

On the Occasion of the Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Ghadir, Supreme Leader Agreed to Pardon and Commute the Sentences of 2,654 Prisoners Following a Proposal From the Judiciary Chief, Gholmhossein Mohseni-Ejei

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani Said That Those, Who Falsely Claim to Be Champions of Human Rights, Have Given the "Criminal Zionist Regime" the Immunity to Continue Killing Palestinian People and Children in Gaza

VOL. XXIX, No. 8013 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

TUESDAY JUNE 18, 2024 KHORDAD 29, 1403

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Owji, Novak Stress on Consolidating Iran-Russia Relations

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Israel Hits Gaza as Tensions Surge on Lebanon Border



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Foreign Investment in Iran Exceeds \$5.5b



TEHRAN - The Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance stated that the type of government exchange rate policies has led many investors to hide their actual investment figures. He said, "The actual amount of investment in the country in the year 1402 [Persian calendar] is significantly higher than the declared \$5.5 billion."

Ehsan Khandozi, at the ceremony honoring well-behaved economic activists (the Balance Initiative), mentioned that the scheduled event was delayed due to recent unfortunate events.

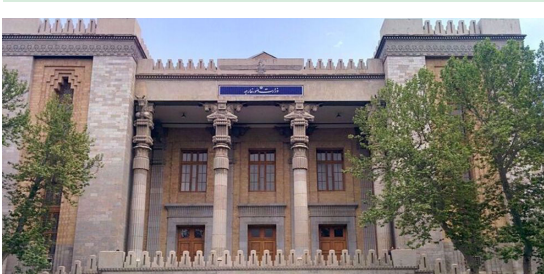
He added, "The concern of the Ministry of Economy, as a department responsible for government finance, is to facilitate economic growth and remove obstacles for entrepreneurs in the production sector. It's very important for us to correct this one-sided view in the traditional culture of organizations where there hasn't been much difference between good accounting and bad accounting."

The Minister of Economy said, "Unfortunately, for a long time, the benefit of 'bad accounting' for economic firms in the country has been so high that those who are good accountants have always seen themselves disadvantaged for adhering to the law, because ultimately and at best, non-compliant and financially irresponsible companies, even if identified, were only subject to minimal penalties."

He emphasized, "Unfortunately, the historical arrangement of economic activities in the country has been such that the more unscrupulous you are, the more successful you will be, and for this reason, we witness a kind of conflict between the public interests of the nation and the private interests of the private sector, which must be transformed into convergence."

The Minister of Economy stated, "Over the years, the government-private sector relationship has been arranged in a way that supports rent-seekers, tax evaders, and financial and customs offenders, who only know how to exploit the weaknesses of the country's monetary and financial system and make huge profits."

E3 Statement on Iran Nuclear Program Invalid



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has strongly condemned a recent statement issued by three European countries on Tehran's peaceful nuclear program as absurd and based on false allegations.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry made the comment on Sunday, saying the statement released by the UK, France and Germany lacks credibility.

"As it has been announced time and again, Iran's nuclear program has a completely peaceful nature and nuclear weapons have no place in Iran's military and defense doctrine," the ministry said.

The statement added, "It is ironic that those countries, which have followed a political and unconstructive approach [to Iran's nuclear program] and are responsible for the current situation of the JCPOA, are now accusing Iran of hollowing out the agreement."

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, was a multilateral international agreement signed between Iran and five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany in 2015, which required Iran to scale back some of its nuclear activities in return for the lifting of cruel sanctions imposed on the country, especially by the United States.

However, former US President Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the UNSC-endorsed agreement in May 2018, imposing severe economic sanctions against Tehran while Iran was adhering to its commitments under the deal and even continued to do so for a year after the US withdrawal.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany condemned what they called "the latest steps" taken by Iran "to further expand its nuclear program."

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Signing of \$5b Oil Contract With Russia Under 13th Gov't

TEHRAN - The Oil Minister announced that all refinery products will be Euro 5 compliant within the next two years. He stated, "In the thirteenth administration, we completed 153 projects worth \$34 billion, and signed a \$5 billion oil contract with Russia."

Javad Owji, in the contract signing ceremony for the development of two oil fields on Sunday, said, "In the thirteenth administration, we signed a \$5 billion oil contract with Russia; additionally, we completed 153 projects in the upstream and downstream sectors of the oil industry worth \$34 billion."

The Oil Minister added, "Among these projects were the collection of flare gas and the inauguration of phase 11 of South Pars, a phase which, for the past 20 years, had only seen its contract passed between various companies."

He continued, "Last year, the economic growth in the oil sector reached 20%; moreover, with the implementation of these projects, we were able to increase gas processing capacity by 55 million and add 10 million tons to petrochemical products."

Owji stated, "We have 300 projects in the pipeline, of which 153 have been completed, and around 70 to 80 new projects have been defined, with a total investment value of \$130 billion."

The Oil Minister said, "We achieved this success by relying on domestic capabilities; as evidenced by the fact that over the past three years, the Ministry of Oil ranked first in utilizing knowledge-based companies."

He emphasized, "Significant steps have been taken to upgrade refineries, particularly in Abadan, Isfahan, Tabriz, and Shiraz, with projects either completed or soon to be operational; moreover, within the next two years, all refinery products will be Euro 5 compliant."

Owji also mentioned, "Today, we will sign \$2 billion worth of contracts with domestic companies, generating a revenue of \$17 billion."

The signing ceremony included contracts for the development and operation of the Changuleh and Band-e Karkheh oil fields, aimed at producing 60,000 and 18,000 barrels of oil per day respectively, as well as contracts for purchasing crude oil processing services using Skid Mounted facilities under a public-private partnership contract.

The Band-e Karkheh oil field is located in Khuzestan province, 20 kilometers from the city of Ahvaz. It is adjacent to the Ahvaz, Mushtaq, Ab Teymur, and Susangerd oil fields and is situated in the Dezful embayment and the Mehr exploration block.

