

Iranian Security Forces Have Killed Two Main Members of a Terrorist Group Who Were Planning Attacks in the Country's Southeastern Province of Sistan and Baluchestan Recently

IRAN NEWS

In a Phone Talks with Iran's Acting Foreign Minister, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Said That the Country's Authorities Will Make Every Effort to Ensure That the Pilgrims Perform Their Hajj in Complete Peace and Safety

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Iran Posts 5.7% Growth in GDP



TEHRAN - According to a report by the Statistical Center of Iran, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the year 1402, at constant prices of the year 1390 (Iranian calendar), grew by 5.7% including oil and by 3.4% excluding oil.

As reported by ISNA, the Statistical Center of Iran announced a 5.7% growth in GDP for the year 1402 last Iranian calendar year ended on March 21, 2024). According to this report and based on the latest calculations of the national accounts by the Statistical Center of Iran, GDP in the year 1402, at constant prices of the year 1390, grew by 5.7% including oil and by 3.4% excluding oil. The industrial and mining sector grew by 6.9%, the services sector by 5.7%, and the agriculture sector contracted by 2.2% compared to the year 1401.

According to the above report, the GDP at constant prices of the year 1390 reached 8675 trillion Rials including oil and 7321 trillion Rials excluding oil in the year 1402. In contrast, the corresponding figures for the previous year were 8205 trillion Rials including oil and 7081 trillion Rials excluding oil, indicating a growth of 5.7% in GDP including oil and 3.4% in GDP excluding oil in the year 1402. The share and growth rates of major economic groups in the GDP at constant prices in the year 1402 compared to the same period last year are as follows:

Examining the growth of the components of final demand in the year 1402 compared to the same period last year shows that private final consumption expenditure grew by 5.2%, government final consumption expenditure by 16.7%, gross fixed capital formation by 4.8%, exports of goods and services by 13%, and imports of goods and services by 9.5%.

The GDP growth in the fourth quarter of the current year at constant prices of the year 1390 was 2.9% including oil and 0.9% excluding oil. The industrial and mining sector grew by 4.9%, the services sector by 1.5%, and the agriculture sector by 0.6% compared to the fourth quarter of the year 1401.

In the fourth quarter of the year 1402 compared to the same period last year, private final consumption expenditure grew by 2.7%, government final consumption expenditure by 16.7%, gross fixed capital formation by 4.9%, exports of goods and services contracted by 5.5%, and imports of goods and services grew by 9.1%.

Continued Increase in Iran's Oil Production in OPEC



TEHRAN - According to ILNA, quoting the Secretariat of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the OPEC report for June, released on Tuesday (June 11), shows that the 12 members of this organization produced 26.629 million barrels of oil in May (April-May) based on secondary source reports. This is 29,000 barrels more than the 26.600 million barrels produced in April.

According to the June OPEC report, after Saudi Arabia with a daily production of 9 million barrels and Iraq with a daily production of 4.195 million barrels, Iran maintained its position as the third-largest producer in the organization with a daily production of 3.226 million barrels.

Based on secondary source reports, Iran produced 3.226 million barrels of crude oil in May (April-May), which is 7,000 barrels more than in April 2024 (March-April).

According to this report, the production of five members of this organization increased during the reviewed period, with the largest increase of 74,000 barrels per day attributed to Nigeria. Iran, Venezuela, and Libya are exempt from the OPEC and non-OPEC (OPEC+) production cut agreement.

According to the latest OPEC monthly report, the price of Iran's heavy crude oil decreased by \$4.66, or 5.2%, in May compared to April 2024. The price of Iran's heavy crude oil in May 2024 was recorded at \$84.13, whereas this figure was \$88.79 per barrel in April 2024.

The average price of Iran's heavy crude oil in 2024 has been \$83.41.

The price of the OPEC oil basket also reached \$83.59 per barrel in May 2024, which is \$5.53 (6.2%) less than in April 2024.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

Iran Will Not Allow Zionists to Disrupt Regional Security



TEHRAN - The acting Foreign Minister emphasized that Iran demonstrated in the "Operation True Promise" that it uses all its capacities and capabilities for the stability, peace, and security of the region. He stated that Iran will not allow Zionist aggressors to disturb the stability and security of the region even slightly. Ali Bagheri Kani, the acting Foreign Minister of Iran, and Fuad Hussein, the Foreign Minister of Iraq, held a joint press conference after their meeting and discussions. The Iraqi Foreign Minister welcomed Bagheri Kani and his delegation, expressing condolences for the martyrdom of the esteemed President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and his colleague and friend, Martyr Amir-Abdollahian.

Fuad Hussein noted that the presence of the Iraqi delegation in Iran to pay respects to the martyrs signifies the depth of relations between the two countries. He continued, "We were deeply affected by this incident, and what added to our sorrow was that ten days after their martyrdom, a large delegation from Iran, led by Ayatollah Raisi, was scheduled to visit Iraq, promising significant outcomes from this visit."

Referring to his talks with the acting Foreign Minister of Iran, Hussein said, "Given the developments in the region, we discussed ways to find solutions and had the opportunity to exchange views on regional issues, including Gaza and establishing a permanent ceasefire."

The Iraqi Foreign Minister pointed to the war in southern Lebanon initiated by Zionists, stating that the expansion of the war would impact the entire region, and they discussed this matter with the Iranian side.

