

The United States Has Imposed a Raft of New Sanctions on Nearly 50 Entities, Companies and People That It Claims Have Been Helping the Iranian Military Transfer Billions of Dollars Worth of Funds Between Various Countries

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Ambassador to Indonesia Mohammad Boroujerdi Has Expressed Hope That the Cooperation Between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Other Countries Will Bring About International Stability

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High Election Turnout to Ramp Up Iran's Power in Region, World



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman says high voter turnout in the June 28 presidential election is crucial to enhancing the country's power and influence in the region and beyond.

Nasser Kanaani made the remarks in a post on his X account. Iranians gear up for the snap presidential election, following President Ebrahim Raisi's martyrdom in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran on May 19.

Kanaani said elections in Iran "demonstrate religious democracy." He said broad participation of Iranians in elections, along with their influential role in managing the country, will boost national power in advancing foreign policy goals.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said the presence of numerous prominent and well-known foreign media reporters in Iran to cover the election highlights the international attention on this important political event.

Kanaani also said Iran's influential role in the region is demonstrated in the presence of 180 foreign journalists for the coverage of the election.

It also highlights the impact of the presidential election on domestic affairs and foreign policy, the official said.

"Undoubtedly, the pride of Iran is the common aspiration of all Iranians, and Iranians living abroad will once again show their great love for dear Iran with their enthusiastic participation in this election."

The new administration, the 14th since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, will assume power in late June or early July and will hold office for four years.

The six candidates are Saeed Jalili, Alireza Zakani, Amir Hossein Qazizadeh Hashemi, Mostafa Pourmohammadi, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, and Masoud Pezeshkian.

In remarks on June 22, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei advised the presidential candidates to refrain from making statements during their televised campaigns that would please the enemy.

Raisi's Gov't Set Ground for Neutralizing Anti-Iran Sanctions



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Interim Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani says the administration of late President Ebrahim Raisi paved the way for the revival of negotiations on the removal of anti-Iran sanctions and the neutralization of bans against the Islamic Republic.

Bagheri Kani made the statement on the sidelines of the Iranian government's weekly cabinet meeting in the capital Tehran on Wednesday.

"Martyr Raisi's administration acted in various fields of foreign policy in such a way that the paths are across the board, and his regional and neighborliness policy has no opposition either inside or outside the country," he said. Pointing to the issue of negotiations to lift Western-led sanctions on Tehran, the top Iranian diplomat said, "Martyr Raisi announced from the beginning of the 13th government that they were following both the path of negotiations and the path of neutralizing sanctions. To this end, the path of negotiation was followed seriously... although there was a disruption for a while during the talks."