The anticlinal structure of the Band-e Karkheh field, measuring 60 by 5 kilometers, has two northern and southern domes. So far, three exploratory wells have been drilled in this field, confirming the presence of liquid hydrocarbons in the southern dome within the Ilam formation.

The oil in place in this field is estimated to be about 980 million barrels. In line with the country's macroeconomic policies and resilience economy strategy aimed at maximum development and production from oil fields, an intensive round of technical, contractual, and financial negotiations was conducted, resulting in the finalization and signing of the field's development contract with Mapna Oil and Gas Development Company.

The duration of this contract is 15 years, and during this period, the cumulative estimated production is around 56.6 million barrels of crude oil. This contract aims to maximize extraction from this field, create employment especially in the West Karun areas, direct national liquidity towards selected oil and gas projects, ensure maximum profitability, utilize the full capacity of Iranian exploration and production (E&P) companies, and develop the social and economic infrastructure of Khuzestan province under the directives of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

Call for Removal of Obstacles to Implementing IP Gas Pipeline Agreement



TEHRAN - Mohammad Mokhber on Sunday in response to a phone call from Shehbaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, congratulated on the arrival of Eid al-Adha. He expressed hope that on the eve of this great Eid, with the increased efforts of all officials and thinkers of the Islamic world, peace and tranquility would return to the region and Gaza would be freed from the crimes of the Zionist occupying regime.

He stated that war, violence, and terrorism are the legacies of the world's oppressors and tyrants for the oppressed and downtrodden nations, emphasizing the necessity of unity and convergence of the Islamic world to eliminate this ominous legacy from Islamic lands and to reveal the beautiful face of pure Muhammadan Islam to the world. In another part of his speech, the Acting President expressed sincere appreciation to the government and people of Pakistan for their warm reception of the late President Raisi of the Islamic Republic of Iran during his visit to the country. He also appreciated the encouraging presence of the high-ranking Pakistani delegation at the ceremony honoring him. He stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan share common views on many issues of the Islamic world, especially the issue of Palestine and Gaza and other international matters, which can provide a suitable basis for enhancing the level of relations in all fields.

Mokhber further referred to the important and strategic agreements between Iran and Pakistan during the late President's visit to Islamabad, including the goal of increasing trade and economic exchanges between the two countries to \$10 billion. He expressed hope that with the attention of both parties and the acceleration in removing obstacles to trade cooperation in the near future, this important goal would be achieved.

Iran Calls for Collective Action by Muslims to Stop Israeli Genocide



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's interim Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani says Muslim countries should take joint action and exert pressure on Israel to end its crimes against the people of Palestine.

In a phone conversation with the Taliban's caretaker foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, on Sunday, Bagheri Kani urged member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to stop Israel's criminal acts.

He hailed South Africa's move to file a genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and a move by a number of Latin American states to sever ties with the regime.

In a case brought by South Africa against Israel, the ICJ, the UN's top court, issued three provisional measures on January 26, March 28, and May 24.

They respectively ordered Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent genocide in Gaza, allow unimpeded access to food aid into the besieged Palestinian territory, and immediately halt its military invasion of the southern city of Rafah.

Bagheri Kani also reiterated Iran's determination to help Afghanistan overcome challenges and achieve progress.

He said Tehran is ready to cooperate with Kabul in various fields and help the Afghan people.

Muttaqi, for his part, extended his congratulations to Bagheri Kani over the Muslim festivity of Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice).

He said Iran and Afghanistan have good relations and hoped the two countries would further promote cooperation in various sectors.

Tehran Urges Swift Implementation of Comprehensive Iran-Russia Cooperation Agreement

TEHRAN - Mohammad Mokhber, the Acting President, in a meeting with Leonid Slutsky, Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Russian State Duma, expressed gratitude for the condolences extended by the Russian government and president to the Iranian government and people following the martyrdom of Ayatollah Raisi and his companions. He described the relations between Tehran and Moscow as based on long-term and sustainable interests of both countries and stressed the need for the swift finalization and implementation of the comprehensive cooperation agreement between the two countries, the North-South Corridor, and the Rasht-Astara railway.

In this meeting, which was also attended by Igor Levitin, special assistant to the Russian President, Mokhber highlighted the establishment of new regional dynamics through the expansion of Tehran-Moscow cooperation under the 13th administration. He emphasized the importance of rapidly executing the comprehensive cooperation plan between Iran and Russia and making the necessary decisions for its swift implementation.

The Acting President emphasized the urgency of completing the North-South Corridor and announced that the necessary groundwork for the Rasht-Astara railway project had been prepared. He added that the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully prepared to operationalize the agreements made in this regard, considering the

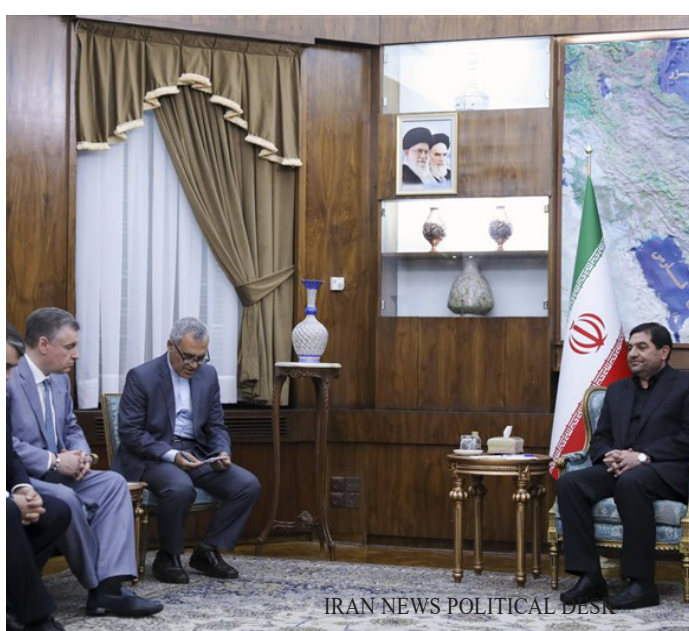
significance of this major project.

