

A Recent Meeting Between Some Members of the Italian Parliament and A Ringleader of the MKO Terrorist Group Is Considered Contradictory To the Int'l Laws and Interference in Internal Affairs of Other States

IRAN NEWS

Denouncing the Desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden, the Secretary-General of Hezbollah Called on Arab and Islamic Countries to Expel the Swedish Ambassadors From Their Countries

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UN Chief Urged to Take Hard Line on Quran Desecration

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Following repeated desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has written to Antonio Guterres, urging the UN secretary-general to take a hard line on such acts of religious sacrilege.

The top diplomat addressed the letter to the UN chief on Thursday, hours after Salwan Momika, a Sweden-based Iraqi refugee, stomped on a copy of the Qur'an and kicked the Muslim holy book during a demonstration outside Stockholm's main mosque amid strict protection provided for the rally by the Swedish police.

The act of sacrilege has opened the floodgates of protest across the world's Muslim community, including in Iran, which has summoned the Swedish ambassador to Tehran, conveying the Islamic Republic's vehement condemnation of the heinous act. This was the second time Momika was disrespecting the Qur'an amid the approval of Sweden's authorities. He had set a copy of the holy book on fire last month too, prompting similar raging protests across the Muslim world and causing the Iranian Foreign Ministry to summon Sweden's chargé d'affaires. **See Page 7**

Iran Ready to Help Syria With Post-War Reconstruction

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations has voiced Tehran's readiness to help Syria with its reconstruction process in the aftermath of a destructive Western-sponsored campaign of militancy.

Speaking during a UN General Assembly meeting in New York, Amir Saeid Irvani reiterated the Islamic Republic's continued support for Syria in the face of threats endangering its territorial integrity such as terrorism and occupation.

"We stand ready to assist in rebuilding their country, ensuring its unity, and preserving its territorial integrity," he said.

Iran has maintained an advisory mission in Syria at the request of Damascus with the aim of helping the war-torn country vanquish the foreign-backed militants, who have been fighting against the Syrian government since 2011.

Iran's advisory assistance helped Syria defeat Daesh and win back control of almost all regions from terrorists. **See Page 7**

Commander Warns U.S. Over Unloading Iranian Oil From Seized Tanker

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy has warned that any oil company unloading hundreds of thousands of barrels of seized Iranian oil sitting in a Greek tanker off the coast of Texas would be held accountable.

"We hereby declare that we would hold any oil company that sought to unload our crude from the vessel responsible and we also hold America responsible," Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri said.

"The era of hit and run is over, and if they hit, they should expect to be struck back," he added.

Adm. Tangsiri's remarks came on the anniversary of Iran's confiscation of a British-flagged tanker in the Strait of Hormuz in 2019 after Britain had seized an Iranian oil tanker off Gibraltar.

The confiscation came "in response to the maliciousness of the British, and when our ships went towards that tanker, the escort helicopter came above the tanker, which we warned that if it does not land, we will shoot it, which it complied, and after that an escorting warship also approached our waters, which we also warned, if it does not move away from the area, it will be targeted, and it also followed the order," he recalled.

"England has a lot of maliciousness and is more malicious than America," Tangsiri said.

Earlier last week, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) revealed that at least 800,000 barrels of seized Iranian oil remains untouched in U.S. waters.

According to the paper, American firms are reluctant to buy the Iranian cargo, which is worth \$56 million as they fear potential reprisals from Iran.

"Companies with any exposure whatsoever in the Persian Gulf are literally afraid to do it," an executive involved in the matter told the outlet.

More people concerned with the issue have also told the daily that they don't think the oil will ever be sold off.

All of the fuel is boarded on an oil tanker called Suez Rajan, which was seized by the US in April. The vessel was seized near southern Africa and anchored off the coast of Texas in May, while the Greek owner was charged with sanctions evasion.

A few days later, Iran's Navy seized a Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker in the Sea of Oman, which was carrying Kuwaiti oil for the second largest energy company in the U.S.

The oil tanker, named Advantage Sweet, had been involved in a maritime accident with an Iranian fishing craft, which resulted in the injury and missing of a number of its crew.

After the collision, the oil tanker attempted to flee the scene in serious breach of international laws and regulations, which require provision of medical treatment and supply of proper and sufficient medicine to seamen in case of sickness or injury.

The U.S. usually auctions off Iran's stolen assets, claiming it would use the money to pay "damages" to alleged victims of the Islamic Republic's actions.

West Using Ukraine as A Tool Against East

The West in recent decades has been losing its grandeur and power in the world as the nations are gradually rising against unipolarism and they do not want the Westerners to decide instead of them and for them, and for this reason today we see more tension between the West and the East or better to say those countries which reject unipolarism and stand against the West.

So what is now going in Ukraine is the best example for the excessive demands of the West and especially the NATO members, and Ukrainian people are paying for it and the U.S. and allies will benefit it.

Although in recent months and because of the economic hardship in the world many countries have called for an end in war between Ukraine and Russia but the U.S. and its European allies do not like any end to the war unless Ukraine wins it because the victory of Ukraine will be an end to resistance against the excessive demands of the West and every day we see that the NATO members announce sending weapons and munitions to Ukraine to help Kyiv resist against Russia and in between Ukrainian people are paying for this war.

In the latest move, the UK has announced plans to spend billions of dollars to replenish its military stockpiles, which have been depleted as a result of the country's assistance to Ukraine in its war with Russia.

The British government is to roll out the plans as early as Tuesday, which include spending 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.3 billion) on replenishing the country's stockpiles of military hardware and munitions.

The announcement came as experts believe that the Ukraine war has laid bare weaknesses of the British military, including the dwindling reserves of some munitions and a lack of necessary industrial capacity to ramp up production quickly as the country continues to supply Ukraine with weapons.

The UK ranks second to the United States in terms of military assistance to Ukraine, which has been engaged in a war with the neighboring Russia since last February. Last year, London provided Kiev with 2.3 billion pounds (\$3 billion) worth of military aid.

During past years, Britain has been also among first countries to supply more sophisticated weapons to Ukraine. It gave the first shoulder-launched anti-air and anti-tank weapons to Kiev even before the war started and also announced in February that it would be the first country to begin training Ukrainian pilots on NATO's fighter jets. **See Page 7**

PGCC Hails Iran-Saudi Normalization

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) says the normalization of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia has contributed to the region's stability, expressing willingness to engage in serious discussions with the Islamic Republic.

Jasem Mohamed al-Budaiwi, the secretary general of the GCC, made the statement in an interview with the Qatar-based Al Jazeera network's Arabic service.

Budaiwi said the entire Persian Gulf countries have welcomed the normalization process between Saudi Arabia and Iran as Riyadh-Tehran ties can contribute to the stability of the region.

"We are willing to hold deep talks with Iran within international conventions," the GCC's secretary general underlined.

Pointing to the economic woes facing Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region, Budaiwi described the economic issue as the "biggest and most important challenge" for the littoral states.

"We are working on completing some elements to reach economic integration," he said, adding, "There is a conscious will among Persian Gulf leaders to achieve this goal." **See Page 7**

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IRAN NEWS Calls for Recess

TEHRAN - Managing Director of Sokhan Gostar Institute Ms. Fatemeh Javaherian in a letter to the Press Supervisory Board of Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance called for a six-month recess and its newspapers IRAN NEWS and Sobh-e Eghtesad will not be published as of tomorrow July 23 for a six-month span.

Ms. Javaherian in her letter to the board called for a six-month halt in the printed version of both newspapers due to some problems. She wrote as follows:

We announce to that respected supervisory board that Sokhan-Gostar Institute, license-holders and publisher of IRAN NEWS English daily and Persian daily Sobh-e Eghtesad, requests a six-month recess (halt in their printed versions) due to the unsuitable revenue earning condition, sky-rocketing rise in the price of paper, problems in printing due to the closedown of the suitable printing house matching the size of the newspapers as well as rise in the cost of printing and lack of a suitable printing house for the good quality printed version of the newspapers and above all the accumulated financial which hit 20b rials according to the year 1401 balance report of the general assembly of the institute.

So we announce the recess of the newspapers according to the media laws.

تهران، بلوار مرزداران، انتهای خیابان گلستان، کوچه پانزدهم تیر، پلاک ۱۳
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تلفن: ۰۲۱-۴۴۲۵۳۳۳۵-۳۹

Govt. Ready to Resolve Iranian Exporters' Problems

HAMEDAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari has announced the government's readiness to resolve the problems faced by Iranian exporters.

Safari said on Thursday that the government is ready to resolve the problems of exporters in all fields and all target countries.

He made the comments in a meeting with economic officials and governor of Hamedan Province, western Iran. Participants at the meeting discussed ways to increase forex revenues of Iran through making foreign investment, transit and swap, as well as sectors like electricity and tourism.

Iran Determined to Pursue U.S. Assassination of General Soleimani

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Iranian vice president for legal affairs says the Islamic Republic is determined to pursue the "cowardly and unlawful" U.S. assassination of Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani in international courts.

"Iran is determined to seriously pursue this grave crime particularly in the international arena. We believe that every court that fails to condemn this crime will lose its moral and professional competence," Mohammad Dehqan told a group of Iraqi lawyers and academics in Tehran.

He hailed efforts by the Iraqi government and judiciary to follow up on the assassination case, and expressed hope these efforts will bear fruits for the two countries.

Dehqan said the West lacked moral authority to act as arbitrator in litigations pertaining to Muslim countries. He added that Iran and Iraq can further expand their legal cooperation and establish a regional court of justice with the help of other Muslim countries to address disputes between themselves and investigate crimes in the region.

He said the Iranian and Iraqi lawyers are duty-bound to pursue the U.S. government's "heinous atrocities in the southwest Asia region, particularly during the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Americans' unwavering and open support for racist and inhumane measures of the infanticidal Israeli regime."

The official said the U.S. and other arrogant powers are using international legal mechanisms as a tool to advance their agenda.



"While Americans are the pivot of terrorism in our region and the world and the blood of thousands of innocent women and children are on their hands, they [claim to be a defender of human rights] and sanction countries under the pretext of rights violations," he added.

The Iranian general was assassinated in a US drone attack in Iraq in January 2020. Iran and Iraq have both launched investigations into the US strike and their courts are pursuing the case. But they're yet to file a complaint at an international court.

In May, Tehran's chief prosecutor Ali Salehi said an Iranian court has been handling the case, and has summoned 73 people for trial and indictment, including former US president Donald Trump, former US secretary of state Mike Pompeo, and Head of US Central Command General Kenneth McKenzie.

He added that Iran has sent separate requests for judicial cooperation to nine countries that had probably played a role or were involved in the assassination.