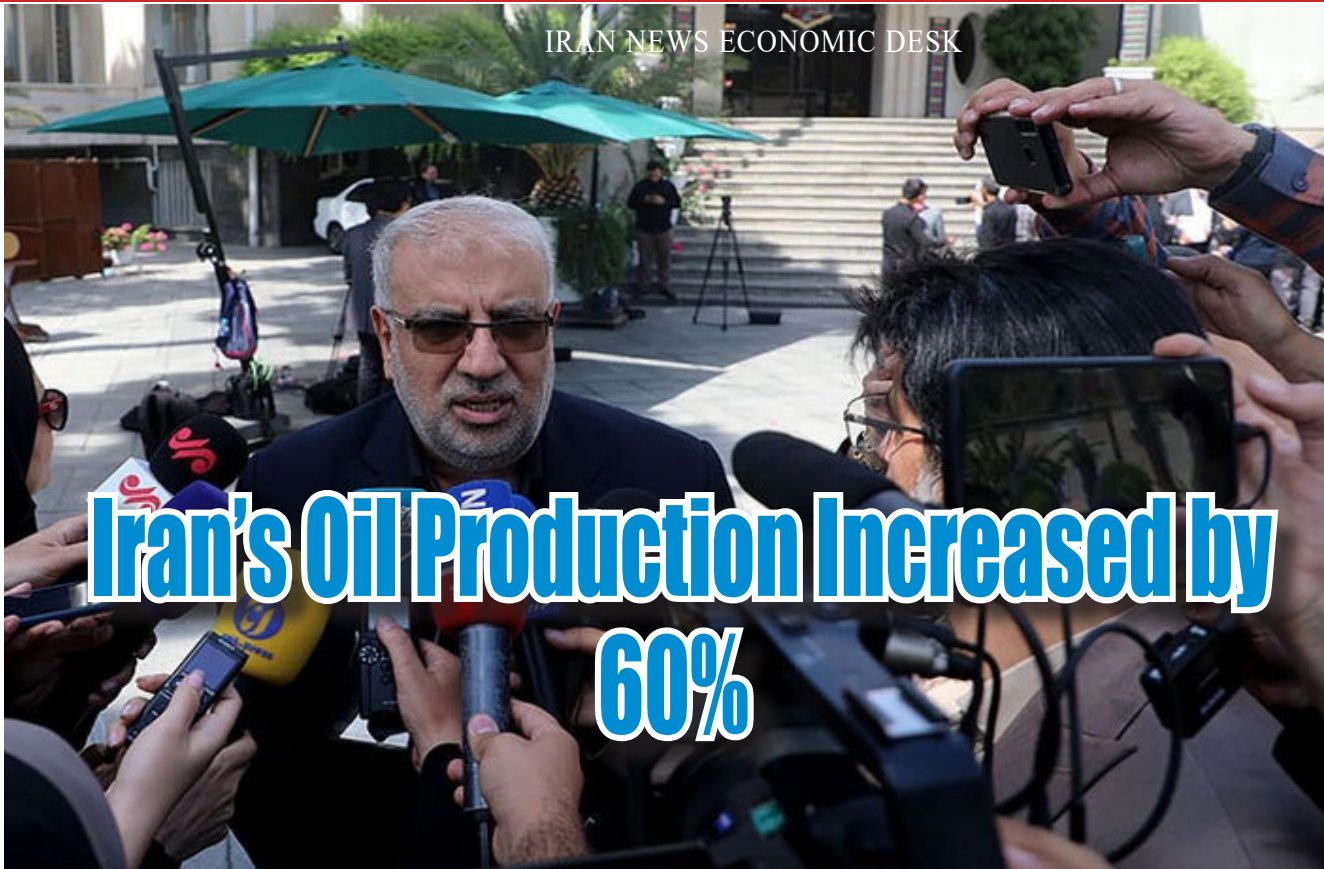
Bagheri Kani stressed that the Islamic Republic pursued a "right and logical path," and is currently treading on a distinguished track.

"In this regard, the next administration can follow the smooth path that was created in this government with new energy both in the field of lifting sanctions and in the field of consolidating nuclear rights."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iran's interim foreign minister said the late chief executive's good neighborliness policy started with mutual political trust and showed a new face of Iran to the neighboring countries and the region.

"Since Raisi's swearing-in and during the time that the representatives of foreign countries came to Tehran and had bilateral meetings with him, we witnessed that their conception after meeting with Raisi clearly showed that the ground for political mutual trust has been completely set for them," Bagheri Kani said.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



Iran's Oil Production Increased by 60%

TEHRAN - Oil Minister Javad Owji on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting told reporters that that over the past few days, there has been injustice against the government of Martyr Raisi, particularly in the context of advancements in the oil and gas industry. He said: "In these past few days, statements have been made regarding oil production and export statistics that are far from reality."

He continued: "Today, at the cabinet meeting, I presented the statistics related to oil production and exports. These statistics are compiled monthly and sent in reports to high-ranking officials of the system and the country, including the Supreme Leader, the heads of the three branches of government, and some chairmen of specialized commissions of the Islamic Consultative Assembly."

The Minister of Oil, referring to the average oil production in different years, added: "In 2019, Iran's average crude oil production was 2,290,000 barrels per day, which dropped to 2,106,000 barrels per day in 2020, and in June 2021, it was 2,107,000 barrels per day."

Owji stated: "With the arrival of Martyr Raisi's government, oil production increased to 2,400,000 barrels per day and then to an average of 2,600,000 barrels per day in 2022, and reached 3,300,000 barrels per day in 2023. So far in 2024, the average crude oil production of the country has been 3,570,000 barrels per day."

Owji emphasized: "These statistics are the same reports that we send monthly, and

their compilers have a 10-year responsibility. The monthly reports show that the trend of oil production has increased by 60%."

Regarding oil export statistics, he said: "The total crude oil exports have risen from 182 million barrels in 2019 to 565 million barrels annually. Additionally, the value of crude oil and gas condensate exports has increased from \$10 billion and \$9 billion in 2010 and 2011 respectively, to \$36 billion now."