Leonid Slutsky, Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Russian State Duma, also reiterated his condolences for the martyrdom of Ayatollah Raisi and Amir Abdollahian and conveyed the deepest sympathies of the Russian President to the Iranian government and people. He stated that the expansion of bilateral cooperation is the desire of the presidents of both countries and, therefore, the agreements made between the two presidents should be

finalized and operationalized as soon as possible.

He appreciated the proactive diplomacy of the 13th administration's foreign ministry in finalizing the comprehensive cooperation document between the two countries, as well as the establishment of the North-South Corridor and the Rasht-Astara railway. He noted that Iran's membership in BRICS and the cooperation agreement with Eurasia have ushered in a new era in the development of Iran's relations with regional countries.

In this meeting, Igor Levitin, the special assistant to the Russian President, and Mehrdad Bazrpash, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, also provided reports on the progress of the comprehensive cooperation document between the two countries, the commencement of the North-South Corridor, and the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway.



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

IRAN NEWS



Iran to Host the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Centers' Meeting in 2025

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran has been selected as the host for the meeting of UNESCO's International Centers for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2025. The meeting of the regional and international centers for safeguarding intangible heritage took place on Friday at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. During this meeting, held concurrently with the General Assembly of the 2003 Convention under the chairmanship of the Convention's Secretary-General, Iran was praised for successfully presenting its actions in safeguarding intangible heritage in Tehran against climate change in the region and its effective capacity-building efforts in this field. Iran has been chosen as the center for studying the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in West and Central Asia, and as the host for this meeting in 2025.

Iran's non-oil exports to Afghanistan have grown by 41 percent



TEHRAN - Iran's Trade Development Organization, Hossein Rostami introduced Afghanistan as Iran's sixth export destination, stating: "Afghanistan is one of Iran's target countries for exports, with the highest positive trade balance with the Islamic Republic." In the first two months of the current year, Iran's non-oil exports to Afghanistan amounted to \$350 million, indicating a 41 percent increase compared to the same period last year. Rostami emphasized that in the first two months of the year 1403, Iran's non-oil exports to Afghanistan reached \$102 million in value and 181 thousand tons in weight. Overall, Iran's non-oil exports to Afghanistan in the first two months of the year 1403 amounted to \$350 million in value and 795 thousand tons in weight, showing a 29 percent increase in weight compared to the same period last year. According to him, the most important export items to Afghanistan include light oils, oil derivatives, petroleum gases, ingots, iron, steel, compounds, polyethylene, light and heavy hydrocarbons, foodstuffs, urea, tomatoes, apples, cement, various types of polyethylene, potatoes, fruits and vegetables, oranges, and powdered milk. Iran's commercial liaison in Afghanistan reported that Iran's imports from Afghanistan in the first two months of the current year exceeded \$7 million, compared to the same period last year. The main products contributing to the increase in imports from Afghanistan include animal feed corn with \$3.3 million increase, barley with \$1.1 million increase, soya butter substitute oil with a \$1 million increase, spindles with a \$321,000 increase, peanuts with a \$255,000 increase, and unrefined lead with a \$211,000 increase.



Iran, France Have Potential to Increase Cooperation in Medical and Food Sectors

TEHRAN - The President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture stated that Iran has significant capacities in petrochemical, chemical, mineral, medical, and pharmaceutical fields. With a population of 85 million, Iran has been very active in meeting the needs of neighboring and regional countries.

In a meeting with the CEO of the French Employers' Association, Samad Hassanzadeh continued: Unfortunately, in recent days, we have witnessed a lack of cooperation from some French public and private institutions with Iranian economic activists regarding opening bank accounts and investing in France.

He expressed the readiness of Iran's private sector to increase cooperation with the French private sector, adding that despite the challenges posed by sanctions, Iran and France can enhance their cooperation in pharmaceutical, medical, and food sectors with a focus on the private sector.

Hasanzadeh, noting that the Iran Chamber of Commerce provides special support for educational and academic activities, expressed hope that with the support of the French Employers' Association, the Iran Chamber could send students to France for internships and training courses.

The CEO of the French Employers' Association also welcomed this proposal, stating that the Iranian market has very valuable potentials. However, he noted that in recent years, due to the dependence of the European financial system or the euro on the dollar, there has been a decrease in the level of bilateral relations.

He emphasized that French companies are acting very cautiously not only with Iran but with all countries worldwide due to the new global situation. This caution is attributed to changes following the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine wars, among other factors.



Signing of \$22.5b Oil Field Development Contracts During 13th Gov't

TEHRAN - The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company announced that during the 13th government, \$22.5 billion worth of contracts prioritizing the development of joint fields have been signed. He further stated that today, four additional contracts with investments exceeding \$2 billion were signed.

The signing ceremony for the development and operation contracts for the Changuleh and Band Karkheh oil fields took place, aiming for a daily production of 60,000 and 18,000 barrels of oil, respectively. Additionally, contracts for the procurement of crude oil processing services using skid-mounted facilities under a Build, Own, Operate (B.O.O) public-private partnership were signed.

Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr, CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company, stated at the ceremony that in the past 2.5 years, approximately \$22.5 billion in oil and gas contracts have been signed, with 80% related to the development of joint oil and gas fields.

He added that during the previous government's 8-year term, \$13 billion worth of contracts were signed, whereas in the first 2 years of the Thirteenth Government, \$22 billion worth of contracts have been signed - six times more per year than the previous administration.