During the joint press conference, the acting Foreign Minister of Iran said, "Today, we mourn the martyrdom of President Raisi and Martyr Amir-Abdollahian, the diligent and active Foreign Minister of Iran. This loss brought a wave of condolences from various countries and Iraq towards Iran." He added, "We witnessed the presence of Iraqi security, political, cultural, and public officials at the ceremony honoring the martyrs of service, and we appreciate this sympathy."

Bagheri stated, "We are two nations with common roots and destiny, thus the cooperation,

alignment, and solidarity between our nations are eternal. This alignment benefits regional security and economic relations, and there is no doubt about it. This resolve exists from the highest levels of Iranian officials to the mid-levels, and we see this resolve in Iraqi officials as well."

He added, "Today in Gaza, we are witnessing open genocide, but the oppressed people of Gaza have raised the flag of victory amid the ruins. We emphasize ending the war crimes against the people of Gaza, and Islamic countries should gather their capacities to help end the crimes against the people of Gaza." The acting Foreign Minister of Iran said, "The Zionists might make another mistake, but Iran responded decisively to the folly of the Zionist regime, exercised its right to self-defense, punished the aggressor, and put them in their place. In the 'Promise of Truth' operation, Iran proved it would use all its capacities and capabilities for the region's stability, peace, and security and would not allow even the slightest disruption to the region's stability and security by the Zionist aggressors."

Bagheri Kani emphasized, "All regional countries are united and in solidarity to build a safe and stable region, and it is the Zionists who have shown themselves to be the main source of tension and instability in the region. This solidarity among regional countries should be strengthened more than ever."

He continued, "If Americans are determined to pursue political initiatives and efforts to stop the war and bloodshed in Gaza, they should stop aiding, especially military and weaponry assistance, to the occupying and aggressive Zionists."

The acting Foreign Minister said, "Americans cannot give the most advanced weapons to Zionists on one hand and on the other hand, seek to take political initiative with a peaceful demeanor." He added, "Like Iraq, Iran insists that the genocide and war crimes by Zionists in Gaza should end as soon as possible, and unconditional aid to the people of Gaza should flow, and in this path, the solidarity and cooperation of regional and Muslim countries can be helpful."

Hajj Rituals Cause of Trepidation for Enemies



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei is to address an extended message to Hajj pilgrims on Saturday on the occasion of commencement of the annual pilgrimage.

The Leader's website, Khamenei.ir, announced the pending development on Thursday, while publishing excerpts of the message.

"When one contemplates this magnificent gathering and the complex Hajj rituals, they are a source of reassurance and increase the confidence for the Muslims, while being intimidating and a cause of trepidation for enemies," read the excerpt.

The excerpt went on to point to Bara'at min-al-Mushrikeen, a Qur'anic institution, which is an integral part of each year's Hajj pilgrimage, and translates into "Renunciation of the Polytheists."

"This year's bara'at must continue beyond the time and place of Hajj to all Muslim countries and cities worldwide. It must continue beyond just the Hajj pilgrims and be extended to the general populace," it read.

"Brothers and sisters, bring your thoughts and actions closer and closer to the truths and luminous teachings of Hajj, and bring back to your homes a reformed identity infused with these lofty concepts. This is the valuable, real souvenir of your Hajj journey," the excerpt concluded, addressing pilgrims.

The full text of the message is to be read out to pilgrims during the Renunciation of the Polytheists' Ceremony, which is slated to be held in the Arafat desert, southeast of Mecca, Islam's holiest city.

Hajj pilgrimage is one of the pillars of Islam. It consists of a series of religious rites that are completed over five days in Mecca and surrounding areas of western Saudi Arabia.

Russia Ties Strategic, Founded on Unchanging Principles



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Interim Iranian President Mohammad Mokhber has described the country's relations with Russia as strategic and founded upon unchanging principles.

Mokhber made the remarks on Thursday, speaking on the phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Complete implementation of all the agreements that have been clinched [between the two sides], including in the areas of trade, transit, and energy, forms the principal agenda of the bilateral ties," the Iranian official said. The Islamic Republic was determined to implement those agreements, he reassured.

Mokhber went on to review the process of the Islamic Republic's bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Russia, especially concerning the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the BRICS group of emerging economies, and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Putin, for his part, considered the level of cooperation and the pace of expansion of economic relations between the two sides to be very favorable and satisfactory.

He described the pending comprehensive cooperation agreement -- a major deal that is expected to elevate relations between the two allied countries to a new level -- as a proper legal basis for expansion of the mutual ties.

The Russian head of state likewise considered full implementation of the standing bilateral agreements, especially in the areas of transport and energy, to form the principal agenda of the bilateral ties.

He described the 2023 conclusion of a free trade agreement between Tehran and the EAEU as a proper basis for further development, enhancement, and dynamism of the Russo-Iranian trade.

Iranian Diplomat Calls U.S. Claims on Humanitarian Exemption for Sanctions Hypocritical

TEHRAN (IP) - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs dismissed claims of the Western countries on the humanitarian exemption for sanctions as fake and hypocritical.

At the United Nations General Assembly meeting on the abolition of unilateral coercive economic and extraterritorial measures as a political expression, on Thursday local time, Reza Najafi, the deputy of legal and international affairs in the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed the negative effects of illegal sanctions on human rights and emphasized the need for the international community to condemn and reject unilateral coercive economic measures.

Iranian diplomat added that this is needed to support the promotion of basic and inherent rights and welfare of our nations, the rule of law, and real multilateralism, and it is a collective responsibility and "our delegation is ready to actively participate in fulfilling this responsibility."

The following is the full text of the statement by Iran's deputy foreign minister addressed to the UN:

"I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to you for organizing this meeting to address unilateral extraterritorial coercive economic measures - or in short, 'unilateral sanctions'."