The Oil Minister, stating that significant work has been done in the field of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) exports, added: "In 2020, annual LPG export statistics increased from 3.2 million to 6.5 million. This means we have gone from 3 million tons to 6.5 million tons, which has led to the economic growth of the oil and gas group."

Owji said: "In 2018 and 2019, the growth of the oil and gas group was -14% and -35% respectively, while in 2023, the growth of the oil and gas group reached 20%. The increase in production has caused the growth of the oil and gas group. If the gentlemen claim to have had high oil production and exports, then why was the growth of the oil and gas group -14% and -35% according to the Central Bank and the Planning and Budget Organization's reports?"

He concluded: "Reporting and statistics in the Ministry of Oil have been done both now and in the past, and these statistics are sent monthly to the heads of the three branches of government and the office of the Supreme Leader."

Construction of Chabahar Spaceport Completed After 10 Years

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Space Organization stated that the construction of the Chabahar spaceport was completed after 10 years in the Thirteenth Administration. He announced that this year, with the completion of the first phase of the spaceport, the first launch will take place. If the first phase achieves technical and economic stability with a reliable and cost-effective launcher, international launches will also commence.

Hassan Salarieh discussed the Chabahar spaceport project, initiated in the early 2010s during the Tenth Administration. The land for the Chabahar spaceport was allocated to the Iran Space Organization to build the facility there.

He added that a comprehensive study was conducted at the time to identify suitable locations across the country for constructing the spaceport. Finding appropriate land involved various aspects that make this spaceport unique and significant.

One notable feature of the Chabahar spaceport, Salarieh emphasized, is its proximity to the open waters of the Oman Sea and the Indian Ocean, providing an ideal orbital inclination for various launches. The port, airport, and railway either exist or are planned as part of the comprehensive regional development plan. The entire area falls under the Makran development plan, which aims to enhance regional and national progress.

Salarieh noted that the Chabahar spaceport lacks obstructive factors for launches at many orbital inclinations and flight paths and is not in an area where launcher debris would fall. The project stalled for 10 years because



establishing a spaceport in an underdeveloped area was challenging and labor-intensive. In 2021, in the first session of the Supreme Space Council chaired by Martyr Raisi, the Chabahar spaceport project was mandated for execution.

He continued, explaining that after several discussions and expert evaluations, an agreement was reached between the Iran Space Organization, representing the Ministry of Communications, the Aerospace Industries Organization of the Ministry of Defense, and the Aerospace Force of the IRGC for the latter to construct the facility. The Iran Space Organization acts as the project client, while the Ministry of Defense's Aerospace Organization

oversees and consults.

The Deputy Minister of Communications stressed that the construction was divided into phases based on the launchers' classes. The first phase focuses on preparing the site for solid-fuel launchers, which are lighter and easier to transport. The infrastructure for this phase is rapidly developing, but heavier infrastructure will be required for subsequent phases.

Salarieh emphasized that the aim was to make the spaceport operational within the Thirteenth Administration's term to launch satellites. He highlighted that in 2021, a memorandum of understanding was signed by three agencies. The Aerospace Force, with its successful experience in building solid-fuel launchers, was tasked with constructing the complex, while the Ministry of Defense supervised the project. After preparatory work, including coordination with the Planning Organization for funding, the contract was finalized in mid-2022.

Unconditional Exit of U.S. Occupation Forces Necessary for Syria's Peace, Stability



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Amir Sa'ad Iravani says the full and unconditional exit of US troops from Syria is necessary for the Arab nation's stability, arguing that the forces continue to support terrorist groups instead of fighting terrorism.

"Full, immediate, and unconditional withdrawal of US forces from Syria is essential for the peace and stability of Syria," Iravani said at a UN Security Council meeting on "The situation in the Middle East: (Syria)" in New York on Tuesday. "Instead of combatting terrorism, they continue supporting UN-designated terrorist groups such as Al-Nusra Front (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) as well as looting the oil and wealth of the Syrian people," he added. Iravani noted that Syrians continue to suffer from humanitarian crises, aggression, foreign occupation, and terrorism.

"Through unlawful occupation, inhumane sanctions, politicizing the return of refugees and IDPs, and preventing international support for Syria's reconstruction, certain Western countries are responsible for the prolongation of the conflict as they attempt to impose their own will on the Syrian people," the senior Iranian diplomat stated.