The Deputy Oil Minister continued, mentioning that last year in Ilam province, the Azar field contract was signed. This year, the Changuleh field contract will be signed with a \$1.3 billion investment for 21 wells, targeting a production of 60,000 barrels of oil per day. The revenue from this contract is estimated at \$13 billion, creating 6,500 jobs.

Khojasteh-Mehr stated that the second contract pertains to the Band Karkheh development plan in Khuzestan, involving the drilling of 14

wells to produce 18,000 barrels of oil per day with an investment of €434 million.

He mentioned that two other contracts are of the B.O.O type, which are considered new and attractive contracts. One contract with Mapna Company involves a \$100 million investment with a 12-month duration and a 10-year service purchase agreement.

The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company announced that another contract in the field of processing the Mansouri field, with a capacity of 75,000 barrels per day, was signed with an investment of \$150 million.

Khojasteh-Mehr concluded by stating that the total value of the four contracts signed today is \$2 billion, with anticipated revenue of \$17 billion.

The Changuleh oil field contract aligns with the country's five-year development plans aimed at maximizing production from oil fields, especially joint fields. This contract was signed between the National Iranian Oil Company and the Oil Industries Engineering and Construction Company (OIEC). The field contains approximately 4.8 billion barrels of crude oil in place. The Ministry of Oil of the Thirteenth Government, in line with the country's five-year development plans for maximum development and production from oil fields, particularly joint fields, finalized and signed the development and operation contract for the Changuleh oil field with OIEC after intense technical, contractual, and financial negotiations. The duration of this contract is 20 years, with an estimated cumulative production of around 228 million barrels of crude oil from this joint field.

Iran, Tajikistan Sign MoU for Land Management

TEHRAN - The National Cartographic Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy of the Republic of Tajikistan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation.

According to IRNA from the National Cartographic Center, after hours of visits and intensive meetings by the chairman and accompanying delegation of the State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy of the Republic of Tajikistan with the National Cartographic Center, a meeting was held on Wednesday, June 13th, at the National Cartographic Center to implement the MoU for cooperation between the two organizations.

Ali Javidaneh, head of the National Cartographic Center, expressed gratitude and appreciation to the chairman of the State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy of the Republic of Tajikistan and his delegation for accepting the official invitation and attending. He stated that this MoU and the associated communications mark a milestone in the joint cooperation between the two countries.

Aref Khojazzada, chairman of the State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy of the Republic of Tajikistan, also expressed his thanks and appreciation to the National Cartographic

Center, expressing satisfaction with the good cooperation with the center. He considered the expansion of bilateral interactions in line with the implementation of the MoU an important step in strengthening the relations between the two countries.

In this regard, considering the existing scientific and technological capacities in the country and Mr. Khojazzada's presence as a member of the Cabinet of the Republic of Tajikistan, it was agreed that these interactions will be further increased.

Nizamuddin Zahidi, the ambassador of Tajikistan, also attended this meeting. Following Khojazzada's remarks, Zahidi stated: "The presence of the State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy of the Republic of Tajikistan has been very fruitful and full of achievements, for which I am very grateful to the National Cartographic Center." He also expressed hope that in the future, we will witness more bilateral cooperation in the field of geomatics sciences and the export of technical and engineering services by specialists from the National Cartographic Center.

According to this report, the MoU, consisting of nine agenda items, was prepared in two versions in Persian and Tajik with equal validity on Wednesday, June 13th, in Tehran and signed by both parties.



Iran Ranks in Flower and Plant Exports



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's customs announced a 40% growth in non-oil exports under the thirteenth government, stating that Iran's non-oil trade has increased from \$74 billion in 2020 to \$116 billion in 2023, a 57% increase.

Mohammad Rezvani-Far, in the second ceremony honoring well-behaved economic activists (Taraz Plan), attended by the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, stated that Iran's non-oil trade (imports and exports) has increased from \$74 billion in 2020 to \$116 billion in 2023, a 57% rise.

The Deputy Minister of Economy added that the non-oil trade volume has also increased from 147 million tons in 2020 to 167 million tons, indicating a 20% growth.

He noted that the value of non-oil exports in 2020 was \$35 billion, and with a 40% increase in 2023, it reached \$49 billion.

Rezvani-Far stated that the value of imports last year reached \$66 billion, of which \$2 billion was for importing gold bullion and \$2.6 billion for trucks and tractors.

Regarding Iran's trade with 15 neighboring countries last year, the head of customs said that in 2023, Iran's foreign trade volume with neighboring countries increased by 10%, surpassing \$61 billion.

He added that in 2023, 17.8 million tons of goods were transited through Iran, showing a 54% increase compared to 2022.

Rezvani-Far emphasized that customs revenue in 2020 was 27 trillion tomans, and with a ninefold increase, it reached 247 trillion tomans in 2023.

Regarding customs facilitation packages defined in 2023, he mentioned one such facilitation is the use of dedicated warehouses for economic activists, which reduces production costs, storage costs, and clearance time, currently having over 248 dedicated warehouses in 25 provinces for producers.

He pointed out that in 2023, there was significant use of dedicated warehouse capacity by producers, and customs reduced the required guarantees and collateral for these warehouses by half for large manufacturing companies.

Rezvani-Far continued, stating that last week, the largest dedicated customs warehouse was expanded at the Mobarakeh Steel Complex in Isfahan with the company's investment. This capacity is beneficial for holding companies and large economic enterprises to utilize, with eight major economic entities currently in the process of establishing dedicated customs.

ICCIMA Seeks Greater Cooperation With Paris Chamber in Non-Sanctioned Areas



TEHRAN - The President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture stated that there is potential for increased cooperation between the Iran and Paris chambers, particularly in the academic and scientific fields.