UNICEF Supports Iran's Justice Ministry Initiatives

TEHRAN (IP) - The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund "UNICEF" office in Iran emphasized that the institution supports the initiative of the Ministry of Justice in holding consultative and collaborative workshops.

Robin Nandy, UNICEF Representative in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the opening ceremony of the third workshop on the child and adolescent protection system, said: "This 3-day workshop is part of Iran's effort to promote experts and managers of the corresponding provincial authorities."

"The National Authority of Children's Rights is about planning to promote children's rights and access to justice for children and adolescents," She concluded.

The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund "UNICEF" added: "Holding consultative and collaborative workshops in a bid to plan for children and teenagers with the participation of the Ministry of Justice is a source of encouragement."

Nandy also said: "UNICEF is proud to support this initiative and is willing to develop cooperation, especially with the Ministry of Justice of Iran to promote the rights of children and adolescents."

Iran, Syria Sign MoU on Judicial Affairs

DAMASCUS (IRNA) - Justice ministers of Iran and Syria have signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at sharing experiences on legal and judicial affairs.

The document was signed by Iran's Amin Hossein Rahimi and Syria's Ahmad al-Sayyed in the capital Damascus during the Iranian minister's visit to the Arab country.

Under the MoU, the two sides agreed to dispatch experts to share experiences on judicial affairs.

They also agreed to hold training sessions and seminars, and conduct case studies in order to make improvements in terms of specialized and scientific aspects. The Iranian minister, during his stay in Damascus, also met with Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad and Parliament Speaker Hammouda Sabbagh.

Amin Hossein Rahimi arrived in Syria on Wednesday at the head of a delegation.

Iran Has No Border Problem With Azerbaijan

TABRIZ (IRNA) - Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri has warned the enemies that any aggression will be met with a repentful and crushing response from Iran.

"Fortunately, our relationship with Azerbaijan is developing and we do not have any problems in border and security issues. Thank God, the economic relations between the two countries are developing and deepening on a daily basis. This visit is just a periodical visit that takes place on the borders of the country annually," Major General Bagheri said while paying a visit to Iran's shared border with the Azerbaijan Republic to inspect the security situation at the northern borders on Wednesday.

"Currently, the border police guards and also units of the army of the Islamic Republic of Iran are stationed in those areas in order to establish border security and protect the borders of our beloved country and carry out their missions in accordance with the laws and their duties," the top Iranian general told reporters after the inspection visit.

In response to a question about the armed forces' reaction to any aggression on the country's borders, the Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces said "certainly, our response will be strong and authoritative like the time of Holy Defense".

"Definitely, in any border and in any place, if there is an attack on the borders of the country or the interests of the Islamic Republic, the armed forces will give a strong and remorseful response to the enemy in the first step, and subsequently, in the next step, all the people of Iran will unite against the enemy and with all their might, they will destroy the attacker and the aggressor and of course, as the whole world knows, that is the reason for the security of our country," the top Iranian general warned.

Iran, Bolivia Ink Defense MoU

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Defense ministers of Iran and Bolivia have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on defense and security affairs.

Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani and his Bolivian counterpart Edmundo Novillo Aguilar signed the defense and security MoU on Thursday morning (July 20).

The Iranian minister said that Latin American countries are of special significance in Iran's foreign and defense policy based on the importance of very sensitive South American region.

Ashtiani also said that regarding Bolivia's needs in the field of border defense and combating drug trafficking,



the Iranian side tried to have interactions with the Latin American country to provide them with equipment, and that this sort of cooperation can be a role model for other nations in South America.

The Bolivian defense minister, for his part, thanked his Iranian counterpart, noting that Bolivia calls for Iran's support concerning border

security and combat against drug trafficking, as well as mutual cooperation with Iranians in the academic field.

Novillo Aguilar expressed hope that his trip to Iran will pave the way for wide range cooperation.

The Bolivian defense minister arrived in Tehran on July 16 to meet and hold talks with his Iranian counterpart.

Iran Neighborliness Policy Boosts Economic Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The good neighborhood policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has not only led to upgrading its bilateral political ties with neighboring states, but also paved the way for stability for economic collaborations, an Iranian deputy foreign minister said.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani, who stays in Warsaw to hold a new round of political consultation with his Polish counterpart, held talks with some ambassadors and diplomats in Poland.

The diplomat pointed to the efficiency of the strategic neighborliness policy of Iran, and underlined that bilateral political trust, dependence on regional capacities to resolve issues, usage of trans-regional capacities for development and progress, as well as consolidation of economic ties or institutionalization of economic cooperation, are among main components of neighborliness policy.

According to the Iranian official, the strategic initiative by Tehran and Riyadh indicated that the regional countries enjoy political maturity to resolve problems inside the West Asian region.

Touching on all political actors' positive reaction to the recent rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Bagheri Kani said, the only entity that was concerned about Tehran-Riyadh collaboration and could not even hide its infuriation was the occupying Israeli regime, because its nature promotes tension, instability, insecurity and chaos in the region.

Answering a question by one of the present ambassadors on NATO's role in the region, he said that the organization's military presence in Afghanistan proved that it is not providing security, but it performs as an element for promoting insecurity, because the outcome of 20 years of NATO presence in Afghanistan has been a 45-fold hike in production of narcotics in the war-stricken country.



Mazandaran Ready to Swap Russia's Oil, Gas

SARI (IRNA) - Governor-General of Mazandaran Province Mahmoud Hosseini-pour has said that the northern Iranian province is ready to use its ports to help swap oil and gas.

Hosseini-pour made the remarks in a meeting with the Governor of Astrakhan Oblast Igor Babushkin as well as private sector tradesmen, noting that given sanctions imposed on Russia, the northern Iranian province Russia's oil and gas through Astrakhan.

The swap capacity of Mazandaran's three major ports in Amirabad village of Behshahr, Fereydunkenar and Nowshahr is 12 million tons, which can be increased to 20 million tons, he added.

Russia's trade via the northern Iranian province would be much more beneficial to the country both in terms of time and cost, the governor-general argued.

The administration of President Ebrahim Raisi gives importance to development of communication and exchanges with neighboring states, and to this end it plans to activate international corridors, including the International North-South Transport (INSTC), which will play effective role in enhancing connections between Iran and the Caspian littoral countries such as Russia.

The INSTC is one of the most important communication routes in Eurasia, which can pave the ground for transiting commodities from the Caspian Sea.

The INSTC agreement was signed by Iran, India and Russia in St. Petersburg in September 2000. The member states plan to develop their ports, roads, terminals and rail routes in order to improve trade and economic cooperation.

Iran Introduces National Coordinator to SCO's Secretariat

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Seasoned Iranian diplomat Mehrdad Kiaei has formally been introduced as the Islamic Republic's national coordinator to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)'s secretariat.

During the 23rd SCO summit, hosted by India earlier this month, the Islamic Republic of Iran was officially accepted as the ninth full member of the regional security and economic alliance.

Established in 2001 by China and Russia to counter Western alliances, SCO also includes India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Kiaei explained that his role as Iran's national coordinator involves coordinating the SCO's activities with domestic institutions.

Kiaei has previously served as a political advisor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a consultant in ministry's departments of education and research, as well as a liaison officer at the Iranian Embassy in Italy.

Additionally, he has experience working in Iranian embassies in Moscow, Cairo and Brussels.

VP Proposes Joint Free Trade Zone With Iraq

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Islamic Republic places a premium on Iraq's stability, security, and territorial integrity, while proposing the establishment of a joint free trade zone to boost bilateral trade, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber said.

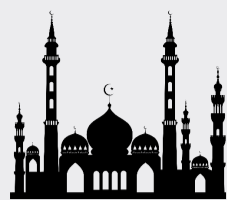
During a meeting with Iraqi Minister of Labor Ahmed Jassim al-Asadi, Mokhber stressed the need to enhance economic cooperation between Iran and Iraq, and said joint factories and a joint free trade zone could significantly contribute to achieving this goal.

He also expressed Iran's willingness to share its extensive expertise in various fields, including science, technology, engineering, medicine, and pharmaceuticals, with Iraq.

The two officials discussed the possibility of improving transportation and banking exchanges to promote greater private sector involvement in the economic development of both countries.

Al-Asadi, for his part, praised Iraq's newfound stability and expressed optimism that his visit to Iran would further strengthen bilateral cooperation and attract more investments.

He also extended his gratitude for Iran's support in combating terrorism in Iraq, particularly the contributions of the late Iranian commander, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a US drone strike in Baghdad in 2020.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:37
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:25
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:05

128. If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. But if ye do good and practise self-restraint, Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.
129. Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire:
But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air). If ye come to a friendly understanding, and practise self-restraint, Allah is Off-forgiving, Most Merciful. Surah 4. Women (128 - 129)

Direct Shipping Line Prerequisite for Broadening Iran-Nigeria Trade

IRAN EWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Ambassador of Nigeria to Iran Yakub Santuraki Suleiman in meeting with head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Mr. Hossein Salahvarzi explored ways for removing hurdles and finding ways for enhancing trade volume between Ira and Nigeria.

In the meeting, Salahvarzi said that the strategies of ICCIMA as the representative of the private sector is in line with the general policies of the government for broadening relations with different countries especially with African states. He added that Africa especially Nigeria is important for Iran as the gateway to the West Africa and Tehran does not consider Nigeria as an exporting oil country and it is well aware of different capacities of Nigeria like its membership in the West Africa Union and equal tariff among those countries which can be a good capacity for Iranian producers and exporters.

He added that in this line, the ICCIAM is interested in simultaneous with reinforcement of political ties between the governments of the two states, their chambers and private sectors also take big strides for broadening relations in order that the trade exchanges concurrent with political relations can broaden.

Then Salahvarzi pointed to the fields for cooperation between the two states and said that there are capable companies in Iran in the field of technical and engineering services that they can participate in construction of houses, roads and infrastructural installations. He went on to say that since the demands for gas in Nigeria's market is on the market both countries can work both in the oil and gas projects and the ICCIMA can introduce companies in the field of liquefied gas supply in Nigeria. He added that both countries can also have good cooperation in export and transfer of technology of agro machineries because of empowered Iranian companies in the field of equipment and machineries.



Salahvarzi then pointed to Iran's need to the main agro products like rice and cooperation in the extra-terrestrial agriculture can be one of the good grounds for bilateral cooperation. He also pointed to the medicines and medical equipment as the other fields for cooperation between the two states either in export or in joint investment. He added that soon a video conference will be held between the chambers of commerce of both countries for presenting capacities for economic cooperation. He also reiterated that ICCIMA welcomes exchange of trade delegations or holding exhibition on Iranian products in Nigeria.