Representing a country that, for well over four decades, has been and continues to be severely affected by unilateral sanctions, I would first, elaborate on their legal aspects, second, provide certain objective examples of their adverse effects, and finally, explain our views on why the international community of States must address them effectively, leading to their elimination.

First, from a legal perspective, the

imposition and application of unilateral sanctions is a gross violation of the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.

They materially breach the "Purposes of the United Nations", particularly those set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Charter's Article 1, namely: "to develop friendly relations among nations", "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character" and "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights".

Similarly, the introduction and application of unilateral sanctions is a flagrant violation of the "Principles of the United Nations", particularly those outlined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Charter's Article 2, that are: "sovereign equality" of States, and to "fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed" by Member States under the Charter.

That's why, according to 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Among States following the Charter of the United Nations, all States shall refrain from using military, political, economic, or any other type of measures to coerce another State to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights and to secure from it advantages of any kind.

Similarly, the imposition of unilateral sanctions contravenes principles and norms of international human rights law.

They violate common Article 1 of the twin covenants on civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights, according to which "in no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence."



IRAN NEWS



Iranian Transport Plane to Be Operational Soon

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran’s homegrown transport plane ‘Simorgh’ is undergoing flight tests and will soon join the country’s fleet, Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said.

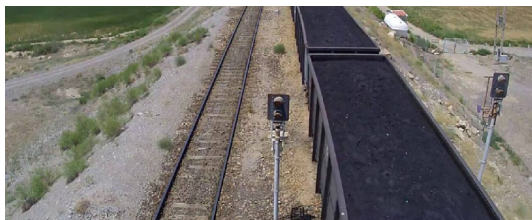
Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting, Ashtiani said the Defense Ministry is conducting flights tests of Simorgh in cooperation with the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran.

The Iranian transport plane will officially join the country’s fleet afterwards, he added.

The minister noted that the second Simorgh aircraft is now being made in Iran, pointing to cooperation with a number of foreign countries in the manufacturing process. Simorgh successfully completed its maiden flight in May 2023, a year after it was unveiled.

The aircraft has been designed and manufactured by the Iran Aviation Industries Organization, a subsidiary of the Iranian Defense Ministry. Authorities say the development of this plane aims to enhance the country’s defensive capabilities.

First-Ever Rail Transit of Coal From Russia to India via Iran



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Following the successful rail transit of potash fertilizer, the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, under the 13th government, has coordinated with Russian Railways to launch, for the first time, the continuous export of Russian coal to India. Today, two trains carrying 59 wagons of coal entered Iran through the Sarakhs border and are currently en route to India.

According to the IRNA report from the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, Seyed Miad Salehi, Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and CEO of Iran Railways, announced the arrival of these two freight trains from Russia. Due to the economic advantages of transiting cargo through the eastern branch of the North-South Corridor and the agreements made between Iran Railways, Russian Railways, and other involved railways, two freight trains carrying 59 wagons of coal from Bardino Station in Western Siberia, Russia, arrived today via the Sarakhs rail border. The route spans approximately 1,600 kilometers within Iran’s rail network, from Sarakhs Station to Bandar Abbas Station. The cargo is transhipped at the Sarakhs border from Russian wagons to Iranian wagons and continues its journey within Iran using Iranian wagons. Coal is a strategic commodity and a significant, ongoing export from Russia to India, previously transported by sea. Rail transit is expected to have considerable economic benefits.



Iran and France Focus on SME Collaboration

TEHRAN - In a meeting between the President and Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and the executive board of the Confederation of French Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the President of the Francophone Association, the emphasis was on cooperation between SMEs of the two countries, particularly in the field of renewable energy production.

Samad Hassanzadeh, President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the capacities and resources of both countries, stating: “Considering the capacities and capabilities of Iran and France, the two countries can cooperate in fields such as technical and engineering services, road construction, and building construction.”

He continued: “Iran excels in the production and export of various agricultural and greenhouse products and has good cooperation in this area with Russia, Arab countries, and through Iraq with Saudi Arabia; this connection can also be established between Iran and France.”

Hassanzadeh pointed to the Iran Expo, the Asian Chamber of Commerce meeting in Isfahan, and the Kerman IDEX conference held since the beginning of this year, adding: “In these international events held in Iran, over 47 delegations from different countries visited Iran, and between 300 to 400 contracts were signed during these visits. Notably, half of the delegations that visited Iran during this period were from African countries, and we know that there are extensive connections between African countries and France.”

Hassanzadeh emphasized the importance of Africa’s role in the modern global economy, stating that Iran is also increasing its trade relations with African countries.

Hossein Pirouzn, Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, stressed that France’s economic system is centered on SMEs, saying: “Approximately 80 percent of Iran’s industry is also focused on SMEs, so strengthening the relationship between these businesses and their French counterparts can help increase the level of relations between the two countries.”

He believes: “For strengthening trade relations between the two countries, embassies are very influential and can help expand relations by providing

necessary information to economic activists on both sides. In this regard, it seems that today, Iran and France have the best opportunity to understand and identify each other, and the role of embassies in this process is very significant.”

Pirouzn referred to the period of the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) and the presence of trade delegations from various European countries in Iran, emphasizing: “At that time, a significant portion of the trade delegations that came to Iran consisted of SME representatives. This shows the importance of considering the role of these units in revitalizing and expanding trade relations.”

The Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce proposed: “A communication group between Iranian and French businesses should be established to exchange necessary economic information. This action will help businesses move forward with effective and continuous communication. We must remember that this communication group focuses only on economic issues because its goal is to expand the level of trade relations between Iran and France.”

In another part of the meeting, the executive board members of the Confederation of French SMEs described establishing trade relations between the SMEs of the two countries as an appropriate solution for revitalizing and expanding trade relations between Iran and France.

According to what was discussed in the meeting, French SMEs are not sufficiently supported by their government, so these units use commercial partners to continue their activities. Therefore, it can be said that Iranian businesses have the opportunity to partner with French companies and cooperate within this framework.

Moreover, joint cooperation in the production of renewable energy is one of the topics intensely pursued by French units, especially in the wind energy sector. Hence, there is the possibility for Iranian and French businesses to collaborate jointly in renewable energy production.

Currently, one-third of French SMEs are based in Paris and are active in fields such as artificial intelligence and similar areas.

Iran Private Sector Calls on ICC to Help Resolve Int’l Crises



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Samad Hassanzadeh has stressed the need for an active role of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to help solve the regional and international problems caused by different crises across the world.

Addressing the ICC annual summit in Paris, Hassanzadeh hailed the significance of ICC as the leading private sector body in the world, noting that “we, as the members of this fundamental body, have to devise mechanisms to strengthen commercial cooperation and focus on facilitating trade among the members.”

He referred to the destructive impacts of sanctions as well as the increasing number of refugees arising from international crises, adding that the ICC is required to address these issues and play a more active role in solving the problems.

Hassanzadeh also voiced the readiness of Iran Chamber of Commerce and ICC Iran to contribute to the measures taken by the ICC to give a boost to commercial relations among member chambers of commerce.

Mohammad Khazaei, the Director General of ICC Iran, also addressed the meeting and proposed the formation of a working group to bolster the relations among the chambers of commerce.

He urged the need for addressing the problems on the way of banking transactions and finance in extra-territorial trade.

Steel Production Grows by 1.6% in Two Months



TEHRAN - The Iranian Steel Producers Association has released the country’s steel production statistics for the first two months of 1403, reporting a slight growth of 1.6% in Iran’s steel production during this period.

According to IRNA, the report from the Steel Producers Association highlights that the highest growth in the steel and iron production chain was seen in raw materials, including iron ore concentrate with a 17.6% growth and pellets with a 6.8% growth. Notably, there was a significant 14% increase in sponge iron production, which could help stabilize the market for this product.

The report also indicated a 1.5% growth in the production of long products (rebar, beams, angles, and channels).

Additionally, the production of various steel sheets saw a 3.6% increase, supported by a 3.1% rise in hot-rolled sheet production, marking another achievement in the industry.

However, cold-rolled sheets were the only product in the iron and steel chain that experienced a decrease in production.

Iran Expects 10,000 Megawatt Electricity Deficit This Summer

Mustafa Rajabi-Mashhadi, in an interview with ILNA, discussed the electricity deficit for this summer, stating: “The deficit this summer is about 10,000 megawatts. At the beginning of the current administration, this figure was around 15,000 megawatts. With the construction of new power plants and the upgrade of existing ones, about 9,000 megawatts have been added to the country’s power production capacity.”

He added: “In addition to building and upgrading power plants, we also have consumption management programs in place to reduce the deficit. One of this year’s programs is the ‘With Energy’ campaign, which invites all household and commercial consumers, totaling 32 million subscribers, who account for nearly half of the country’s consumption, to reduce their use to help the productive sector access more energy during peak consumption hours.”

Regarding recent comments by National Gas Company officials about not supplying fuel to low-efficiency power plants, the CEO of Tavanir explained: “Fortunately, the new power plants being built by the Ministry of Energy are highly efficient. Combined cycle power plants of class F have an efficiency of 55%, and all new plants have adequate fuel supplies. Fuel has also been provided to other plants according to consumption needs, and we have not faced any issues.”

He emphasized: “A small percentage of the country’s power plants are low-efficiency and are only operational during peak summer consumption. Even the power purchase agreements for these plants are set only for the summer period. During other seasons, these plants are not used because the country’s electricity consumption needs are lower.”

Rajabi-Mashhadi discussed the retirement of low-efficiency power plants: “The Ministry of Energy has planned to gradually retire about 3,000 megawatts of obsolete power plants, which are only used during peak consumption times, and replace them with new, high-efficiency plants.”

Regarding the use of renewable power plants instead of obsolete ones, he clarified: “Renewable power plants have their own specific plans. We have a 30,000 megawatt construction plan that should increase the country’s power production capacity within the Seventh Development Plan. Additionally, the Ministry of Energy plans to build about 10,000 megawatts of renewable power plants. Currently, about 13,000 megawatts of renewable power plants are under construction in the country, with some being built by industries and others through contracts set by the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA).”



Agricultural Products Irradiation Complex Inaugurated in Eastern Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The first phase of the Agricultural Products Irradiation Complex in Eastern Iran has been inaugurated. This enduring project, a tribute to the martyred President Ibrahim, aims to enhance the country’s food security and reduce agricultural product wastage.

The first phase of the Agricultural Products Irradiation Complex in Eastern Iran was inaugurated on Thursday morning. The project, part of the enduring “Yadgar Ibrahim” initiative, was launched via video conference with the presence of the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), the Acting President, members of the cabinet, several national officials, and the family of the martyred Ayatollah Raisi.