In a meeting with the Vice President of the Paris Chamber of Commerce, Samad Hassanzadeh continued, "The Iran Chamber is ready to provide scholarships for Iranian students interested in studying at universities and educational institutions affiliated with the Paris Chamber of Commerce."

He pointed out that 27% of Iran's national production and economic activities fall under the purview of the Iran Chamber, adding, "We seek greater bilateral cooperation in non-sanctioned areas."

Hassanzadeh concluded by inviting the Vice Presidents of the Paris Chamber of Commerce to visit Iran to closely acquaint themselves with the country's economic and commercial potential, an invitation that was warmly received.

During the meeting, the Vice President of the Paris Chamber of Commerce also highlighted their activities, saying, "Providing consultancy to companies, aiding their economic growth, supporting companies in international domains, particularly in digitalization processes, organizing international exhibitions and events, and overseeing their implementation are among the main activities of the Paris Chamber of Commerce."

At Least 19 Hajj Pilgrims Die From Extreme Heat in Saudi Arabia

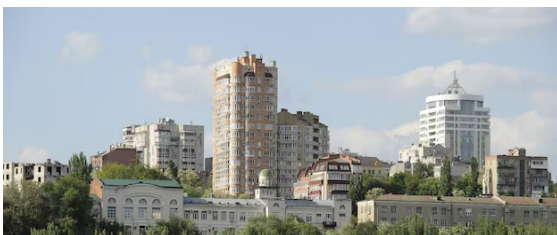
RIYADH (Dispatches) - At least 19 Jordanian and Iranian pilgrims have died while on the hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, authorities from their countries said on Sunday, as temperatures soar in the kingdom.

"Fourteen Jordanian pilgrims died and 17 others were missing" during the performance of hajj rituals, Jordan's foreign ministry said in a statement. The ministry later confirmed the 14 had died "after suffering sun stroke due to the extreme heat wave". Iranian Red Crescent chief Pirhossein Koolivand separately said "five Iranian pilgrims have lost their lives so far in Mecca and Medina during the hajj this year", without saying how they died. The hajj, one of the world's biggest religious gatherings, is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must perform it at least once. Temperatures have pushed well past 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) during the annual pilgrimage that around 1.8 million Muslims are taking part in this year. Many of the rituals are performed outdoors and on foot, creating challenges especially among the elderly.



IRAN NEWS

Russian Forces Kill IS-Linked Hostage Takers at Detention Center



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian special forces freed two prison guards and shot dead six inmates linked to the Islamic State militant group who had taken them hostage at a detention center in the southern city of Rostov on Sunday, Russian media said.

State media said that some of the men had been convicted of terrorism offences and were accused of affiliation with the Islamic State militant group, which claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a Moscow concert hall in March.

The six hostage takers, one of whom wore a headband with the flag used by the Islamic State that bears an Arabic inscription, knocked out window bars and climbed down several floors by rope before taking the guards hostage with a knife and fire axe.

In video published by the 112 Telegram channel, one was shown brandishing a knife beside one of the bound guards in Rostov-on-Don. In negotiations with the authorities, they demanded free passage out of the prison.

But Russian special forces decided to storm the prison. Intense automatic gunfire could be heard in footage published on Russian Telegram channels. Video published by the 112 Telegram channel showed the six dead men in pools of blood.

"The criminals were eliminated," Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service said in a statement, which said a "special operation" had taken place to free the hostages.

"The employees who were being held hostage were released. They are uninjured," the prison service said.

Ambulances were seen entering the complex.

Islamic State, a Sunni Muslim militant group, was defeated in Iraq and Syria by a combination of U.S.-led forces, Kurdish fighters, and Russian, Iranian, Syrian soldiers. It splintered into different regional groups that have claimed a number of deadly attacks across the world.

Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K), named after an old term for the region that included parts of Iran, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, claimed responsibility for the March attack on the Crocus City Hall outside Moscow in which 145 people died.



Ukraine Summit Strives for Consensus, Way Forward Uncertain

BUERGENSTOCK (Dispatches) - Western powers and their allies at a summit in Switzerland denounced Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Sunday, but they failed to persuade major non-aligned states to join their final statement, and no country came forward to host a sequel.

Over 90 countries attended the two-day talks at a Swiss Alpine resort at the behest of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, billed as a "peace summit" even though Moscow was not invited.

Russia ridiculed the event from afar. A decision by China to stay away all but assured that the summit would fail to achieve Ukraine's goal of persuading major countries from the "global South" to join in isolating Russia.

Brazil attended only as an "observer". And in the end, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and South Africa all withheld their signatures from the summit communique, even though some contentious issues were omitted in the hope of drawing wider support.

Still, the conference provided Kyiv with a chance to showcase the support from Western allies that it says it needs to keep fighting against a far bigger enemy.

"We are responding to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine not only with a full-scale defense of human life, but also with full-scale diplomacy," Zelenskiy said.

Leaders including U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron gathered at the mountaintop resort of Buergenstock. U.S. President Joe Biden, in Europe for other events last week, did not attend despite public invitations from Zelenskiy.

The frontlines in Ukraine have barely moved since the end of 2022, despite tens of thousands of dead on both sides in relentless trench warfare, the bloodiest fighting in Europe since World War Two.

In her closing remarks, Swiss President Viola Amherd warned that the "road ahead is long and challenging".

Russia, as it has for weeks, mocked the gathering.

"None of the participants in the 'peace forum' knows what he is doing there and what his role is," said Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's former president and now deputy chairman of the country's Security Council.

After initial Ukrainian successes that saw Kyiv repel an assault on the capital and recapture territory in the war's first year, a major Ukrainian counter-offensive using donated Western tanks fizzled last year. Russian forces still hold a fifth of Ukraine and are again advancing, albeit slowly. No peace talks

have been held for more than two years.