He added that both countries should work to resolve their banking problem for trade through launching a financial mechanism for exchange of money. He reiterated that transport is the main and biggest hurdle for trade between the two countries and direct shipping line is the prerequisite for enhancing bilateral trade and both countries should focus on it.

Then Nigerian Ambassador Mr. Suleiman, for his part, felicitated Mr. Salahvarzi for being elected as the head of the ICCIMA and said that the trade volume of Iran and Nigeria is low and expressed hope that with the role making of ICCIMA especially after recent visit of Iranian President to Africa would open new doors for broadening trade between Iran and Nigeria. He then pointed to the abundant capacities of Iran for cooperation and pointed to some fields for bilateral cooperation.

He said that soon the issues raised by the ICCIMA will be discussed in the Nigerian government and the will be seriously pursued.

Suleiman admitted that the main problems are the issues of money transfer and transport that they should be resolved soon.

He then pointed to the hiatus in action for the launch of direct flight between Tehran and Lagos and reiterated that immediately after its launch, problems related to transport will be resolved to some extent. He noted that there is a wrong notion among Nigerian businessmen which prevent them from visiting Iran which should be corrected.

Introduction and Farewell Ceremony in MAPNA Group



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – In an introduction and farewell ceremony which was held at MAPNA Group, the new CEO of the group officially began his mission in the group and the former CEO was honored for his efforts.

In the ceremony, former CEO of MAPNA Group Mr. Abbas Aliabadi was honored for years of services in the group and the new CEO of the group Mr. Mohammad Olia officially was introduced as the new CEO of the group. Aliabadi left the job for being picked as the minister of Industry, Mine and trade.

In the ceremony, Mr. Aliabadi said that he in his new job will remove hurdles in way of big and innovative companies, adding that during his tenure, the industry minister will not become a rival for the domestic companies. He added that his ministry will support those companies which earn forex for the country. He reiterated that his ministry will remove hurdles in way of those companies which earn forex for the country.

Aliabadi reiterated that he will try to create high capacities of capable and expert human forces. Then the new CEO of MAPNA Group Mr. Olia, for his part, in the ceremony hailed Aliabadi for his efforts in MAPNA Group and wished him success in his job as a minister.

He went on to say that the name of MAPNA Group associates with sustainable development, development, innovation and value creation for long term successes, adding that he is now heir of a 30-year era of endeavor and with the efforts of managers and staff of the group since its first day of establishment it has turned to the symbol of success in the country. He reiterated that dear MAPNA is the clean farm of the innovative thinkers.

Olia replaces Abbas Aliabadi who was recently appointed as the Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade.

MAPNA Group is Iran's largest contractor for steam, gas and combined cycle and renewable power plants.

Respected CEO of Sirjan Iranian Steel Co. Dr. Ramezan Ghorban Ebrahimi Talks to Media

SISCO Enjoys Surge in Production Despite All Restrictions



it managed to produce 730 thousand tons of ingots.

Ebrahimi announced that Sirjan Iranian Steel Company is among the top 100 companies in the country despite being young is considered a great honor in itself, and reminded the development plans of this company and pointed out that if reforms and new projects are not carried out in line with other similar companies in the country and the world, the unit is doomed to decline, and for this reason we have also considered various development plans, the most important of which is the design and construction of a 1.5 million ton mega module rehabilitation unit as well as a steelmaking plant in Bardsir region. According to him, the development plan of the steel factory is still facing 20% progress while with a series of reforms and special ceiling measures, the capacity of 2.5 million tons of pellet plant will increase to 2.3 million tons, a major part of which is raised from the feed of the sponge iron factory.

The CEO of Iranian Sirjan Steel Company told the reporter about the supply of water needed by the factories of this complex: this company, by carrying out expert measures, tried to collect water from the intermediate product with the construction project of "Second Dewatering" in the Sirjan complex and also the project re-purification of returned water by WRO method in Bardsir steel complex and recycling it with the least possible waste. In this method, about 95% of water is reused in the consumption cycle and the remaining five% is used in the green space; Even now, the WRO project, which costs about 75 billion tomans, is facing 70% progress.

Ebrahimi also stated that the required capital of the mega module factory is about 140 million euros and added: In this project, more than 75% of internal and real equipment and only mainly compressors and tube reformers and some other small equipment with a value of less than 25% It will be supplied from abroad. In addition, the investment for the construction of a one million ton steel factory is also predicted with a budget of around 140 million euros.

Continuing the issue, he considered the need for proper planning to advance the general goals of the steel chain by institutions and officials as very necessary and emphasized that

if the pricing and all aspects of the steel chain are defined correctly and the price of energy, raw material (from iron ore, concentrate), sponge iron ingots or slabs and long rolled products with sheets with the correct coefficient ratio in the commodity exchange with the base price compared to ingots) and... should be planned at each stage based on scientific and expert principles, none of the parts of the production chain From the mine to the final steel product, they will not suffer, but when government salaries increase several times a year, all the economic plans of the steel production chain will also be messed up and sometimes lose their justification, which is basically not the right thing to do.

Ebrahimi pointed out that in our country there is experience, skill and the possibility of creating the capacity to produce 55 million tons of steel in the country and its justification was acceptable three decades ago, but gradually with the emergence of inconsistencies in the implementation of other prerequisite projects and At the same time, in other areas, such as the exploration of new mining areas, road and rail transportation projects, the development of necessary wharves for export, for mooring with suitable capacity, electricity and gas supply, and some other cases, the impact of reduction on quantitative productivity and The quality of the country's steel will have, he added: When the steel units are obliged to reduce the production hours in one shift as the summer season approaches, it is quite natural that the capacity of 55 million tons will not be realized.

Ebrahimi emphasized that turning off and on industries such as steel will cause a lot of damage due to thermal shocks in the equipment and the fire of the furnaces, he said: Steel factories have a series of obligations to deliver the manufactured goods in the commodity exchange in the country and export contracts abroad. ... or sometimes they have to deliver their goods to the customer on time, otherwise they will suffer huge losses and lose markets. Therefore, the authorities should consider such consequences in making their decisions to reduce the consumption of energy carriers of steel factories.

It is worth mentioning that more than 95% of the employees of this company are natives of Kerman province. This company has created employment for a total of 2,300 people directly in the two regions of Bardsir and Sirjan.

Last year, Sirjan Iranian Steel Company was able to produce 3.4 million tons of concentrate with an iron grade higher than 67% in two concentrate production units, 2.3 million tons of pellets with an iron grade above 65%, 835 thousand tons of sponge iron and 730 thousand tons of ingots despite the electricity and gas restrictions to set new record in the country and the world.

Dr. Ramzan Ghorban Ebrahimi, the CEO of Sirjan Iranian Steel Company, in an interview with Pardazesh s Media Group, announced the news and said: The production plan of the sponge iron factory of this company was 800,000 tons, but with some modifications, the production can be increased to one million.

Pointing out that steelmaking also in the initial plan has a capacity of 800,000 tons but in CCM (continuous casting machine) more melting can be obtained, he stated: "One of the challenges of smelting production is the lack of scrap in the country and the uneconomical prices of it. We try to reduce the amount of scrap charge below 5% by replacing sponge iron. The managing director of Sirjan Iranian Steel Company announced that about one million tons of sponge iron is needed to produce 800 thousand tons of ingots. He said that considering this point that the company produced 830,000 tons of sponge iron and purchasing its needs from Iran Mercantile Exchange,

Thailand to Hold Vote On PM Next Week

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thailand's parliament will hold another vote for a prime minister next week which cannot include the leader of election winners Move Forward, a deputy speaker said, after rivals derailed his bid by blocking his re-nomination.

Parliament's move to deny Pita Limjaroenrat after a marathon debate on his eligibility on Wednesday sparked protests, as a post-election crisis deepens two months after his party's surprise election triumph over military-backed rivals.

"A candidate can only be nominated once in each parliamentary session," Deputy House Speaker Pichet Chuamuangphan told Reuters on Thursday.



Iraq Expels Swedish Ambassador Over Planned Quran Burning



BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq expelled the Swedish ambassador in protest at a planned burning of the Quran in Stockholm that had prompted hundreds of protesters to storm and set alight the Swedish embassy in Baghdad.

An Iraqi government statement said Baghdad had also recalled its charge d'affaires in Sweden, and Iraq's state news agency reported that Iraq had suspended the working permit of Sweden's Ericsson on Iraqi soil.

Anti-Islam protesters, one of whom is an Iraqi immigrant to Sweden that burned the Quran outside a Stockholm mosque in June, had applied for and received permission from Swedish police to burn the Quran outside the Iraqi embassy on Thursday.

In the event, the protesters kicked and partially destroyed a book they said was the Quran but left the area after one hour without setting it alight. The Quran, the central religious text of Islam, is believed by Muslims to be a revelation from God.

Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said embassy staff were safe but Iraqi authorities had failed in their responsibility to protect the embassy.

The Iraqi government strongly condemned the burning of the Swedish embassy, according to a statement from the office of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani which declared it a security breach and vowed to protect diplomatic missions.

But Baghdad had also "informed the Swedish government ... that any recurrence of the incident involving the burning of the Holy Qur'an on Swedish soil would necessitate severing diplomatic relations", the statement said.

The decision to recall the charge d'affaires to Sweden came while the protest in Stockholm had started but before the protesters had left without burning the Quran.

Billstrom said the storming of the embassy was "completely unacceptable and the government strongly condemns these attacks". He added: "The government is in contact with high-level Iraqi representatives to express our dismay."

In Washington, the State Department strongly condemned the attack on the embassy and criticized Iraq's security forces for not preventing protesters from breaching the diplomatic post.

The European Union also strongly condemned the attack and said it looked forward to "swift adoption of the necessary security measures" by Iraq to prevent further incidents.

Thursday's demonstration was called by supporters of Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to protest at the second planned Quran burning in Sweden in weeks, according to posts in a Telegram group linked to the influential cleric and other pro-Sadr media.

Sadr, one of Iraq's most powerful figures, commands hundreds of thousands of followers, whom he has at times called to the streets, including last summer when they occupied Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone and engaged in deadly clashes.

He stood by the embassy storming on Thursday, telling a press conference the U.S. "has no right to condemn the burning of the Swedish embassy but should have condemned the burning of the Quran."

Several videos posted to the Telegram group, One Baghdad, showed people gathering around the Swedish embassy around 1 a.m. on Thursday (2200 GMT on Wednesday) chanting pro-Sadr slogans and storming the embassy complex about an hour later.

"Yes, yes to the Quran," protesters chanted. Videos later showed smoke rising from a building in the embassy complex and protesters standing on its roof.

EU Climate Chief Timmermans To Run in Dutch Election

AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) - EU climate chief Frans Timmermans said he wants to become the next Dutch prime minister and will contest a parliamentary election in the Netherlands in November.