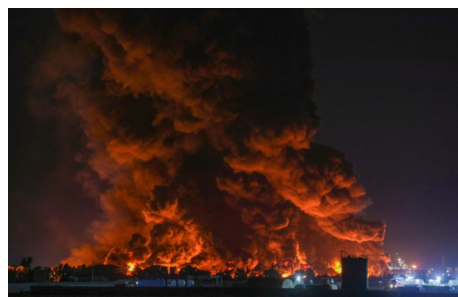
The Agricultural Products Irradiation Complex in Eastern Iran will be equipped with two systems: an industrial microwave system and a gamma pool system. These systems are developed by the Radiation Application Development Company of the AEOI with private sector investment. The complex aims to provide daily services to the agricultural sector and support research and technological activities.

Mohammad Eslami, head of the AEOI, during the inauguration ceremony held in Mashhad via video conference, honored the memory of the martyred President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi and other martyrs. He stated that the late president emphasized integrating nuclear technology into the lives of the Iranian people, a goal now achieved with divine support and consistent efforts.



Huge Fire at Iraq Oil Refinery Injures 14

ARBIL (Dispatches) - A massive fire at an oil refinery in Iraqi Kurdistan raged for about 20 hours and injured at least 14 firefighters who on Thursday finally brought the blaze under control. The fire broke out in a major crude oil tank on Wednesday night before spreading to a second refinery on a road southwest of Arbil, capital of the autonomous northern region of Kurdistan, the civil defense agency said. Thick plumes of black smoke and balls of orange flame rose into the sky above the facility, an AFP photographer reported. The civil defense agency said the fire, the cause of which remains unclear, "started in one refinery before spreading to another". A spokesman for the agency, Shakhwan Saeed, told a news conference yesterday evening: "The fire has been 100 per cent contained, and there is no longer any danger for the surrounding refineries." He said 150 rescuers had been mobilized and 14 had been injured, with two in "critical condition".



S. Korea, U.S. Sound Alarm Over North Korea-Russia Ties




SEOUL (Dispatches) - A possible impending visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to North Korea could deepen military ties between the two countries in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, officials of South Korea and the United States warned on Friday. South Korea's vice foreign minister, Kim Hong-kyun, in an emergency phone call with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, said Putin's visit should not result in more military cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow in violation of the resolutions, according to Seoul's foreign ministry. Echoing Kim's concerns, Campbell pledged continued cooperation to tackle potential regional instability and challenges caused by the trip. "While closely monitoring related developments, the two sides agreed to resolutely respond through airtight cooperation to North Korea's provocations against South Korea and actions that escalate tensions in the region," the ministry said in a statement. On Wednesday, a senior official at Seoul's presidential office said Putin was expected to visit North Korea "in the coming days". Russia's Vedomosti newspaper on Monday reported Putin would visit North Korea and Vietnam in the coming weeks. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Thursday declined to give a date or agenda for a possible visit but said Russia's right to develop closer ties with North Korea should not be in doubt or a source of fear for anyone. Russia has used North Korean-made missiles and artillery shells to attack targets in Ukraine, officials in Washington, Seoul, and Kyiv, as well as United Nations sanctions monitors and independent experts have said. North Korea and Russia have denied arms deals but vowed to deepen cooperation across the board, including in military relations. Speaking at the Stimson Center think tank in Washington on Wednesday, Campbell said the United States has a very good understanding of what North Korea has provided Russia, which he said has had "a substantial impact on the battlefield".

Hezbollah Fires New Barrage at Israel



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group said it had fired waves of rockets and drones at the Israeli army yesterday after an Israeli strike killed one of its senior commanders. The major attack comes after months of near-daily cross-border fire between the group and the Israeli military since Hezbollah ally Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel triggered the Gaza war. Hezbollah fighters launched "an attack with rockets and drones, targeting six barracks and military sites", while simultaneously flying "squadrons of explosive-laden drones" at three other Israeli bases, the group said in a statement. One of the targets was an Israeli base that the militants said housed an intelligence headquarters "responsible for the assassinations". Hezbollah, which announced more strikes into the evening, said the attacks were "part of the response to the assassination" of its commander Taleb Abdallah on Tuesday. The Israeli army said during the afternoon that about "40 projectiles were launched toward the Galilee and Golan Heights area", adding most were intercepted, while some ignited fires. In one attack near the border village of Manara, "one IDF (army) soldier was moderately injured and an additional soldier was lightly injured", the military said. The Israeli government said it would respond strongly to all Hezbollah attacks. "Israel will respond with force to all aggressions by Hezbollah," government spokesman David Mencer said during a press briefing, vowing to "restore security on our northern border". Later, Lebanon's National News Agency reported that Israeli "warplanes launched a raid targeting a house" in the town of Janata, killing one civilian and injuring seven others.

In recent weeks, cross-border exchanges have escalated, with Hezbollah stepping up its use of drones to attack Israeli army positions and Israel hitting back with targeted strikes against the militants. On Wednesday, top Hezbollah official Hashem Safieddine vowed the group would "increase the intensity, strength, quantity and quality of our attacks", while speaking at Abdallah's funeral. The Israeli army confirmed it carried out the strike that "eliminated" Abdallah on Tuesday, describing him as "one of Hezbollah's most senior commanders in southern Lebanon". A Lebanese military source said he was the "most important" Hezbollah commander to have been killed since the start of the war. The cross-border violence has killed at least 468 people in Lebanon, most of them fighters but also including 89 civilians, according to an AFP tally. Israeli authorities say at least 15 Israeli soldiers and 11 civilians have been killed. Addressing the situation along the border — which France has been making diplomatic efforts to contain since January — French President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday that his country, the United States and Israel would work together to ease tensions in the area. Speaking at a G7 summit in Italy, Macron said the three countries would "move forward on the road map that we have proposed. We will do the same with the Lebanese authorities." The French proposal involves halting attacks on both sides and militants withdrawing 10 kilometres from the border, according to Lebanese officials.