"We know that peace in Ukraine will not be achieved in one step, it will be a journey," European Commission Chief Ursula von der Leyen said, calling for "patience and determination".

"It was not a peace negotiation because (Russia's President Vladimir) Putin is not serious about ending the war, he's insisting on capitulation, he's insisting on ceding Ukrainian territory - even territory that today is not occupied."

In the absence of a clear path to ending the war, Zelenskiy emphasised practical issues, such as nuclear safety and securing food supplies from Ukraine, one of the world's biggest grain exporters.

The summit's final declaration called for Ukraine's control over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant and its Azov Sea ports to be restored. But in line with the conference's more modest stated aims, it omitted tougher issues of what a post-war settlement for Ukraine might look like, whether Ukraine could join the NATO alliance or how troop withdrawals from both sides might work.

"The more allies that can be found to say 'Things can't go on like this', 'This is too much', 'That's overstepping the mark', that also increases the moral pressure on the Russian Federation," said Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer.

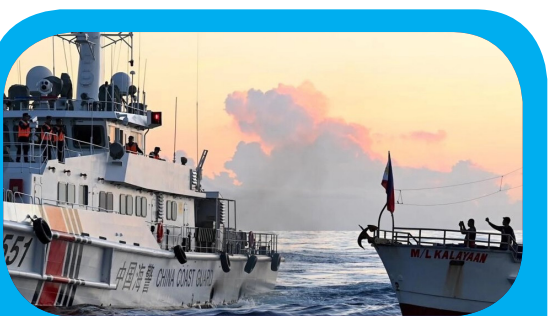
As Sunday's talks turned towards issues of food security and nuclear power, some leaders left early. No country came forward to host another such meeting, with notable silence from Saudi Arabia, mooted as a possible future venue. Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said the kingdom was ready to assist the peace process but a viable settlement would hinge on "difficult compromise."

Since initial peace talks in the first months after the Feb. 2022 invasion, Ukraine has consistently demanded Russia withdraw from all its land, while Moscow has demanded recognition of its rule over territory its forces captured.

Last week, in remarks clearly aimed at the conference, Putin said Russia would not halt the war until Kyiv withdraws its forces fully from four provinces that Moscow only partially controls and claims to have annexed. Kyiv swiftly denounced that as a demand for surrender.

"Of course we...understand perfectly that a time will come when it will be necessary to talk to Russia," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said. "But our position is very clear: We will not allow Russia to speak in the language of ultimatums like it is speaking now."

Western leaders at the summit endorsed Kyiv's refusal to negotiate under such terms.



Philippine ship, Chinese Vessel Collide in Disputed South China Sea

MANILA (Dispatches) - A Philippine ship and a Chinese vessel collided near the Spratly Islands in the disputed South China Sea on Monday, Beijing's Coast Guard said.

Beijing claims almost the entirety of the South China Sea, brushing aside competing claims from several Southeast Asian nations including the Philippines and an international ruling that its stance has no legal basis.

China deploys coast guard and other boats to patrol the waters and has turned several reefs into militarised artificial islands. Chinese and Philippine vessels have had a series of confrontations in disputed areas.

On Saturday, new Chinese coast guard rules took effect under which it can detain foreigners for alleged trespassing in the disputed sea.

Beijing's coast guard said in a statement Monday that a "Philippine replenishment ship ignored many solemn warnings from the Chinese side".

It "approached the... Chinese vessel in an unprofessional way, resulting in a collision", the statement said.

Beijing accused the ship of having "illegally broken into the sea near Ren'ai Reef in China's Nansha Islands", using the Chinese name for the Spratly Islands.

"The Chinese Coast Guard took control measures against the Philippine ship in accordance with the law," it added.

Hamas Response to Gaza Ceasefire Proposal

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Hamas' response to the latest Gaza ceasefire proposal is consistent with the principles put forward in U.S. President Joe Biden's plan, the group's Qatar-based leader Ismail Haniyeh said in a televised speech on the occasion of the Islamic Eid al-Adha on Sunday.

"Hamas and the (Palestinian) groups are ready for a comprehensive deal which entails a ceasefire, withdrawal from the strip, the reconstruction of what was destroyed and a comprehensive swap deal," Haniyeh said, referring to the exchange of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners.

On May 31, Biden laid out what he called a "three-phase" Israeli proposal that would include negotiations for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza as well as phased exchanges of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners held in Israel.

Egypt and Qatar - which along with the United States have been mediating between Hamas and Israel - said on June 11 that they had received a response from the Palestinian groups to the U.S. plan, without giving further details.

While Israel said Hamas rejected key elements of the U.S. plan, a senior Hamas leader told Reuters that the changes the group requested were "not significant".

Meanwhile Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu criticized plans announced by the military on Sunday to hold daily tactical pauses in fighting along one of the main roads into Gaza to facilitate aid delivery into the Palestinian enclave.

The military had announced the daily pauses from 0500 GMT until 1600 GMT in the area from the Kerem Shalom Crossing to the Salah al-Din Road and then northwards.

"When the prime minister heard the reports of an 11-hour humanitarian pause in the morning, he turned to his military secretary and made it clear that this was unacceptable to him," an Israeli official said.

The military clarified that normal operations would continue in Rafah, the main focus of its operation in southern Gaza, where eight soldiers were killed on Saturday.

The reaction from Netanyahu underlined political tensions over the issue of aid coming into Gaza, where international organisations have warned of a growing humanitarian crisis.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who leads one of the nationalist religious parties in Netanyahu's ruling coalition, denounced the idea of a tactical pause, saying whoever decided it was a "fool" who should lose their job.

The spat was the latest in a series of clashes between members of the coalition and the military over the conduct of the war, now in its ninth month.

It came a week after centrist former general Benny Gantz quit the government, accusing Netanyahu of having no effective strategy in Gaza.