The four-party coalition government of Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte resigned earlier this month after failing to reach an agreement on restricting immigration, triggering a vote on Nov. 22. Timmermans formally announced his candidacy to lead the ticket for Labour and Green Left parties, which are joining forces in a bid to stem a decline in support for left-leaning parties.

"This morning I told the Labour and Green Left parties that I would love to be a candidate to lead them in the next elections," Timmermans said on national Dutch television.



Russia Bombards Ukraine Ports, Threatens Ships

MYKOLAIV (Dispatches) - Russia jolted world grain markets with an escalation in the Black Sea, mounting a third straight night of air strikes on Ukrainian ports and issuing a threat against Ukraine-bound vessels to which Kyiv responded in kind.

At least 27 civilians were reported hurt in the air strikes on the ports, which set buildings ablaze and damaged China's consulate in Odesa.

The United States said Russia's warning to ships indicated Moscow might attack vessels at sea following Moscow's withdrawal this week from a U.N.-brokered deal to let Ukraine export grain. The signals that Russia was willing to use force to reimpose its blockade of one of the world's biggest food exporters set global prices soaring.

Moscow says it will not participate in the year-old grain deal without better terms for its own food and fertilizer sales. The United Nations says Russia's decision threatens food security for the world's poorest people.



Macron Reshuffles Cabinet

PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron reshuffled his government as he looks to move on from a series of crises since his re-election last year, government sources said.

After weeks of speculation that he might change prime minister, the 45-year-old head of state said on Monday that he was sticking with under-fire Elisabeth Borne. Since his re-election last May, Macron has faced months of fierce street protests over a deeply unpopular pensions reform and was forced into crisis management again late last month when riots erupted nationwide.

Advisors and ministers had long argued over whether the centrist should carry out a major overhaul of the cabinet to signal a fresh start, but in the end the changes were limited.

The highest-profile change saw the replacement of Pap Ndiaye, France's first black education minister, who despite a solid intellectual profile was seen as lacking political experience and found little support among Macron's allies.

His successor is Gabriel Attal, 34, a former government spokesman and currently public accounts minister, and rising star in the Macron administration, the sources told AFP.

Junior interior minister Marlene Schiappa was also sacked after she became embroiled in a scandal over the management of a public fund to fight Islamic extremism which she announced in 2021.

The feminist campaigner also irked her colleagues by posing for Playboy magazine in the middle of the protests over Macron's pension reform, which raised the retirement age to 64 from 62.

France got a new health minister, Aurelien Rousseau, who was previously chief of staff to Prime Minister Borne.

Macron's popularity ratings remain low but have begun to recover after suffering a near-record slump in April, with 31 percent of respondents in a July 5 poll saying they had a positive view of him.

Protesters Take to Peru's Streets, Some Met With Tear Gas

LIMA (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in Peru in marches organized by groups opposed to President Dina Boluarte, while police took anti-riot measures against some demonstrators, arresting at least six.

Peaceful protesters affiliated with left-wing groups and unions marched in the capital Lima, while isolated incidents involving the police were reported in an Andean region linked to past social conflicts, media reported.

"We want justice, peace and calm, and that Boluarte leaves immediately," said protester Dionisio Flores in Lima.

Many Peruvians accuse Boluarte and her allies of illegitimately removing and jailing her leftist predecessor Pedro Castillo, which led to sometimes violent protests through March in which 67 people were killed.

By late evening, six civilians and two police officers had been injured as protesters carrying rocks and bottles squared off with security forces who resorted to tear gas, the ombudsman said.

"The protests may continue tomorrow," Interior Minister Vicente Romero told a press conference, adding that six protesters had been arrested.

Some 21,000 people took part in the marches, Romero said, though he added that some people were taking part to press on issues unrelated to the protesters' main demands.

The unrest is also fueled by longstanding anger over widespread poverty and deep inequality that has persisted even as the major copper-producing nation has grown wealthier.

Peru, the second-largest supplier of the metal globally, could also face disruption along its key mining corridor, where Castillo is popular and many communities support the protests. Apart from Boluarte's removal, many protesters also want the right-wing Congress dissolved, elections, and a new constitution.

"This government is immoral, incompetent," said Martha Manami, who attended one of the marches. "It has used the armed forces to suppress us."

Some 24,000 police officers were deployed throughout the country in the lead up to the protests, officials said.

Transport officials said protesters blocked at least eight highways, most in the southern Arequipa and Cusco regions. They were open again by the evening, authorities said.

"We will respect the right of people to protest, but if these turn violent we will make rational use of force to impose authority," Lima police chief Roger Perez told reporters.

Jorge Pizarro, a spokesperson for one of the protest organizers, said demonstrators "will not seek a confrontation with the police." But in the Andean town of Huancavelica, protesters set the door of a government building ablaze. Police doused it and then dispersed the crowd with tear gas, a television station reported.



Several Reported Shot in Kenya During Tax Hikes Unrest



NAIROBI (Dispatches) - Several people were shot in Kenya, some possibly fatally, as security forces clashed with demonstrators across the country protesting high costs of living and tax hikes, a hospital official and local media said.

Demonstrators hurled rocks at police and burned tyres in the streets, while the security forces fired volleys of tear gas, witnesses said. It was the third round of anti-government demonstrations the opposition called this month.

Police arrested at least 300 people countrywide, including nine senior opposition figures, according to the interior ministry and an opposition lawyer.

Schools were closed in the capital Nairobi, the port city of Mombasa and Kisumu, the country's third-largest city. Nairobi's city centre was largely deserted with many businesses shut, while police erected checkpoints on roads leading to State House, President William Ruto's official residence.

Ruto was elected last August pledging to champion the interests of the poor but prices of basic commodities have risen under his administration and last month his government passed tax hikes.

The government says the levies on fuel and housing are needed to help deal with growing debt repayments and to fund job-creation initiatives.

In the unrest, seven people were admitted at Nakuru County Referral Hospital after sustaining gunshot wounds, a top hospital official, Dr. James Waweru, told Reuters.

Citizen TV reported that two people were shot dead in Nakuru, in the Rift Valley, without saying by whom.

Those arrested will be charged with various crimes including looting, malicious damage and arson, the ministry said.

In Migori town in western Kenya, two people sought treatment for gunshot wounds sustained during protests there, Citizen TV reported. One person was shot dead and another wounded in the southern town of Makueni, Citizen TV said.

Citizen TV also reported that two people were shot and wounded in Nairobi, while the Standard newspaper also reported two people shot in the capital.

"This government is violating the constitution by being brutal on us while we are trying to uphold the same constitution through peaceful protests," a protester in Mombasa who gave only his first name, Eric, told Reuters as he poured water over his face to wash away tear gas.

How Addictive, Endless Scrolling Is Bad For Your Mental Health

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Social media has redefined human connection, especially if you're part of the millennial or Gen Z generation. It is so deeply interwoven into every aspect of our lives that it's almost impossible for us to withdraw from our digital devices. Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and other such platforms are everywhere, allowing us to communicate and connect with people from all over the world.

But there's another side to social media, one about which mental health experts have been sounding the alarm for years: how our social media consumption compares to cocaine or alcohol addiction. And how it's contributing to a growing mental health crisis among youths. Subscribe to The Post Most newsletter for the most important and interesting stories from The Washington Post.

"Human connection is vital for survival. We're programmed over millions of years of evolution to connect with other people," says Anna Lembke, a professor of psychiatry and addiction medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine. But Lembke says social media companies have essentially exploited our need for human connection.

"Part of the way our brains get us to do that is by releasing oxytocin, our love hormone, which in turn releases dopamine in the reward pathway, which makes connection feel good," she added.

Lembke explains that social media has taken the work out of how we connect with other human beings, placing that effort online and adding three major ingredients: novelty, accessibility and quantity, making scrolling a very potent drug.

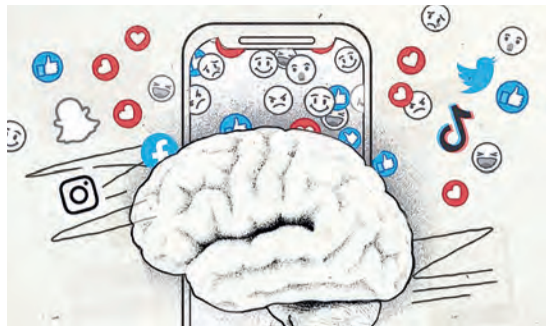
In May, Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy issued a public warning: Social media poses a risk to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents.

That public advisory from the country's top doctor was rare, but one that follows a pattern when no legal standards are in place. In a 1964 report, the then-surgeon general expressed concern about the health hazards of smoking, paving the way for warning labels on cigarette packets. In the 1980s, there were calls to reduce the permissible levels of alcohol in the blood while driving as drinking-related traffic accidents spiraled.

Now Murthy's report on social media is trying to move the needle again, and he has statistics to back up his concern: More than 95 percent of people ages 13 to 17 in the country say they use a social media platform, and more than a third say they are "almost constantly" using one.

"We are living in the middle of a youth mental health crisis in America. And my growing concern is that social media has become an important contributor to that," Murthy told The Washington Post.

In the absence of laws against overuse of social media platforms, Lembke says, the responsibility rests on parents and users. She recommends identifying the particular type of digital media that is affecting us and eliminating it for four weeks, as a sort of dopamine fast.



Extreme Heat Straining Health Systems

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The extreme heat in the northern hemisphere is putting an increasing strain on healthcare systems, hitting those least able to cope the hardest, the World Health Organization said.

The WHO said the heat often worsens pre-existing conditions, saying it was particularly concerned about those with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and asthma.

Millions of people across three continents are enduring a sustained spell of dangerous heat on Wednesday as temperature records tumble.

"Extreme heat takes the greatest toll on those least able to manage its consequences, such as older people, infants and children, and the poor and homeless," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"It also puts increased pressure on health systems," he told a news conference.

"Exposure to excessive heat has wide-ranging impacts for health, often amplifying pre-existing conditions and resulting in premature death and disability."

The WHO was working with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), its fellow Geneva-based UN agency, to support countries in developing hot-weather action plans to coordinate preparedness and reduce the impacts of excessive heat on health, he added.

Maria Neira, the WHO's public health and environment chief, said the agency was particularly concerned about pregnant women and people with diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, and asthma, as air pollution would be part of the problem.

Local and national governments needed to identify all those potentially at risk, while hospitals should ensure they had an action plan in place, she added.

Neira also said communities needed to get the message out on avoiding sport during the hottest part of the day, finding a cool place indoors, looking out for the vulnerable, and being aware of heat stroke or heat exhaustion.