Reform UK Overtakes PM Sunak's Conservatives in Opinion Poll

LONDON (Dispatches) - Nigel Farage's Reform UK Party overtook Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives in an opinion poll for the first time on Thursday ahead of Britain's election on July 4. The poll by YouGov for the Times newspaper put Reform UK on 19%, up from 17% previously, and the Conservative Party unchanged on 18%. The opposition Labour Party topped the poll with 37%. The survey of 2,211 people was carried out June 12-13, after Sunak pledged to cut 17 billion pounds (\$21.70 billion) of taxes for working people in his party's election manifesto. Reform's poll rating has risen since Farage, best known for his successful campaign for Britain to leave the European Union, said he was returning to frontline politics, taking over leadership of the party and standing for election to parliament. "This is the inflection point. The only wasted vote now is a Conservative vote, we are the challengers to Labour and we are on our way," Farage said in a video posted on X. A small right-wing party, founded in 2018 as the Brexit Party, Reform backs populist causes such as tougher immigration laws. Asked if the trend would stick, a Conservative lawmaker who declined to be named said: "Yes. I think people are fed up with the Tories (Conservatives), but not with Conservatism."

Biden, Zelensky Sign Historic 10-Year Security Deal

SAVELLETRI (Dispatches) - Presidents Joe Biden and Volodymyr Zelensky signed a landmark 10-year security deal between Washington and Kyiv in what the Ukrainian leader called a historic day in the fight against Russia's invasion. The deal will see the United States provide Ukraine with a range of military aid and training over the next decade, while Zelensky said it would act as a bridge to his country finally winning prized membership of the NATO alliance. Signed shortly after a G7 summit agreed on a separate deal to loan Ukraine US\$50 billion based on frozen Russian funds, it comes as the White House tries to lock in support for Kyiv with an election battle with Donald Trump looming. "Today is a truly historic day," Zelensky said at a joint press conference with Biden after they signed the security agreement at a luxury resort near the G7 summit site in southern Italy. Biden said they had taken "major steps at the G7 that collectively show (Russian President Vladimir) Putin he cannot wait us out." The agreement says that the United States and Ukraine must consult within 24 hours "at the highest levels" after any future armed attack by Russia. It also pledges to build up Ukraine's military, cooperate on training and work to build up Ukraine's domestic arms industry. "Our security agreement is a bridge to Ukraine's membership in NATO," Zelensky told the press conference. The United States has previously said Ukraine should have a path to membership but says that is impossible while it is still at war with Russia, as under NATO's mutual defense treaty its Western allies would have to go to war with Russia. Biden meanwhile defended his decision to let Ukraine use US arms for short-range cross border attacks in the Kharkiv region,

where Russia is mounting an offensive, but said longer-range attacks were still barred. Zelensky meanwhile called for more Patriot air defense missiles to protect Ukraine against Russia's campaign of missile attacks. Biden said five countries had already pledged to give Patriots to Ukraine, and said they would have to wait for the United States to replenish them until Ukraine's needs were fully met. Zelensky also said that Chinese leader Xi Jinping had promised not to send Russia weapons to use against Ukraine — though Biden said Beijing was already contributing to Moscow's war effort by giving economic and industrial support.

The US-Ukraine deal is similar to one that the United States has with its close Middle Eastern ally Israel. Washington has supplied Israel with arms as it fights Hamas in Gaza following the October 7 attacks. While the Ukraine accord aims to commit future administrations to also support Ukraine, Trump could in theory end the agreement if he wins a second term in November. But US officials insisted it would still build lasting support for Ukraine. "Today, the United States is sending a powerful signal of our strong support for Ukraine now and into the future," said a US statement accompanying the security agreement. Japan signed a similar security pact with Ukraine at the G7 summit. Kyiv has now signed at least 15 similar deals in the past year with its major Western backers outlining multi-year commitments to fund and enhance Ukraine's defence and military. Separately in Italy, the Group of Seven rich nations reached a US-backed deal for a new \$50-billion loan for Ukraine using profits from frozen Russian assets.



France's Left Pledges to Tie Wages to Inflation, Lower Retirement Age

PARIS (Dispatches) - France's leftwing parties will reveal the political manifesto for their renewed alliance on Friday, which politicians from the bloc said included policies that would lower the retirement age, link salaries to inflation and introduce a wealth tax for the rich. Political parties including the Socialists, Greens, Communists and hard-left Unbowed France (LFI) will form a "Popular Front" in a bid to challenge the far-right's National Rally (RN), leading the polls for upcoming snap parliamentary elections. "Warmest congratulations and thanks to our negotiators who had four sleepless nights at work, (going through) the program line by line, constituency by constituency," French far-left leader Jean-Luc Melenchon said on social media platform X. Ian Brossat, a communist member of the Senate, said the final deal, which will be presented during a news conference midday, includes the withdrawal of President Emmanuel Macron's unpopular pensions



reform which led to protest on the streets. "There will be the withdrawal of the pensions reform and a return to 60 years (as retirement age)", Brossat told Public Senat television. Macron's reform included a gradual rise of the retirement age to 64 from 62 before the overhaul. Although the left's chances of winning the elections are slim according to the polls, their tie-up could bundle enough votes to hinder both Macron's and Le Pen's camps from reaching a stable governing majority, handing it sizeable political leeway. The bloc worked together during the previous parliamentary campaign in 2022 before a leadership struggle and policy differences - including on the Gaza war - led to the de-facto collapse of their alliance. Brossat said the parties managed to agree on a common stance on the conflict in the Middle East, labelling Hamas a "terrorist organisation" while also calling for the recognition of a Palestinian state.