"Such attempts are unlawful and immoral and serve only to prolong the crisis and worsen the suffering endured by the Syrian people," he added.

He went on to urge the international community not to leave the Syrian people alone in their struggle against terrorism, foreign occupation, and the economic terrorism caused by unlawful sanctions.

"The sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria must be fully respected by all as was mandated by the Security Council resolutions. Any separatist agendas and illegitimate self-rule initiatives must be rejected and all foreign forces whose presence is illegal in the territory of Syria by the Syrian Government must withdraw from Syria," Iravani highlighted.

Iran's UN ambassador highlighted that combating terrorists in Syria must continue until the full removal of their threats, demanding the utmost care for the lives of civilians during the process.

Iran, Saudi Arabia Say Resolved to Deepen All-Out Ties



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian Interim Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani has met with Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Walid bin Abdulkarim Al Khreiji in Tehran to discuss bilateral relations and means to enhance ties.

During the meeting, which was held on the sidelines of the 19th Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) ministerial meeting on Tuesday, Bagheri Kani emphasized that the two countries have a serious determination to pursue the deepening and development of relations in various fields.

"We believe that there should be no obstacle in the way of this process," he added. The top Iranian diplomat also thanked Saudi officials for facilitating the affairs of Iranian pilgrims in performing the Hajj rituals and their peaceful return to the country, stressing the need for the continuation of Saudi officials' cooperation in providing necessary and appropriate facilities to Iranian pilgrims.

Al Khreiji, for his part, expressed his condolences over the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi, noting that with the successful holding of the presidential election and the formation of the new government, the Iranian people will successfully overcome this phase.

Al-Kharji underlined efforts to promote and strengthen bilateral relations, expressing hope that the moves will continue with strength given the serious attempts of the Iranian and Saudi high-ranking officials as well as cultural and historical commonalities.

In March last year, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed under a Chinese-brokered deal to restore diplomatic relations severed in 2016.

IRAN NEWS



Russia Sends Coal to India Via Iran by Train for First Time

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Russia has for the first time sent two trains laden with coal to India via the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which connects Russia to India via Iran, according to a statement by Russia's national railway company.

According to RT, a multimodal route that includes a railway, roadway network and seaports, the INSTC spans 7,200km (4,500 miles) from St. Petersburg to the port of Mumbai in India.

The corridor is part of Russia's push to find new transport routes in light of Western sanctions, which have forced it to shift trade flows from Europe to Asia and the Middle East.

Construction of the INSTC started in the early 2000s, but developing it further has taken on a new impetus in light of the restrictions facing Moscow.

Iran Has the Highest Economic Growth Rate in the Region

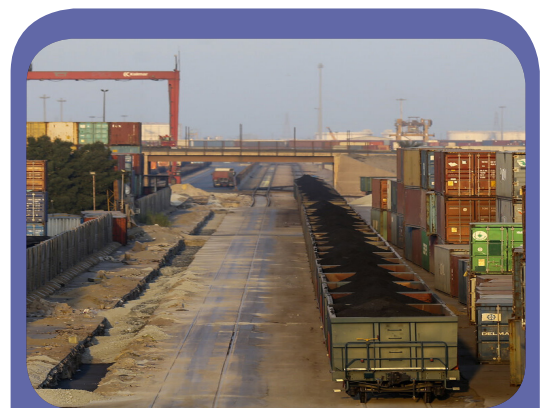


IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Central Bank Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin, in a joint press conference of the Thirteenth Government members, stated that this meeting is an opportunity to analyze macroeconomic variables. He mentioned that the most important variable is economic growth, as it indicates the country's status compared to its competitors and regional countries. The GDP at constant prices from 2016 showed a decline in 2018 and 2019 and further decreased during the COVID-19 period. However, in 2023, the economic growth rate reached 4.5%, with a non-oil growth rate of 3.6%.

He continued, stating that in 2023, economic growth at market prices was 5%, which was the highest rate in the region and a significant figure. Additionally, the growth rate in the energy sector, which had sharply declined in 2018 and 2019, reached 14.7% in 2023. The only sector that did not show suitable growth was agriculture, partly due to weather conditions. However, the services sector, which holds a 50% share of GDP, witnessed considerable growth. The Governor of the Central Bank added that the gross fixed capital formation rate reached 7.2% last year, while in 2018, this figure was more than -15%. Furthermore, in 2023, the capital formation growth rate in the construction sector was 7.2%, compared to -11.6% in 2018. The growth rate in the machinery sector also improved from -21% to 7.9%, indicating promising future growth rates. Farzin stated that the average GDP growth rate under the Thirteenth Government was the highest, with an average growth rate of 4.5% over the past three years, better than any period since 1997. Regarding the improvement in the unemployment rate, he noted that the unemployment rate decreased from 12.3% in 2018 to 8.1% in 2023, coinciding with an increase in the participation rate, indicating that investments have been made and this growth is due to increased investment.