Experts have blamed the heatwaves on climate change, driven by the burning of fossil fuels releasing the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

"That will be helping us to reduce the heatwaves in a very important way."

City officials needed to think through their urban planning to ensure people had refuges in times of extreme heat, she added.

The UN's WMO weather agency has said repeated high overnight temperatures are a particular health risk because the body is unable to recover from hot days, leading to more heart attacks and deaths.



Live Music Can Be Engaging For Everyone, Including Babies



TORONTO (Dispatches) - A number of scientific studies have demonstrated the benefits of live music for our mental and physical health. But can babies benefit too? A Canadian study set out to investigate.

Researchers at the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) conducted an experiment with 120 infants aged between 6 and 14 months. They divided them into two groups: the first attended an opera in a concert hall that doubles as a research center at McMaster University, while the second watched a recording of the same performance. The scientists observed the babies' reactions using heart monitors and tablets installed on the backs of concert hall seats.

These devices enabled them to observe that the infants seemed much more interested in the live performance than in its recording. As the opera unfolded before their eyes over a period of 12 minutes, their attention was retained for 72 per cent of the time, compared with 54 per cent for the video recording. What's more, the babies stayed focused longer when watching the live opera than when watching the recorded version.

This indicates that they were significantly more engaged when watching live music, according to Laura Cirelli, Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at UTSC and co-author of the study, published in the journal *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*. "Even little babies who may or may not have experienced music in a community context before are already engaging more when it's delivered this way," Cirelli says. "That's one question we have as music cognition researchers: What is it about the live experience that's worth it? Why would people go if there's not something fundamental about that live music experience that's above and beyond listening to music by yourself?" the researcher said in a statement.

If live music seems to fascinate babies, this doesn't mean that opera and other concert recordings don't interest them. They just stimulate them in a different way. Attending a musical performance is a collective experience during which the audience becomes a "rhythmic mass," in the words of the writer and essayist Elias Canetti. As such, all those present all are moving in phase with the beat of the music and become one.

Hearing Aids May Cut Thinking Declines In Those at Risk of Dementia

NEWYORK (Dispatches) - If you're hard of hearing and at higher risk for dementia, hearing aids could be a win-win.

New research, published Tuesday in *The Lancet*, finds hearing aids might reduce thinking declines in older adults --but only in those at higher risk of dementia.

"These results provide compelling evidence that treating hearing loss is a powerful tool to protect cognitive function in later life, and possibly, over the long term, delay a dementia diagnosis," said Dr. Frank Lin, a professor at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Bloomberg School of Public Health.

"But any cognitive benefits of treating age-related hearing loss are likely to vary depending on an individual's risk of cognitive decline," Lin added in a journal news release.

Untreated hearing loss may contribute to cognitive decline in several ways, including by making the brain work harder to hear, at the detriment of other mental functions such as thinking and memory.

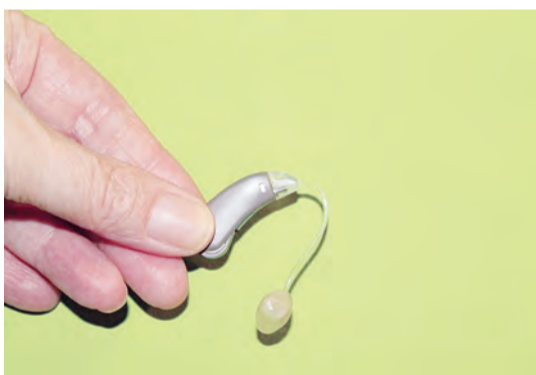
It may cause the aging brain to shrink more quickly, the study suggested. Hearing loss may also ultimately result in brain atrophy as people become less socially engaged.

To study this, the ACHIEVE randomized trial at several U.S. sites included 977 adults, aged 70 to 84 years, with untreated hearing loss. They did not have substantial mental impairment.

Two study groups were included: One was at higher risk of cognitive decline; the other was generally healthier people.

They were randomized to either receive audiological counseling and hearing aids or the control intervention of generalized counseling on healthy aging. Researchers followed up with the groups twice a year over three years.

Researchers tested executive function, language and memory at the start of the study and then annually. Among the tests were delayed word recall,



incidental learning, logical memory and digit span backwards.

Taken together, there was no difference in cognitive decline after three years between the two groups.

But when looking specifically at the greater-risk group, there was 48% less cognitive change over three years in the group who received hearing aids

compared to the one that didn't.

For those in the healthier group, three-year cognitive change did not differ significantly between the hearing intervention and control groups.

Treating hearing loss protected against mental decline in older adults at greater risk of dementia, researchers said.

Age-related hearing loss affects about two-thirds of adults aged over 60 around the world. Fewer than 10% of people with hearing loss use hearing aids in low- and middle-income countries, while fewer than 30% do so in high-income countries, the authors said in background notes.

The 2020 *Lancet* Commission on Dementia estimated that untreated hearing loss contributed to around 8% of dementia cases worldwide, about 800,000 of the nearly 10 million new cases of dementia diagnosed every year.

"We eagerly await the follow-up of ACHIEVE that is currently underway to examine the longer-term effects of hearing aids on cognition in populations at lower risk of dementia. Further analyses of MRI and social engagement data will also improve our understanding of the ways in which hearing aids may help delay cognitive decline," said co-author Marilyn Albert, a professor of neurology from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore.

Study limitations included that participants and researchers were aware of the intervention. Also, two of the 10 neurocognitive tests contained only auditory stimuli, so those with untreated hearing loss could potentially perform more poorly on these tests.

Chronic Constipation May Indicate Higher Risk for Dementia



LONDON (Dispatches) - Chronic constipation may not only be an indicator of gut health, but a potential warning sign of thinking declines, a preliminary study suggests.

Researchers found that among more than 110,000 middle-aged and older U.S. adults, those who were chronically constipated -- fewer than three bowel movements a week -- also showed signs of an "older" brain.

Compared with their counterparts who were regular, they typically performed worse on tests of memory and thinking -- equivalent to three extra years of aging. And they were 73% more likely to say their cognitive skills were waning.

The findings -- presented Wednesday at a meeting of the Alzheimer's Association in Amsterdam and online -- are considered preliminary. And they do not prove that constipation, per se, somehow causes the aging brain to deteriorate faster.

But experts said the findings add to evidence connecting gut health to brain health.

One possibility, researchers theorize, is that constipation and cognition are linked via the gut microbiome. That's the vast array of bacteria that naturally dwell in the intestines and play important roles in many bodily functions.

An explosion of research in recent years has been looking at links between the gut microbiome and various diseases, including degenerative brain diseases like Alzheimer's. The question is whether certain gut microbiome profiles -- an abundance of particular "bad" bacteria or short supply of some "good" ones -- might contribute to those health conditions.

One recent study, for example, found that people with early markers of Alzheimer's -- abnormal protein buildup in the brain -- also had gut microbiomes that looked different from those of other older adults.

In theory, constipation could be a symptom of a gut microbiome that is associated with poorer cognition. But that remains to be proven.

"It's unclear at this point whether constipation itself or the underlying cause of constipation -- whether it be disruptions in the gut microbiome or a change in diet -- is driving this association," said Claire Sexton, senior director of scientific programs and outreach for the Alzheimer's Association.

South Korea to Hike Minimum Wage by 2.5% in 2024

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea has decided to raise the minimum wage by a three-year low of 2.5% in 2024, its Minimum Wage Commission said, amid slowing growth and high inflation. The minimum hourly wage will be raised to 9,860 won (\$7.80) next year, up from 9,620 won this year, the commission said. The figure was reached after 110 days of discussion, the most number of days it has ever taken reach an agreement. It will be the smallest increase since 2021, when the wage was raised by a record low of 1.5% amid the COVID-19 pandemic.



Turkey, UAE Ink 13 Agreements Worth \$50.7B During Erdogan Visit

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed 13 agreements worth \$50.7 billion during President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to the Persian Gulf country, the Presidential Communications Directorate said.

In a statement, the directorate said that both sides have reached an agreement to establish a High-Level Strategic Council, to be chaired by the presidents of Turkey and the UAE.

Turkey's relations with the UAE have been elevated to the level of strategic partnership as a result of the agreement, it said.

"The parties also decided to advance the existing cooperation in fields such as energy, transportation, infrastructure, logistics, e-commerce, finance, health, food, tourism, real estate, construction, defense industry, artificial intelligence and advanced technologies," the statement said.

"The total value of agreements signed in these areas is worth \$50.7 billion," it added.

Erdogan said that his country will ensure that relations with the UAE are addressed regularly at the highest level through the High-Level Strategic Council mechanism.

His remarks came as Erdogan and UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan led delegation-level talks at the Al Watan Palace in Abu Dhabi.

Expressing satisfaction with the development of close dialogue and cooperation on the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations with the UAE, Erdogan said Turkey aims to strengthen legal infrastructure with UAE in areas including investment promotion, security, renewable energy and transportation.

"With the joint agreement we will sign, we will elevate our relations to the level of strategic partnership," Erdogan said, adding: "We find it beneficial to organize a Trade and Investment Forum in Istanbul in the fall to introduce the agreement to our business world."

Erdogan said that cooperation between the two countries would advance further with the International Defense Industry Fair (IDEF) to be held in Istanbul on July 25-28.

He expressed his pleasure for being invited as the "guest of honor" to the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair.

Al Nahyan also awarded Erdogan with the Order of Zayed, the UAE's highest civil decoration.

In the UAE president's visit in November 2021, when non-oil trade volume was around \$13 billion (TL 350 billion), Ankara and Abu Dhabi signed a total of ten deals, including exchanging financial information to prevent money laundering and financing terrorism, cooperation between Abu Dhabi Port Company and Türkiye Wealth Fund, as well as the central banks and stock markets of both nations.

The same month, UAE unveiled a \$10 billion fund for Turkey investments, which Erdogan and Al Nahyan inked on paper during Erdogan's visit to Abu Dhabi months later. The deals reached 13 to cultivate partnerships in defense, healthcare, climate change, industry, culture, trade and many other fields.

Last year, the two countries signed a nearly \$5-billion currency swap deal to boost Ankara's dilapidated foreign currency reserves when non-oil trade volume measured \$19 billion.

In March this year came a free trade agreement to increase bilateral commerce to \$40 billion annually within five years.

Another objective is to create 25,000 jobs in the UAE and 100,000 others in Turkey as per a partnership framework.

Emirati ambassador to Ankara this week said, "Soaring trade volume has made Turkey the fastest growing one among the UAE's top 10 trade partners," accounting for over 3% of the country's non-oil foreign trade.

