jackson went into the race as their countries' recently-crowned national champions, the Jamaican having run 10.65 seconds in Kingston to go fifth in the all-time list.

In hot, steamy conditions in the Polish city of Chorzow, Jackson swept away on the coattails of fast-starting home favourite Eva Swoboda before taking the lead at the halfway mark.

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McIlroy Birdies Last Hole To Win Scottish Open

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rory McIlroy sank a birdie on the last hole to seal a dramatic victory in the Scottish Open for his first tournament win in Scotland.

The four-time major winner had seen his one-shot overnight lead evaporate on a day where 40 mph winds made scoring difficult at the Renaissance Club.

But having missed from eight feet for birdie on the par-five 16th, the Northern Irishman made no such mistake from closer range on the par-three 17th to join Scotland's Robert MacIntyre on 14 under.

Alcaraz Defeats Djokovic to Win First Wimbledon Title

LONDON (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz defeated seven-time champion Novak Djokovic to claim his first Wimbledon title, shattering the Serb's dream of a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam crown.

World number one Alcaraz recovered from dropping the first set and saving a set point in the second to win 1-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 3-6, 6-4 after four hours and 42 minutes on Centre Court.

It was a second major for the 20-year-old Spaniard following his US Open title last year as he became Wimbledon's third youngest men's champion.

The result will also spark feverish speculation over the start of a generational shift, with 36-year-old Djokovic carrying the torch of the 'Big Three' now that Roger Federer is retired and Rafael Nadal is sidelined, perhaps permanently.

Australian Open and French Open champion Djokovic had been bidding to equal Federer's record of eight Wimbledon titles, match Margaret Court's all-time mark of 24 Slams and become the All England Club's oldest men's champion.

When he won his first major at the Australian Open in 2008, Alcaraz was still three months shy of his fifth birthday.

"You inspire me a lot," Alcaraz told Djokovic after becoming the third Spanish winner of the title, following in the footsteps of Manuel Santana in 1966 and Nadal in 2008 and 2010.

"I started playing tennis watching you. Since I was born you were already winning tournaments. It is amazing," he added with a smile after firing 66 winners past the Serb, off-setting his 45 unforced errors.

Djokovic was playing in his ninth final at Wimbledon and 35th at the majors, while for Alcaraz it was just a second in the Slams following his US Open triumph.

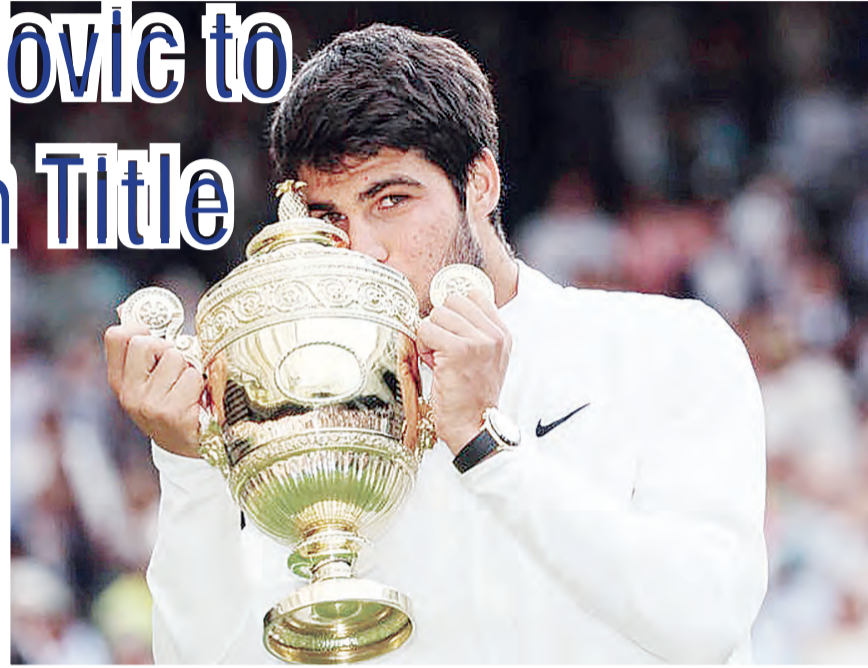
"What a quality at the end of the match when you had to serve it out," said Djokovic, who had been chasing a fifth successive Wimbledon crown.