Nuclear Arms More Prominent Amid Geopolitical Tensions

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - The role of atomic weapons has become more prominent and nuclear states are modernising arsenals as geopolitical relations deteriorate, researchers said Monday, urging world leaders to "step back and reflect".

Diplomatic efforts to control nuclear arms also suffered major setbacks amid strained international relations over the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said in its annual yearbook.

"We have not seen nuclear weapons playing such a prominent role in international relations since the Cold War," Wilfred Wan, director of SIPRI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme, said in a statement.

The research institute noted that in February 2023 Russia announced it was suspending participation in the 2010 New START treaty -- "the last remaining nuclear arms control treaty limiting Russian and US strategic nuclear forces".

SIPRI also noted that Russia carried out tactical nuclear weapon



drills close to the Ukrainian border in May.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has upped his nuclear rhetoric since the Ukraine conflict began, warning in his address to the nation in February there was a "real" risk of nuclear war.

In addition, an informal agreement between the United States and Iran reached in June 2023 was upended after the start of the Israel-Hamas war in October, SIPRI said.

According to SIPRI, the world's nine nuclear-armed states also "continued to modernise their nuclear arsenals and several deployed new nuclear-armed or nuclear-capable weapon systems in 2023".

The nine countries are the United States, Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel.

In January, of the estimated 12,121 nuclear warheads around the world about 9,585 were in stockpiles for potential use, according to SIPRI.

Around 2,100 were kept in a state of "high operational alert" on ballistic missiles.



Bellingham Gets England's Euro 2024 Campaign Off to Winning Start

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Jude Bellingham got England's Euro 2024 campaign off to a winning start but a 1-0 victory over Serbia in Gelsenkirchen failed to dispel doubts over the Three Lions' quest to become European champions for the first time.

Bellingham was in a class of his own in Gelsenkirchen as the Real Madrid midfielder's header on 13 minutes capped a fine individual display.

But collectively England failed to match the standards Germany and Spain showed in romping to victory in their opening matches.

Expectations on England ahead of a major tournament have rarely ever been higher but they had won just one of their previous five matches, including a 1-0 defeat to Iceland in their final warm-up match before jetting out to Germany.

Restored to full strength, it appeared all would be alright on the night for Gareth Southgate in a dominant start from the Euro 2020 finalists.

Serbia coach Dragan Stojkovic hailed Bellingham as a future Ballon d'Or winner on the eve of the game and he put on a show to justify his status as arguably the world's best player on current form.

The 20-year-old played with the swagger of a newly-crowned Champions League winner as he had the Serbian midfield chasing shadows.

Yet, Bellingham also showed his physical prowess to open the scoring on 13 minutes. He started the move before bursting into the box to meet Bukayo Saka's deflected cross with a powerful header into the top corner.

England were dominant in the first 45 minutes without ever threatening to cut loose.

Kyle Walker had the best chance to double their lead before the break when he pulled an effort wide after a lung-bursting run into the Serbian box from right-back.

Southgate's one roll of the dice with his starting line-up was to play Liverpool right-back Trent Alexander-Arnold in midfield.

That decision nearly backfired as it was an Alexander-Arnold error that gifted Serbia their only sight of goal in the first half.

Alexander-Arnold was dispossessed on the edge of the England box but the in-form Aleksandar Mitrovic, who scored 40 goals in 43 games for Saudi champions Al Hilal this season, fired wide.

The second period was a different story as England sat on their lead and were lucky not to be punished.

Southgate's men came into the tournament with question marks over their defence due to the absence of Harry Maguire and Luke Shaw's lack of match practice.

Crystal Palace's Marc Guehi stepped into Maguire's shoes, but had a moment to forget as was outpaced by Dusan Vlahovic and Filip Mladenovic failed to connect with the Juventus striker's cross.

Mitrovic then saw an optimistic penalty claim waived away and Luka Jovic failed to take Dusan Tadic's pass in his stride with another decent chance.

Southgate turned to his bench to stem the tide with the introduction of Conor Gallagher and Jarrod Bowen.

Mbappe Rules out Playing at Paris Games After Real Madrid Move



PARIS (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe confirmed he will not play for France's Olympic team at the Paris Games as his new club Real Madrid are against the idea.

The 25-year-old said in March that he was keen on playing at his home Games but since the Olympic soccer tournament is not on FIFA's calendar clubs are not obliged to release their players.

Mbappe was not included in a 25-man preliminary squad for the Olympics earlier this month, though head coach Thierry Henry left the door open.

"My club's position was very clear, so from that moment on, I think I (knew) I won't be taking part in the Games," Mbappe told reporters ahead of Monday's Group D match against Austria at Euro 2024.

"That's just the way it is, and I understand that too. I'm joining a new team in September, so it's not the best way to start an adventure.

"I'm going to wish this French team all the best. I'm going to watch every game. I hope they'll win the gold medal."

The men's Olympic football competition begins on July 24, 10 days after the European Championships final, and ends on Aug. 9.

Doncic, Mavs Avert Sweep With Game 4 Blowout

DALLAS (Dispatches) - Luka Doncic scored 25 of his 29 points in the first half, Kyrie Irving added 21 points and the Dallas Mavericks avoided a sweep with a 122-84 rout of the Boston Celtics in Game 4 of the NBA Finals.

The series shifts back to Boston for Game 5 as the Celtics will look to close it out at home. However, Dallas showed life in extending the series after Boston was the dominant team while winning the first three games of the best-of-seven series.

The script flipped in Game 4. Doncic and the Mavericks got off to a fast start and didn't look back. Doncic started a 10-0 spurt in the first quarter with a floater and closed it with a driving layup as Dallas took a 25-14 lead with 3:19 left in the period. That early run was a sign of things to come.

Dallas had a 34-21 lead by the end of the first quarter, scoring the final six points on 3-pointers by Irving and P.J. Washington.