Iraq to Reuse Syrian Port to Export Oil Across the Mediterranean

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The spokesperson of the Iraqi government, Basim Al-Awadi, confirmed on Monday that Iraq is considering reusing oil pipelines linking oilfields in Kirkuk with the port of Baniyas in Syria to export oil through the Mediterranean Sea, according to the Iraqi News Agency (INA).

Al-Awadi indicated that Iraq rejects the economic sanctions imposed on Syria, which increase regional destabilization, and is working to help Syria boost its economy.

The Iraqi official illustrated that Iraq is looking for new outlets to export oil, expecting that the government is ready to discuss with the Syrian side reusing the oil pipeline to export oil through the port of Baniyas on the Mediterranean Sea.

The improvement of economic conditions in Syria will provide Iraq with new opportunities to export its crude oil and deliver it quickly to buyers in Europe through the Mediterranean Sea.

The pipeline connecting Kirkuk's oilfields with the northwestern Syrian port of Baniyas was operational for many years before it was badly damaged during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In 2007, Iraq and Syria agreed to rebuild the pipeline, but a contract awarded to Stroytransgas, a subsidiary of the Russian Gasprom group, was cancelled in 2009 due to high costs and other reasons, Zawya News reported.



Asia Slashes Russian LNG Imports To Two-Year Low

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Major LNG buyers in North Asia have slashed imports of liquefied natural gas from Russian export projects to the lowest in two years as the world's top LNG importers look to diversify supply amid ample current supply.

In June, Asian imports of LNG from Russia slumped by 15% to the lowest levels since August 2021, shipping data compiled by Bloomberg showed on Wednesday.

China, which has been buying record volumes of crude oil from Russia, has recently slashed LNG purchases from Russian export plants. Chinese LNG imports from Russia halved in June compared to May, to the lowest level in 11 months, according to the shipping data compiled by Bloomberg.

South Korean utilities are not buying Russian spot LNG cargoes currently, while at least two Japanese utilities want LNG supply from Russia reduced, sources familiar with the matter have told Bloomberg.

Russia's natural gas and LNG exports are not subject to any embargoes or restrictions, but buyers are looking to diversify and avoid potential future problems with payments and deliveries, according to Bloomberg.

Japan and South Korea have renewed some of their long-term LNG supply deals with Russia. Most long-term LNG buyers of the Sakhalin-2 project, including from Japan and South Korea, have continued to buy gas from the venture, even though Western majors quit en masse operations in Russia after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Exceptionally High Economic Risks in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) says Pakistan's economic challenges are "complex and multifaceted" and the risks are "exceptionally high".

In a report released, the global lender said Pakistan's economy had been rocked by "significant shocks" over the past year, which included floods that caused damage of more than \$30bn, the war in Ukraine and other "fiscal and external pressures".

"Addressing them requires steadfast implementation of agreed policies, as well as continued financial support from external partners. Consistent and decisive implementation of program agreements will be essential to reduce risks and maintain macroeconomic stability," the 120-page report added.

The IMF released the report a week after it approved a \$3bn bailout program, including

the immediate disbursal of about \$1.2bn to help stabilize the economy of the South Asian country with a population of 220 million people - the world's fifth highest.

The lender imposed stringent conditions for the bailout, including a market-determined exchange rate for the Pakistani rupee, increased energy tariffs and other reforms in the energy sector.

The government has also told the IMF it will not introduce any new tax amnesty scheme or grant tax exemptions in the current fiscal year.

The past year saw Pakistan's economic condition worsen as it faced an ever-growing balance of payment crisis with depleting foreign reserves, ballooning debt and record-breaking inflation.

Before the IMF board's decision to approve the bailout, Pakistan's foreign reserves were just over \$4bn, enough to cover a month of imports.

Political turmoil has added to the financial meltdown as the country heads into national elections, expected this year.

The IMF also hinted that upon completion of the arrangement, a possible successor program could be agreed upon with the government.

"Resolving Pakistan's structural challenges, including long-term balance of payment pressures, will require continued adjustment and creditor support beyond the program period. A possible successor arrangement could help anchor the policy adjustment needed to restore Pakistan's medium-term viability and capacity to repay," the report said.

Karachi-based economic analyst Yousuf M Farooq says the IMF recommendations could be just the medicine Pakistan's ailing economy needs.

"If we do follow what the IMF has prescribed, we may just find ourselves out of the woods for now. We must ensure a floating foreign exchange rate, remove restrictions on imports and take other recommended policy measures," he told Al Jazeera.

Farooq said the IMF report refers to "policy missteps" by the government and it is necessary for the country's financial managers to show "fiscally responsible behavior".

UK Inflation Cools Sharply To Ease Pressure On Bank of England

LONDON (Dispatches) - Inflation in the United Kingdom dropped by more than anticipated in June and came in at its lowest in over a year, according to official data that is likely to ease some of the pressure on the Bank of England (BoE) to keep on raising interest rates sharply to provide potential relief for struggling households.

The inflation, as measured by the consumer prices index (CPI), fell to 7.9% in the year to June from 8.7% the previous month, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said, marking a 15-month low. Most economists had expected a more modest decline to 8.2%.

The sterling weakened against the U.S. dollar and the euro as the ONS said the consumer price inflation growth rate was its lowest since March 2022 but stayed above the pace of price growth in other big, rich economies.

The statistics agency said the falling of fuel prices was the biggest driver behind the drop, while food price inflation also pared back, though they remained historically high.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the CPI rate in the 12 months to June would drop to 8.2% from May's 8.7%, moving further away from October's 41-year high of 11.1% but still far above the BoE's 2% target.

The BoE said in May it expected June inflation would fall to 7.9%.

"Overall, the U.K. will probably still have higher rates of inflation than elsewhere for a while yet, but at least the U.K. is now following the global trend," Paul Dales, chief U.K. economist at Capital Economics, said.

The Bank of England, like other central banks around the world, has been raising interest rates over the past 18 months or so, firstly as a result of supply chain problems linked to the coronavirus pandemic and then by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which led to a sharp rise in energy and food prices in particular.

However, inflation in the U.K. has proved stickier than in other wealthy nations within the Group of Seven (G-7) for a number of reasons.

Many economists blame Britain's departure from the European Union as one reason for impeded trade. Others blame the BoE for being too slow in raising interest rates, which help dampen inflation by making it more expensive for consumers and businesses to borrow.

"The U.K. still has one of the highest inflation rates of any advanced economy, but after today it merely looks bad rather than a basket case," said James Smith, research director at the Resolution Foundation. "That is a very welcome improvement."

Investors reeled in bets for more interest rate hikes from the BoE. Markets now show a 25-basis point rise next month is likelier than a 50-basis point increase, which had been priced in on Tuesday.

Dollar's Rise Hit Emerging Markets Harder Than Advanced Economies



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Emerging market economies bore the brunt of the strongest U.S. dollar in two decades in 2022, a rise that battered them with capital outflows, higher import prices and tighter financial conditions, the International Monetary Fund said.

The IMF said new research in its annual External Sector Report shows that the dollar's surge last year had a bigger impact on emerging markets than on smaller advanced economies, partly due to the latter group's more flexible exchange rates.

For every 10% of U.S. dollar appreciation linked to global financial market forces, emerging market economies faced a gross domestic product (GDP) output decline of 1.9% after one year, a drag that is expected to linger for 2.5 years, the IMF said.

The same research showed the impact was far lower in advanced economies, with output reduction peaking at 0.6% after one quarter and the effects largely gone within a year.

The IMF said in the report that the dollar's real effective exchange rate rose by 8.3% in 2022 to its strongest level in two decades, amid a rapid series of Federal Reserve rate increases to curb inflation and higher global commodity prices driven by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Emerging market and developing economies with pre-existing vulnerabilities such as high inflation and misaligned external positions experienced greater depreciation pressures, while commodity-exporting economies benefited from the increase in commodity prices," the IMF said.

Many emerging market economies suffered worsening credit availability, diminished capital inflows, tighter monetary policy, and bigger stock market declines.

In advanced economies, more flexible exchange rates were able to absorb some of the impact through depreciation, while more accommodative monetary policy also helped - provided that there were firmly anchored inflation expectations, the IMF said.

Eight Iranian Kids Awarded At French Art Contest

TEHRAN (MNA) – Eight Iranian children have won prizes at the International Visual Arts Competition, “Louis François” held in France.

Iranian participants submitted as many as 193 artworks to the contest, the Institute for the public relations department of the Iranian Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults reported.

The theme of the artistic event was “The landscape that I love, the nature I must preserve”, added the report. Kids from as many as 66 states took part in the competition by sending 5,098 artworks.

The Louis François Center for UNESCO organizes the competition to promote the practice of art among children and young people around the world in a bid to unite them via international activity.



French Backlash Scuppers Appointment of U.S. Economist for EU Big Tech Regulation

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - A French-led backlash led to a U.S. economist withdrawing from a top European Union antitrust job, a move some economists said risks undermining competition policy-making.

EU antitrust chief, Margrethe Vestager, triggered the furore last week by picking Fiona Scott Morton as the chief economist of the EU's antitrust unit, the competition arm currently running probes into U.S. tech giants Alphabet, Apple, Meta Platforms, Microsoft and Amazon's bid for iRobot.

It is rare for the Commission to pick a non-EU national for such a senior job unless there are exceptional circumstances.

France has in recent years been vocal about its determination to drive Europe's independence and wants to remove all possible U.S. influence from policy-making as it pushes for strategic autonomy in key industries, such as technology.

Scott Morton, 56, a Yale economics professor who held the post of chief economist at the U.S. Department of Justice just over a decade ago, has acted as a consultant for some Big Tech companies including Apple, Amazon and Microsoft. She would have had to recuse herself for up to two years from cases involving companies which were her clients.

France, from President Emmanuel Macron to its media and lawmakers, led criticism of her appointment, but leaders of the main political parties at the European Parliament also opposed the move.

A spokesman for the French foreign ministry said its opposition “did not relate to the qualities of the person concerned but to the compatibility of this appointment with two principles which are at the heart of our conception of the European Union: sovereignty and the protection of the interests of European businesses and consumers.”



French politicians from all sides welcomed Morton's decision on Wednesday.

The EU has forged a reputation as a global pioneer for formulating privacy rules to keep the U.S. tech giants in check, handing out huge fines to Google for various anti-competitive business practices and forcing Amazon to change the way it uses sellers' data. Vestager said she accepted Scott Morton's decision to quit with regret but economists warned that the debacle will leave the bloc's competition commissioner weakened.

Vestager should have been more transparent on possible conflicts of interest, said EU lawmaker Paul Tang from the Netherlands.

Sweden Ambassador Summoned Over Quran Desecration

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran summoned Sweden's ambassador to Tehran over a second incident of state-authorized desecration of the Holy Qur'an in the Swedish capital, conveying the Islamic Republic's vehement protest against the heinous act of blasphemy.