"You came up with some big plays in the big situation and you absolutely deserve it. Amazing."

The Serb, who was on a 34-match winning streak at Wimbledon, went into the final not having lost on Centre Court since his 2013 defeat to Andy Murray in the title match.

Alcaraz, who had been crippled by body cramping in his loss to Djokovic in the French Open semi-final in June, was unable to settle in the first set and let a break point slip away in the seven-minute opening game.

Djokovic took advantage and raced into a



5-0 lead on the back of a double break before the Spaniard got on the board.

It was too little, too late as Djokovic claimed the opening set with a smash.

But Alcaraz finally freed himself of his shackles and broke for 2-1 in the second set.

Djokovic hit straight back in the third game before saving a break point in the fourth, coming out on top of a 29-shot rally.

The Serb was hit with a time violation in the tie-break before seeing a set point saved.

Alcaraz needed no second invitation when he carved out and converted a set point to level the contest with a backhand winner.

The marathon set had taken 85 minutes as Djokovic's run of 15 tie-breaks won in a row at the majors ended.

Alcaraz broke in the opening game of the third set and again after an exhausting 26-minute fifth game, which went to 13 deuces and saw Djokovic save six break points before he cracked on the seventh.

Alcaraz backed it up with a rapid-fire service game which took just two minutes in comparison and broke again against the dispirited defending champion to move two sets to one ahead.

Djokovic broke twice in the fourth set, levelling the match courtesy of Alcaraz's seventh double fault of the final.

But Djokovic wasted a golden chance to break for 2-0 in the decider with a wild smash and Alcaraz made him pay, breaking for 2-1.

A frustrated Djokovic collected another code violation for destroying his racquet against the net post before he slipped 3-1 down.

Alcaraz was not to be denied and he claimed a famous victory when Djokovic buried a forehand in the net.

Suns Deal Guard Payne to Spurs and Land Bol

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Phoenix Suns continued a major NBA roster revamp by dealing guard Cameron Payne to San Antonio and agreeing to terms with center Bol Bol, according to multiple reports.

The Suns also swapped 2026 NBA Draft first-round picks with Orlando for three future second-round choices, according to ESPN and The Athletic.

Eight-year NBA veteran Payne, who averaged 10.3 points and 4.5 assists a game last season, went to the Spurs with cash and a future second-round draft pick in exchange for a future second-round draft pick.

Payne averaged 9.8 points, 4.8 assists and 2.6 rebounds a game for the Suns over 174 games with Phoenix over the past four seasons.

The Payne move saves the Suns \$26.4 million in luxury tax money as the club will surpass the salary cap in hopes of bringing Phoenix its first-ever NBA crown.

New Suns owner Mat Ishbia has made major changes since taking over the team five months ago, including making Frank Vogel, who guided the Los Angeles Lakers to a 2020 NBA crown, the new head coach in place of Monty Williams.

The Suns landed forward Kevin Durant in a deal with Brooklyn and guard Bradley Beal in a trade with Washington to form a powerful core alongside guard Devin Booker and Bahamas big man Deandre Ayton.

Vingegaard Understands Doping Skepticism

PARIS (Dispatches) - Jonas Vingegaard, the Tour de France leader and defending champion, said he was racing clean but welcomed skepticism on the thorny issue of doping in cycling.

The Danish Jumbo-Visma rider is among Tour climbers to have broken speed records on classic ascents in this year's Tour. He was asked on Sunday if he understood public suspicion given cycling's history with doping.

Vingegaard didn't flinch.

"I fully understand and we have to be skeptical because of what happened in the past or it will just happen again," said the former fish factory worker.

"I understand the questions and I welcome them."

"I'm not taking anything (doping products) personally and I'm happy there's scepticism," he said warning to the subject.

"Yes we are going fast and beating records so it's a good thing that fans ask questions about that," he insisted.

"On the other hand there are reasons, the food, the material and the training is all improving all the time," he said.

"But it's always good to at least think about it."