The Mavericks kept pouring it on. They doubled up the Celtics 50-25 on a layup by Irving at the 5:16 mark of the second quarter. To close



the half, Maxi Kleber drilled a corner 3-pointer off an assist by Doncic. That gave Dallas a 61-35 lead at the break.

The Mavericks shot 52.3 percent from the field compared to the Celtics' 29.7 percent in the opening half. Dallas also won the rebounding battle 29-13 over the opening 24 minutes.

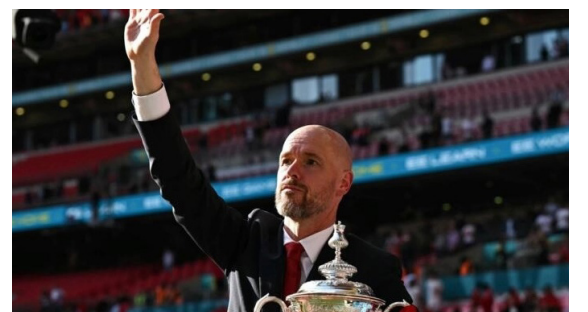
Dallas turned it into a full-on rout in the second half, leading by as many as 48, taking a 115-67 lead on a 3-pointer by Jaden Hardy with 5:58 left in the game.

The Mavericks reached the 100-point mark several minutes before that on a 3-pointer by Tim Hardaway Jr. Dallas didn't reach the 100-point mark in any of the first three games against Boston.

Hardaway finished with 15 points on 5-of-7 shooting from 3-point range. For Boston, it was a letdown for a team that remains in control of the Finals. NBA teams are 156-0 when taking a 3-0 lead in a best-of-seven series.

The Celtics were led by Jayson Tatum's 15 points. Sam Hauser added 14 points, and Payton Pritchard had 11.

Ten Hag Reveals Tuchel Was Approached for His United Job



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United boss Erik ten Hag revealed Sunday the English giants had admitted courting Thomas Tuchel to replace him but opted to persevere with the under-pressure Dutchman when "they came to the conclusion that they already have the best manager".

The 54-year-old Ten Hag was the subject of intense scrutiny after United ended last season eighth in the Premier League -- their lowest finish since 1990 -- and crashed out of the Champions League at the group stage.

But he did help salvage something from the campaign thanks to a 2-1 FA Cup final win over local rivals Manchester City at Wembley that also secured a place in next season's Europa League.

"The club management came to me while I was on holiday in Ibiza," Ten Hag told NOS on Sunday, while working as a football pundit for the Dutch broadcaster.

"They suddenly showed up on my doorstep and told me they wanted to continue with me. It was a turbulent season. Never a dull moment."

Former Tottenham and Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino and Kieran McKenna, the boss of newly-promoted Ipswich, were both touted for a job where there was technically no vacancy -- Ten Hag's contract with United is about to enter its final season.

Other managers linked to United included Graham Potter, Thomas Frank, Roberto De Zerbi and current England boss Gareth Southgate.

But it was former Chelsea and Bayern Munich boss Tuchel who attracted United's interest.

The German reportedly met with United co-owner Jim Ratcliffe, only to appear to rule himself out.

But Ten Hag said United chiefs had flown out to Ibiza to tell him they wanted him to stay in post.

"Manchester United have told me that they spoke with Tuchel, but they eventually came to the conclusion that they already have the best manager."

Ten Hag, reflecting on the club's end of season review, added: "As in any organisation, it is wise to evaluate. Manchester United did that too. The new owner (Ratcliffe) is new to football, he has taken his time."

DeChambeau Wins U.S. Open

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Bryson DeChambeau came out on top in a dramatic final round, back nine battle with Rory McIlroy to win the U.S. Open by one shot on Sunday as the Northern Irishman's major misery continued at Pinehurst resort in North Carolina.

Poised to end a decade long major drought, McIlroy collapsed at the finish with bogey's on three of his final four holes, including a heart-breaker at the 18th where he missed from inside four feet.

At the same time, playing in the final pair, DeChambeau sent his tee shot into the rough but held his nerve with a brilliant up and down to save par for a final round one-over 71.

That was good enough to earn the LIV Golf standard bearer a heart-stopping victory with a six-under 274 winning total.

"Oh, man, I didn't want to finish second again," said DeChambeau, runner-up at last month's PGA Championship. "PGA really stung."

"As much as it is heartbreaking for some people, it was heartbreak for me at the PGA. I really wanted this one."

"When I turned the corner and saw I was a couple back, I said, nope, I'm not going to let that happen."

"I was a little lucky. Rory didn't make a couple putts that he could have coming in."

"I had an amazing up-and-down on the last."

"I don't know what else to say. It's a dream come true."

McIlroy had a final round 69 to finish alone in second one ahead of Americans Patrick Cantlay (70) and Tony Finau (67).



It was the second career major win for DeChambeau, his first coming at the 2020 U.S. Open.

The 30-year-old American started the day at the top of the leaderboard three clear of the chasing pack that included McIlroy but trailed the world number three by two with five holes to play.

"Ultimately on 13, I knew I had to make birdie there to give myself a chance because Rory was going on a heater," said DeChambeau, who collected his last birdie of the day at 13. "He (McIlroy) slipped up a couple on the way coming in, and I just kept staying the course."

DeChambeau had looked headed for another second place until McIlroy's sudden collapse.

McIlroy had used a red hot putter to snatch the lead, but with the finish line in sight, suddenly went cold on the greens missing from 30 inches at the 16th and from inside four-feet at 18 leaving the Northern Irishman shellshocked as he walked off the course and quickly into his car putting the disaster in his rearview mirror.

The U.S. Open thriller showcased golf's best providing fans something they have been regularly denied since the sport split into two camps with the PGA Tour on one side and Saudi-backed rebel circuit LIV Golf on the other.