Shelton Falls in Stuttgart



STUTTGART (Dispatches) - Australian qualifier James Duckworth pulled off a three-set upset of American No. 2 seed Ben Shelton, 7-6 (5), 4-6, 6-3, to advance to the quarterfinals of the Boss Open in Stuttgart, Germany.

Shelton fired 21 aces but committed eight double faults along the way. In a close match, Duckworth capitalized on Shelton's second serves, winning 18 of 30 second-return points (60 percent).

Duckworth's next foe will be Italy's Matteo Berrettini, who is playing on a protected ranking. Berrettini took care of Canada's Denis Shapovalov 6-4, 6-4 in 74 minutes on Thursday.

Elsewhere, No. 7 seed Jan-Lennard Struff of Germany defeated France's Arthur Rinderknech 6-4, 7-6 (0), and Brandon Nakashima swept past French lucky loser Richard Gasquet 6-3, 6-4 in 71 minutes.

Meanwhile top two seeds Alex de Minaur of Australia and Tommy Paul of the U.S. advanced in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

The top-seeded de Minaur topped Belgian lucky loser Zizou Bergs 7-5, 6-4, while No. 2 seed Paul needed three sets to rally past Australia's Alexei Popyrin 5-7, 6-4, 6-3. Popyrin saved 8 of 11 break points, but Paul hit 10 aces and had fewer unforced errors (11 to Popyrin's 18).

Paul's next foe will be fellow American and seventh seed Sebastian Korda, who beat Italian Luca Nardi 7-5, 7-5. Canadian Milos Raonic will meet de Minaur in the quarterfinals after charging back for a 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 victory over Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut.

The No. 4 seed in the bracket fell when Australian Aleksandar Vukic beat Russian Karen

Khachanov 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (4). Vukic fired off 14 aces without a single double fault.

Meanwhile Aleksandra Krunic of Serbia outlasted No. 1 seed Jessica Pegula 7-6 (3), 6-7 (3), 6-4 in a Round of 16 upset at the Libema Open in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

Krunic, who won the tournament in 2018, is ranked No. 400 in the world but took advantage of a rusty Pegula, who was playing in her first tournament since April due to neck and back injuries. Krunic saved 5 of 7 break points and won 56 of her 69 first-service points (81.2 percent) in a two-hour, 44-minute match.

Krunic's quarterfinal opponent will be Hungary's Dalma Galfi, who upset No. 5 seed Veronika Kudermetova of Russia 6-3, 3-6, 7-5.

No. 2 seed Liudmila Samsonova of Russia beat Switzerland's Celine Naef 7-5, 6-2, while countrywoman and No. 3 seed Ekaterina Alexandrova took care of Emina Bektas 7-5, 6-4. Robin Montgomery, a 19-year-old American, beat Germany's Jule Niemeier 6-3, 6-3.

Emma Raducanu of Great Britain smashed 11 aces and handled Ukrainian Daria Snigur 6-2, 6-2 in the Round of 16 in Nottingham, England.

The 2021 U.S. Open winner also saved seven of eight break points in front of a home crowd. Raducanu could face fellow Brit Francesca Jones in the quarterfinals, but rain suspended Jones' encounter with Ashlyn Krueger as she was serving for match with a 6-4, 4-6, 6-5, 30-30 lead.

In the only other match to finish before the weather stoppage, No. 5 seed Magdalena Frech of Poland beat Germany's Tatjana Maria 3-6, 6-3, 6-1. A match between No. 1 seed Ons Jabeur of Tunisia and Linda Fruhvirtova of the Czech Republic was postponed till Friday.

Fonseca Named as New AC Milan Coach



ROME (Dispatches) - Former Roma coach Paulo Fonseca is to return to Italy as the new boss of AC Milan, the Serie A runners-up announced on Thursday.

"Milan's new coach will be Paulo Fonseca," said former Milan forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic, representing the owner, at a press conference.

Fonseca, 51, who has signed a three-year contract, has been with French club Lille since 2022.

He succeeds Stefano Pioli, who was sacked at the end of the 2023-24 season after five seasons in charge.

"We studied very carefully what he did, how he prepared his matches," said Ibrahimovic, who had two spells as a player with the club, ending his on-field career with Milan in 2023.

"We want him to bring his identity of game, his offensive style to our team, to our players."

"After five years we wanted something new, with all respect to Stefano Pioli."

Born in Nampula, Mozambique, in 1973, Fonseca began his coaching career in Portugal with stints at Pacos de Ferreira, Porto and Braga before spending three years at Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk, where he won seven trophies and finished with a record of 103 wins in 139 matches.

In 2019, he took over at Roma, whom he led to fifth and seventh in Serie A, before heading to Lille, taking them to fifth and fourth in Ligue 1 and guiding them into Europe in both seasons he had in France.

Milan are coming off a trophy-less season — their 19th league title came in 2022 — where they were second best by some distance to city rivals Inter who won the title.

Footballers' Unions Take FIFA to Court Over Club World Cup

LAUSANNE (Dispatches) - The professional footballers' unions of England (PFA) and France (UNFP) took FIFA to court in Brussels on Thursday to challenge the timetable "unilaterally set" by the world body, in particular its new Club World Cup in 2025.