Farzin also mentioned the reduction in the inflation rate and improvement in the Gini coefficient, stating that although subsidies of 300,000 to 400,000 toms caused inflation, they increased the purchasing power of the people, and the Gini coefficient improved.



40% Increase in Non-Oil Exports in 1402 Compared to 2019

TEHRAN - The Iranian Customs announced a 40% increase in the country's non-oil exports in Iranian calendar year 1402 (ended on March 20, 2023) compared to 1399, stating that Iran's non-oil trade increased from \$74 billion in 1399 by 57% to \$116 billion last year.

According to the report from Iranian Customs, Iran's non-oil trade (imports and exports) increased from \$74 billion in 1399 by 57% to \$116 billion in 1402.

In terms of weight, non-oil trade also increased from 147 million tons in 1399 to 167 million tons, showing a 20% increase.

The report, noting that the value of non-oil exports in 1399 was \$35 billion, added that non-oil exports in 1402 increased by 40% compared to 1399, reaching \$49 billion.

According to this report, the value of imports last year reached \$66 billion, of which \$2 billion was allocated to gold bullion imports and \$2.6 billion to trucks and trailers.

The report elaborates on Iran's trade with 15 neighboring countries last year, stating that in 2023, Iran's foreign trade volume with neighboring countries increased by 10% to over \$61 billion.

The report indicates that in 1402, 17.8 million tons of goods were transited through Iran, showing about a 54% increase compared to 1399.

The report emphasizes that the total revenues collected by Customs in various categories increased approximately ninefold in 1402 compared to 1399, adding that the amount of revenue collected by Customs in 1399 was 27 trillion toms, which with a ninefold increase, reached 247 trillion toms in 1402.



Turkmenistan Urged to Ease Visa Issuance for Iranians

TEHRAN - Ramazan Bahrami, head of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, explained the latest state of trade between the two countries and said "The latest statistics on Iran-Turkmenistan trade show \$440 million in Iranian exports and \$38 million in imports."

He attributed the imbalance in exports and imports between the two countries to dissatisfaction on the Turkmen side, saying: "The Turkmen are on the path of export development and thus expect that in return for the volume of exports from Iran to this country, Iranian imports from Turkmenistan should be more than these figures."

A member of the Golestan Chamber of Commerce board continued: "In the Thirteenth Government, regardless of political affiliations, good developments have taken place to strengthen trade relations with Turkmenistan. Ayatollah Raisi was supposed to make his second visit to this country in June this year, and this action has a significant impact on enhancing interactions."

He added: "In the past decade, the type of demand in Turkmenistan for imported goods has changed compared to the previous decade, as this society has turned to new industries."

Bahrami noted: "Fortunately, the Iranian ambassador to Turkmenistan pays great attention to economic matters and cooperates with Iranian traders. In the first three months of 1403 (2024), two trade delegations from Iran and two from Turkmenistan have traveled between the two countries."

The head of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce emphasized: "However, private sector traders are still grappling with redundant regulations and laws related to the return of export currency."

Regarding the establishment of preferential tariffs in trade between the two countries, he said: "There are still differences in some laws between the two countries."

Bahrami explained the status of border crossings: "Three border crossings in Khorasan province and one in Golestan province are active. Iran also has sea access to Turkmenistan through Amirabad, Anzali, and Nowshahr ports, and there are rail lines between the two countries at the Incheh-Borun border in Golestan province and Sarakhs in Khorasan province."

Bahrami reminded: "The Bajgir border in Khorasan province has good capacity for truck traffic, but only eight trucks pass through this border daily, and Turkmenistan does not accept more than this number. It is the only border where passenger vehicles can cross."