The Swedish envoy was summoned by Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani on Thursday.

Just hours earlier, Salwan Momik, a Sweden-based Iraqi refugee, had stomped on a copy of the Qur'an and kicked the Muslim holy book during a demonstration

outside Stockholm's main mosque amid strict protection provided for the rally by the Swedish police.

“We strongly condemn the repeated desecration of the Nobel Qur'an and Islamic sanctities in Sweden, and consider the Swedish government to be fully responsible for the fallout from provocation of the sentiments of the world's Muslims,” Kanaani told the Swedish diplomat.

The act of sacrilege has opened the floodgates of protest across the world's Muslim community.

Hours before the planned desecration, hundreds of Iraqi protesters amassed outside the Swedish embassy in Baghdad, scaling its walls and setting fire to parts of it.

“Continuation of disrespect against the Islamic sanctities and hatermongering in this way serves as a complete example of organized violence and is considered to be a hostile measure against the world's two-billion-strong Muslim population, God-fearing people, and followers of divine religions,” Kanaani told the Swedish envoy.

The spokesman further asked how come Sweden, which lays claim to respecting human and civil rights, had come to brook such an act of profanity against the rights of the world's Muslim population, around one million among whom reside in Sweden.

The Iranian official reminded the envoy that the United Nations Human Rights Council had recently passed a resolution condemning the desecration of the Holy Qur'an, denouncing Sweden's disregard for international ratifications that had witnessed Stockholm allowing repetition of the act of sacrilege.

Lashing out at the Swedish government for its efforts to try and justify such profanity under the banner of “freedom of speech,” Kanaani said freedom of speech should not feature “violation of the dignity and religious sanctities” of other people.

The Swedish ambassador, for his part, said he would promptly notify his respective government about the Islamic Republic's protest.

Iran, Iraq FMs Stress Necessity of Holding OIC Meeting

TEHRAN (MNA) - Condemning the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden, the foreign ministers of Iran and Iraq emphasized the necessity of holding a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Following the renewed desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden, Hossein Amirabdollahian and his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein held a phone call on Thursday evening.

The two sides strongly condemned the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden.

They considered insulting the Holy Quran as an insult to rationality and freedom of expression and condemned the irresponsible behavior of the Swedish government.

The two foreign ministers emphasized the necessity of holding a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in that regard.

For the second time in the last few weeks, Salwan Momika, an Iraqi-Swedish citizen, insulted the Holy Quran with the support of the Swedish police.

The Swedish ambassador to Tehran was summoned to Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday.

Iran, Iraq Labor Ministers Discuss Cooperation, Joint Investment

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's Minister of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare Solat Mortazavi expressed the country's willingness to engage in joint investment development with Iraq.

He conveyed this message during a meeting with Iraq's Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Ahmed Al-Asadi.

Mortazavi emphasized Iran's readiness to collaborate in areas of labor, social welfare, and the exchange of technical and vocational training experiences.

Referring to the religious and cultural commonalities between the two countries, Mortazavi expressed hope for a successful Arbaeen rally this year, emphasizing its significance in showcasing unity among the Islamic Ummah.

Describing Iraq as a friendly and brotherly nation, Mortazavi conveyed his ministry's keen interest in expanding economic cooperation with Iraq.

In response, Al-Asadi acknowledged Iran's progress in various industrial sectors and expressed hope for sharing its successful experiences with the Arab country.

He also announced the launch of cooperation between the social security funds of Iran and Iraq, aiming to increase joint investments.

The initial steps for this collaboration will be taken in the near future.

Iran Ready to Help Syria...

FROM PAGE 1

The meeting came days after Russia vetoed a West-backed draft resolution at a UN Security Council session that called for a nine-month extension of aid deliveries to Syria through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing with Turkey without the consent of Damascus. Also, another resolution by Russia for a six-month extension did not meet the quorum required to pass.

Two days later, Syria submitted a letter to the UN and the Security Council, saying it allows the world body access to the crossing for six months “in full cooperation and coordination” with the Syrian government, warning against any cooperation with terrorists in the country's north.

Iran's UN envoy expressed regret about the failure of the Security Council to reach an agreement on the resolution for a cross-border mechanism, welcoming, however, Damascus' decision to authorize aid deliveries.

“We warmly welcome this decision and sincerely hope that in providing humanitarian aid, the United Nations and its relevant agencies will address Syria's legitimate concerns. These concerns include the diversion of aid to terrorist organizations in the northwest region and the need for transparent and non-discriminatory distribution of aid,” he added.

Iravani further urged the Western countries to respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and avoid legitimizing terrorist groups in northwestern Idlib

Province through humanitarian assistance.

“The Syrian Arab Republic has consistently emphasized that the cross-border mechanism undermines its sovereignty and territorial integrity, providing an opportunity for terrorist groups to exploit humanitarian aid for their own interests,” he added.

“The situation raises legitimate concerns about Western intentions that they may seek to divide Syria and establish a self-governing region led by terrorists in the northwest. The continued support for this border crossing through humanitarian aid further exacerbates these worries.”

The ambassador also said that Iran supports the provision of humanitarian assistance without politicization or conditions and in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality.

“The ever-increasing humanitarian crisis in Syria, further compounded by the devastating earthquake on 6 February 2023, highlights the urgent necessity for humanitarian aid. Ensuring the delivery of impartial and non-politicized assistance to all regions of Syria is paramount for saving lives ... It is crucial, however, to uphold Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity throughout this process,” he noted.

Iravani called for the lifting of unilateral Western sanctions on Syria which worsen the humanitarian and economic situation there.

PGCC Hails...

FROM PAGE 1

On March 10, after several days of intensive negotiations hosted by China, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to restore diplomatic ties and reopen embassies seven years after their relations were severed.

In a joint statement after signing the agreement, Tehran and Riyadh highlighted the need to respect each other's national sovereignty and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of one another. They agreed to implement a security cooperation agreement signed in April 2001 and another accord reached in May 1998 to boost economic, commercial, investment, technical, scientific, cultural, sports, and youth affairs cooperation.

The meeting between Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud on April 6 marked the first such meeting in seven years and emphasized the need to implement the China-brokered agreement.

Iran appointed Alireza Enayati as the Iranian envoy to Riyadh in May. Enayati had previously served as Iran's ambassador to Kuwait, assistant to the foreign minister and director-general of Persian Gulf affairs at the Foreign Ministry.

West Using Ukraine...

FROM PAGE 1

As the war in Ukraine its taking its toll on military stocks of Kiev's Western allies, British defense secretary said earlier in July that the West is not an Amazon delivery service for weapons shipment to Ukraine. Ben Wallace's comments were seen as an extraordinary snub of Ukraine's repeated requests for more arms to fight against Russia.

He added that Kiev needed to show gratitude for Western weapons donations and persuade some doubting politicians in Washington and other capitals that the tens of billions of dollars they were spending on military aid to the country were worthwhile.

Although the British defense secretary said that the West is not an Amazon delivery but they act as an Amazon delivery to save Ukraine because the West badly needs the victory in this war and they will not spare any aid to Ukraine to encourage Ukrainian forces to fight against Russia.

As means of recovering the damage it has suffered from the war, Britain announced earlier this year that it would boost its defense spending by an extra five billion pounds (\$6.5 billion) to take it to about 2.25 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) during this year and the next. The previous defense budget accounted for only 2 percent of the UK's GDP.

As the war goes on, the pressure on the U.S. and UK governments are increased by their own people and even by other nations and everybody wants an end to this war but the arrogance of the U.S. and its ally UK does not let the war end, and of course weapon suppliers and manufacturing companies make most of the war because their existence hinges on war in any part of the world, and Ukraine because of its importance for the West is a good option and customer for arms dealers.

So the world should not expect at this moment any end to the war in Ukraine because this is the war between the NATO and Russia and the NATO under the guise of Ukraine is fighting with Russia and unfortunately both Russia and Ukraine have fallen into the trap of the U.S. and allies, one fighting for its pride and the other for its land and the third party the U.S. enjoys watching the war and as we have seen in the past the U.S. and the West have been behind most of wars in any part of the world for their benefit and unfortunately many people worldwide have lost and are still losing their lives because of the unipolarism policy of the West which one day the world should put a full stop to it.

UN Chief Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

Writing to Guterres, Amirabdollahian reminded that the act of sacrilege had caused “serious harm” to the sentiments of Muslims and other followers of divine religions across the world. “The shock and concern about such insulting actions is on the rise,” the foreign minister added.

Iran strongly denounces the Swedish authorities' issuance of their approval for the provocative act, the letter went on.

“Iran strongly warns that continuation of such actions under the cover of freedom of speech constitutes an open insult to the entirety of Muslims and serves to provoke various communities,” Amirabdollahian said, cautioning that such acts of sacrilege “pursue Islamophobia and promotion of extremism.”

These acts of desecration, the foreign minister further warned, “are to be ensured by irreparable consequences and repercussions, such as an expansion of hatred, violence, and xenophobia across various communities.”

Continuation of these insulting behaviors ultimately serves to pose “serious threats to peace and peaceful coexistence among members of various divine religions,” added the letter.

Amirabdollahian finally urged Guterres to take the necessary measures that would prevent a repetition of such profanity, calling on the UN chief to demand the world body's members to “seriously confront those ordering and perpetrating such [insulting] actions.”

Separately, in a tweet on Thursday evening, the minister strongly slammed the act of desecration and the Swedish government's “irresponsible” measure to allow it to happen.

“Insulting beliefs and divine texts have no place in divine religions,” he wrote.

“Iran, along with other Islamic countries and those that revere holy books, is ready to take coordinated deterrent measures,” Amirabdollahian said.



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Wolves Re-Sign Doherty After Atletico Madrid Exit

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wolves re-signed Matt Doherty on a free transfer after the Republic of Ireland defender's exit from Atletico Madrid.
Doherty agreed a three-year deal with Wolves, where the right-back made more than 300 appearances during his first spell at the Premier League club.
The 31-year-old left Molineux in 2020 to join Tottenham but, after a disappointing stint in north London, he moved to Atletico Madrid in January on a six-month deal.

Vingegaard Tested Four Times In Last Two Days

COURCHEVEL (Dispatches) - Tour de France overall leader Jonas Vingegaard has undergone four anti-doping tests in the last two days, including one an hour before the start of 17th stage, his Jumbo-Visma team said amid scepticism over the Dane's performances.
Vingegaard extended his overall lead to one minute and 48 seconds over second-placed Tadej Pogacar with a stunning display in Tuesday's individual time trial, which he won by 1:38. Pogacar was second in the stage.