Players' unions have complained that the expanded Club World Cup, due to take place in the United States in June and July next year, is an unacceptable additional burden on players.

The organizations "believe that these decisions violate the rights of players and their unions under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights while also potentially violating EU competition law", the global professional footballers union Fifpro said in a statement.

With the support of Fifpro, UNFP and PFA have asked the Brussels Commercial Court to refer the case to the Court of Justice of the European Union by putting forward "four questions for a preliminary ruling". "Players and their unions have consistently highlighted the current football calendar as overloaded and unworkable", the unions said in their statement.



In early May, Fifpro and the World Association of Football Leagues had already threatened FIFA with legal action.

The players' representatives accuse FIFA of having "continued a program of competition expansion despite the opposition of player unions", in particular by expanding the Club World Cup from seven to 32 teams. "The most in-demand players are now part of an endless schedule of games and competitions for club and country, with their limits constantly being pushed through expansion and the creation of new competitions," said PFA general manager Maheta Molango. The two unions point to a possible violation by FIFA of the right of European workers to "collectively bargain over their terms and conditions of employment" and their right to "healthy friendly working conditions", as provided for in European law.

They also cite the ECJ's ruling in the Super League case last December as evidence that FIFA is restricting competition law in a "unilateral and discretionary" manner.

Nadal to Skip Wimbledon to Prepare for Olympics



MADRID (Dispatches) - Rafa Nadal will skip Wimbledon in July in order to prepare for the Olympic Games in Paris which will be played on the clay courts at Roland Garros, the Spaniard said.

Nadal, a record 14-times winner of the French Open, has been far from his best after returning from injuries and he exited the tournament at Roland Garros in the first round this year, losing in straight sets to eventual runner-up Alexander Zverev.

The 38-year-old missed almost all of 2023 with a hip problem and his comeback earlier this year was stalled by a muscle tear, before small niggles affected his preparation for the claycourt major.

"During my post match press conference at Roland Garros I was asked about my summer calendar and since then I have been practising on clay. It was announced yesterday that I will play at the summer Olympics in Paris, my last Olympics," Nadal said.

"With this goal, we believe that the best for my body is not to change surface and keep playing on clay until then. It's for this reason that I will miss playing at the championships this year at Wimbledon.

"I am saddened not to be able to live this year the great atmosphere of that amazing event that will always be in my heart, and be with all the British fans that always gave me great support. I will miss you all."

Nadal, who won an Olympic singles gold medal in 2008 and a doubles gold in 2016, will team up with newly-crowned French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz to play in the doubles at the Olympics.

A twice-champion at Wimbledon, Nadal said he would continue his preparations for the Olympics by playing in the ATP 250 claycourt event in Bastad, Sweden that will be played from July 15.

The Paris Olympics run from July 26-August 11.

Afghanistan Beat PNG to Advance at T20 World Cup as NZ Eliminated

TAROUBA (Dispatches) - Afghanistan underlined their growing status as the dark horses of the 2024 T20 World Cup with a seven-wicket victory over Papua New Guinea on Thursday to advance to the Super Eight phase of the competition and send New Zealand crashing out.

Fazalhaq Farooqi added another three victims to his tournament-leading wicket tally as PNG were bundled out for 95 off 19.5 overs batting first in the Group C match at the Brian Lara Stadium in Trinidad.

Afghanistan stumbled early in reply, losing both openers cheaply for the first time in the tournament but eventually reached the target for the loss of three wickets in the 16th over for a third win in a row.

Gulbadin Naib, dropped on nine by wicketkeeper Kiplin Doriga off medium-pace Alei Nao, took his team to the target with an unbeaten 49 in an unbroken fourth-wicket partnership of 46 with Mohammad Nabi (16 not out). Afghanistan finished on 101-3 off 15.1 overs.

The result confirms Afghanistan's place, together with hosts West Indies, in the next round while at the same time eliminating New Zealand, who still have two group matches to play. Left-arm seamer Farooqi spearheaded another impressive Afghan bowling effort, taking two quick wickets after PNG captain Assad Vala inadvertently opened the door for his opponents when he was carelessly run out in the second over of the match. Two more run outs followed and Farooqi returned in the 19th over to claim another scalp to finish with three for 16 before a fourth run out ended the



innings.

"I just keep it simple and stay with my strengths," said Farooqi after receiving the 'Man of the Match' award. "If conditions are helpful for me I'm going for wickets. We just want to keep on giving 100 percent in every match we play."

He now has 12 wickets in the tournament, four more than the trio of South African pacer Anrich Nortje, fast bowler Alzarri Joseph of the West Indies and Australian leg-spinner Adam Zampa.

To their credit, the Papuans showed a willingness to fight after slipping to 50 for seven in the 13th over as Doriga, who topscored with 27, and Alei Nao (13) put on 38 for the eighth wicket before Farooqi, inevitably, separated them.

"They are a really good bowling unit and to give them four easy wickets (run outs), especially mine, which was a bit lazy, didn't help," said a remorseful Vala. "I'm really happy though with the way our bowlers have been going. Even though we haven't put enough runs on the board to help them the execution of their skills and their planning has been outstanding."

Afghanistan captain Rashid was particularly pleased with the adaptability of his team. "Our players have understood their roles in the team and, more importantly, have been able to adjust quickly to the conditions," he stated, before praising another fine performance by Farooqi.

"His way of attacking (the batsman) with each and every ball allows us to have a strong base as a bowling unit. In T20 cricket, I think it's better the more you attack as a bowling unit if the conditions are in your favor."