Vingegaard did not mention changes in the way the Tour plans its route, where stages used to drain riders by climbing a series of huge mountains. These days, stages like Sunday's with five climbs are rare, and just one showpiece ascent is not unusual.

Vingegaard said it was in the nature of sport to strive.

"You never find your limit. There's always something you can optimise, so it is a normal thing for athletes to constantly try and improve," said Vingegaard.

Two-time champion and current runner up Tadej Pogacar was asked on his way to the 2020 title if he was doping and replied he was not. "I come from a good family, and they raised me to be a nice boy," Pogacar said. "I assure you, I'm not taking short cuts in my life."

Pogacar's rival that season was also a Jumbo rider Primoz Roglic.

"There is nothing to hide from my side. You can definitely trust me," Roglic said in his typical deadpan delivery.



James Returns to Jersey No. 23 in Russell Tribute

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - LeBron James will switch his jersey number from 6 to 23 for his 21st NBA season, the Los Angeles Lakers announced.

The move, confirmed Saturday night on social media by the Lakers, is a tribute to the late NBA legend Bill Russell, whose jersey No. 6 was retired last year after his death, James's agent Rich Paul told ESPN.

Players who were wearing 6, like James, were allowed to continue wearing the number. James did so for the 2022-23 campaign in honor of Russell, an 11-time NBA champion and five-time NBA Most Valuable Player, but has decided to show his respect this season by picking another number.

It's the fourth NBA number change for James, who returns to 23, which he wore to start his career and at stops throughout his two decades in the league.

James wore 23 in high school and when he first played for the Cleveland Cavaliers.

When he left the Cavs for the Miami Heat in 2010, he changed to 6 as the Heat had retired 23 as a tribute to NBA legend Michael Jordan.

In 2014, when James returned to the Cavaliers, he switched back to 23 and kept that number until 2021, when he went back to 6 so new Lakers teammate Anthony Davis could have 23, a number Davis ultimately did not take.

James, who was wearing 6 when he set the all-time NBA scoring record last season, announced on Wednesday that he would play in the NBA for a 21st season.

The four-time NBA champion and four-time MVP turns 39 in December and has said he would like to play in the NBA alongside his son Bronny James, who is set to be drafted next year.

Maguire Stripped of Man Utd Captaincy By Ten Hag

LONDON (Dispatches) - Harry Maguire announced Sunday he is no longer captain of Manchester United following talks with manager Erik ten Hag.

Reports earlier this month suggested Ten Hag was set to remove the England international from the role following Maguire's limited appearances under the Dutch boss last season.

The central defender made just eight Premier League starts, sparking speculation over his future with the English giants.

But what is now certain is he will no longer be the skipper at Old Trafford, with Maguire writing on Twitter: "After discussions with the manager today he has informed me he is changing captain."

"He outlined his reasons to me and whilst I'm personally extremely disappointed, I will continue to give my all every time I wear the shirt."

The 30-year-old added: "So I wanted to say a massive thank you to the Manchester United fans for all their brilliant support whilst I've been wearing the armband."

"Since the day I took on the role, three-and-a-half years ago, it's been a huge privilege to lead Manchester United and one of the proudest moments of my career to date."



Japan's Oda, 17, Wins Wimbledon Wheelchair Title

LONDON (Dispatches) - Japanese teenager Tokito Oda made history by winning the Wimbledon wheelchair title with a commanding 6-4, 6-2 victory against Alfie Hewett.

Aged 17 years and 69 days, Oda is the youngest man to win a Wimbledon singles title in any discipline.

He is also the youngest player to win a Wimbledon singles title since 16-year-old Martina Hingis lifted the women's trophy in 1997.

"This is so amazing. I didn't expect this amazing support on this court. I am feeling like I'm living in a dream. I'm so happy," Oda said.

"I want to thank Alfie and his support team. It was not easy playing in this situation against a country's home player."

"He is one of the strongest players and I have played him many times. It's really tough playing with him."

Oda's Wimbledon victory brought him a second Grand Slam title after he won last month's French Open.

That success made him the youngest man to win a Grand Slam tournament in any discipline and also the youngest world number one in the history of wheelchair tennis.