Cavaliers Win Overtime Thriller To Advance to Championship

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Cavaliers are heading to the 2K24 Summer League championship game after defeating the Nets 102-99 in overtime.
Isaiah Mobley's game-high 23 points – which included a game-winning basket – led the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 102-99 overtime win over the Brooklyn Nets in an NBA 2K24 Summer League semifinal playoff game at Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas on Sunday afternoon.

The back-and-forth ball game started with a high-scoring first quarter as the Cavaliers emerged to take a 26-21 lead, but the Nets bounced back to narrow their deficit to one going into halftime. In the third period, Cleveland appeared to retake control, for good, by building its advantage back to 12 going into the fourth quarter. However a late rally by Brooklyn, punctuated by Armoni Brooks' game-tying pullup three-pointer with 24.3 seconds remaining, forced overtime.

In the extra period, the Nets fought back from an early hole to get within one point of the Cavs before Mobley's turnaround jumper put Cleveland over the 101 target score.

Jalen Wilson and Brooks co-lead the Nets with 22 points apiece, with Wilson adding 11 rebounds and four assists, while Brooks posting three boards and one dime. Matt Lewis furnished 14 points, three rebounds, one assist and one block. RaiQuan Gray delivered 12 points, nine boards, three assists and one block. Kennedy Chandler delivered 11 points, seven assists, four rebounds and two steals. David Duke Jr. managed 10 points, six rebounds and two assists.

Mobley added seven rebounds, five assists, two blocks and one steal. Rookie second-round pick Emoni Bates registered 20 points and seven boards. Sam Merrill tallied 19 points, five assists, four boards and one steal. Craig Porter netted 12 points, seven rebounds, seven assists and two blocks. Luke Travers generated an 11-point, 12-rebound double-double that included five assists, four blocks and one steal.

Meanwhile the Brooklyn Nets will face the Cleveland Cavaliers at Paris's Accor Arena on Jan. 11, 2024 for the third regular-season NBA game in the French capital, the NBA announced.

Warholm Thriving In Ultra-Competitive 400m Hurdles

MONACO (Dispatches) - The blot on Karsten Warholm's storied track landscape was a botched comeback at last year's world championships, but the Norwegian insists that is well behind him in what is proving to be an ultra-competitive 400m hurdles.

Warholm produced one of the most memorable Olympic victories in history when hurdling to gold in Tokyo in a stunning world record of 45.94sec two years ago. To get a better understanding of that performance, just 200 athletes have bettered the time this season over 400m flat.

But the former two-time world champion was then beset by a hamstring injury and could only finish seventh at the world championships in Eugene, although he did rebound to win a second European crown in Munich a month later.

"It was tough being humiliated!" Warholm said Thursday ahead of the Diamond League meeting in Monaco.

"It was tough being at the world champs last year -- good memories now, we laugh about it!"

"I was obviously not fully prepared. But I'm a competitor, I will never back down. I'm not going to lie, when I was standing in the final, I thought I was going to win. I didn't obviously, I finished seventh!"

The gold medallist that day was Brazilian Alison Dos Santos, for whom Friday's race in Monaco will be his first over the hurdles this season as he comes back from a "completely weird" injury sustained while doing a plank exercise.

"It's the perfect time to come back to the track, I'm fit and healthy, I'll give my all tomorrow," said the Brazilian who won Olympic bronze behind Warholm and American silver medallist Rai Benjamin in Tokyo.

Both Warholm and Dos Santos admitted to thriving amid the competitive cut-and-thrust of the 400m hurdles.

"It's amazing to be part of this group. When you turn up at the track you don't know who's going to win," said Dos Santos.

Warholm added: "There are a lot of competitive guys pushing each other. Whenever you run against someone who is super good you know you need to push.



Wembanyama of the San Antonio Spurs.

"We're thrilled to be bringing the live NBA experience back to Paris with two exciting teams in the Brooklyn Nets and the Cleveland Cavaliers," said Mark Tatum, the NBA's deputy commissioner and chief operating officer.

"This game has become a destination for our passionate fans across Europe and will build on the incredible momentum around basketball and the NBA in France and throughout the region."

The game will be held about six months before Paris hosts the 2024 Summer Olympics, where basketball will feature prominently.

Team USA defeated France 87-82 to win the gold medal at the Tokyo Games in 2021.

"The City of Paris is delighted to host another thrilling NBA regular-season game and extend a warm welcome to two remarkable teams, the Brooklyn Nets and the Cleveland Cavaliers," said Pierre Rabadan, deputy mayor of Paris in charge of sports, Olympic and Paralympic Games and river Seine.

"Our love and passion for the sport of basketball drive us to provide an unforgettable experience for players and fans alike. Paris has always been a special place for basketball and continues to be, as its rich culture steadily thrives and spreads within the city."

Fernandes Replaces Maguire As New Man Utd Captain

LONDON (Dispatches) - Portuguese midfielder Bruno Fernandes has been named as the new captain of Manchester United, the Premier League club said.

The 28-year-old will replace defender Harry Maguire, who was stripped of the team captaincy by manager Erik ten Hag after the England international failed to secure a place in the first team.

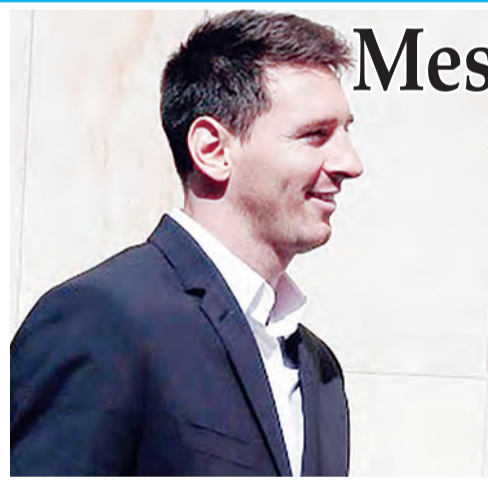
Fernandes, who has 64 goals and 54 assists in 185 games for the club in all competitions, captained in the absence of Maguire, who spent much of last season on the bench or injured.

The defender has been linked in British media reports with a move away from the club.

"The Portuguese midfielder has already worn the armband for United on numerous occasions and Erik ten Hag has confirmed that he will now lead the team on a permanent basis," United said in a statement.

"As captain, the two-time Sir Matt Busby Player of the Year will continue to drive the highest standards throughout the squad as United push for success in the 2023-24 season and beyond."

Fernandes drew criticism for his petulant performance in the 7-0 loss to rivals Liverpool in March.



Messi Surprises Teammate in Group Chat

MIAMI (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi has already proved to be a team player at his new club Inter Miami as the Argentine forward surprised a team mate in the players' group chat by providing a timely assist with tickets to his presentation.

Not even the pouring rain could spoil Messi's welcome party last weekend in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where the new face of Major League Soccer (MLS) was introduced to a packed stadium of adoring fans.

The new team mates of the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner did not want to miss the event either, and forward Leonardo Campana turned to Inter's WhatsApp group for spare passes.

"On Sunday, Campana was looking for tickets and he put in the group chat if anybody has any," Inter defender DeAndre Yedlin told the reporters.

"I didn't even know whether Messi was in the group chat yet, but he popped up straightaway and said, 'How many do you need though?' Straightaway like that.

"From there I was just like 'Woah!' You know what I mean. Like straight off the bat, they maybe know each other for three days or something. But to show that generosity is a great fresh example of how (Messi) is."

A sold-out crowd of about 20,000 fans waited through a delay caused by heavy rain and lightning to see Messi being presented with his No. 10 shirt, before he was joined on the pitch by his family where they posed for photos as fireworks lit up the sky.

Paul Beats NCAA Singles Champ At Newport

NEWPORT (Dispatches) - Top-seeded Tommy Paul registered six aces while cruising to a 6-4, 6-2 victory over wild card Ethan Quinn in the second round of the Infosys Hall of Fame Open at Newport, R.I.

Paul won 85.2 percent (23 of 27) of his first-serve points while beating Quinn, the reigning NCAA singles champion out of Georgia. Paul will next face John Isner, who posted a 6-3, 6-4 victory over eighth-seeded Corentin Moutet of France.

Second-seeded Adrian Mannarino of France recorded a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Australia's Rinky Hijikata, while French No. 3 seed Ugo Humbert beat Steve Johnson 6-4, 6-4.

Also prevailing in the second round were No. 4 seed Mackenzie McDonald, No. 7 Jordan Thompson of Australia, Alex Michelsen and South African wild card Kevin Anderson. The latter just ended his retirement to resume his playing career.

Serbian qualifier Hamad Medjedovic outplayed former World No. 3 Dominic Thiem and produced a 7-5, 2-6, 6-3 victory in the second round at Gstaad, Switzerland.

Medjedovic overcame nine double faults and had a 10-7 edge in aces over the Austrian. He next faces fourth-seeded Yannick Hanfmann, who beat Daniel Altmaier 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 in an all-German affair.

No. 2 seed Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia defeated Swiss wild card Dominic Stricker 7-6 (4), 6-1. Kecmanovic next faces Belgian qualifier Zizou Bergs, who outlasted Austria's Jurij Rodionov 7-6 (8), 4-6, 7-6 (4).

No. 3 seed Lorenzo Musetti converted his seventh match point of the third set to advance past fellow Italian Matteo Arnaldi 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (6) in the second round at Bastad, Sweden.



Liverpool Captain Henderson Set to Join Gerrard in Saudi

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson is set to join former teammate Steven Gerrard at Saudi club Al Ettifaq after a deal was struck between the clubs, The Athletic reported.

Henderson, 33, led the Reds to their first Premier League title for 30 years in 2020, a year after lifting the Champions League.

However, the England midfielder has been tempted to join Gerrard after reportedly being offered a deal worth up to £700,000-a-week.

Liverpool are set to receive a fee of £12 million.

Gerrard was appointed manager of Al Ettifaq earlier this month.

Henderson joined Liverpool from Sunderland in 2011 and succeeded Gerrard as skipper at Anfield in 2015.

He had been left out of Juergen Klopp's squad for a friendly against Karlsruhe yesterday. Liverpool are also set to lose Fabinho to the influx of investment by Saudi clubs with the Brazilian on the brink of a £40 million move to Al-Ittihad.

Klopp has also seen midfielders Naby Keita, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and James Milner depart on free transfers since the end of last season. But Liverpool have reinforced that area of the field with the signings of Alexis Mac Allister and Dominik Szoboszlai.

Henderson's decision to move to the Gulf state has been criticised by Liverpool's LGBT+ fans group Kop Outs.

The Saudi state has been accused of attempting to "sportswash" its human rights record by hosting major sporting events and now attracting some of the world's best footballers to its domestic league.