He announced the absence of a flight route between Tehran and Ashgabat and explained the financial disputes between Iranian and Turkmen traders: "Problems arise in any transaction, and in Iran-Turkmenistan trade, traders from both sides have unresolved claims. To resolve these issues, the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce has negotiated with the heads of judiciary departments in provinces adjacent to this country, and the Chief Justice of Golestan Province has agreed to establish a Dispute Resolution and Arbitration Council in the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber. Those who face financial issues in transactions with the Turkmen can attend this center for resolution."

He added: "Currently, five cases of claims between Turkmen and Iranian traders are under review, and we also have cooperation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the embassy."

A member of the Golestan Chamber of Commerce board stated: "Iranians and Turkmen still need visas to travel to each other's countries. Turkmenistan is strict in issuing visas, but Iran is more lenient in issuing them."

He finally announced that the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Commission will be held in Tehran in the second half of this year.

300% Increase in Oil Revenues in the 13th Gov't



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company announced a 300% increase in Iran's oil revenues under the thirteenth administration and said: To increase Iran's share in the oil market, we have replaced obstructive competition with constructive engagement. One of the most important pillars of Iran's economy is the oil industry. Although efforts have been made in recent years to reduce Iran's reliance on oil revenues for the public budget and instead use these revenues to develop necessary infrastructure in the country, the impact of oil exports and sales on Iran's economy remains greater than any other factor. Under the thirteenth administration, despite sanctions, the growth in oil production and exports has positively impacted Iran's economic growth. In some cases, the shortfall in other economic sectors has also been compensated by oil revenues. This change largely stems from the new perspective and approach of the thirteenth administration towards domestic and international conditions. Moshen Khojasteh-Mehr, the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company, emphasized that the thirteenth administration understood that economic growth would be achieved through increased production. He stated that given the role of oil in Iran's economy, half of the country's economic growth over the past three years is attributable to the growth in the oil and gas sector. He continued: "Internationally, despite the breaches and oppressive sanctions against Iran, we have prioritized a resilient economy and put it into practice. Alongside

this, we have been compatible with the international environment and have tried to utilize its capacities." Khojasteh-Mehr: The president and officials of this administration have precisely understood that the country's economic growth is achieved through increased production. If we want to improve the country's economic indicators and generate more revenue, we must start with a production leap. This approach was adopted by the thirteenth administration and succeeded. In the years 2021, 2022, 2023, and now in 2024, economic indicators show an increasing and upward trend. According to official national sources, the trend of increasing production and, of course, exports of Iranian oil is entirely tangible and observable.

Khajesteh-Mehr added: "The Thirteenth Government has achieved approximately 70% growth in oil production, which is an unprecedented growth in less than three years, thanks to the prudence of this government. There is no indicator more important than production growth in a country's economy. However, the Thirteenth Government did not stop at this point; the growth in oil production was converted into increased exports and revenue, resulting in the country's oil revenue rising from under \$10 billion annually at the end of the Twelfth Government to about \$36 billion in 2023. This income was solely obtained from the sale of crude oil and gas condensates. These figures represent a 300% leap in Iran's oil revenues under the Thirteenth Government."

Red Alert on Foreign Investment in Oil Due to Unresolved FATF Issues



TEHRAN - Arash Najafi, in an interview with ILNA, touched upon the necessity of attracting foreign investment in the oil industry during the 14th government. He emphasized that it is crucial to consider the broader energy economy, define the economic strategy and roadmap, without which the development of the oil sector will be challenging and success will be unattainable. Najafi stressed the importance of a positive reaction to the FATF (Financial Action Task Force). He stated that negative reactions are futile because the entire world has now agreed on FATF standards. Although Iran's current anti-money laundering measures are far more stringent and complex than FATF's, it is essential to join this global financial system. The Chairman of the Energy Commission at the Chamber of Commerce mentioned that without an agreement on FATF, attracting foreign investors will remain impossible. Many investors are eager to enter Iran and invest in various projects. Many of these projects are not affected by sanctions, meaning that even if sanctions are not resolved, there are thousands of efficient and wealth-generating projects available for foreign investment. However, due to the lack of agreement on FATF, investors cannot obtain guarantees and assurances for their capital. He pointed out that no investor will enter a project directly with their own capital; all investors, considering their financial capabilities, enter projects through banks. Foreign banks, regardless of the sanctions, refrain from investing due to the FATF issue because they cannot obtain the necessary guarantees for a project. Najafi stated that due to the special conditions of sanctions, investment in Iran is already marked red and highly risky. Without FATF, no one can secure the necessary guarantees and assurances from us, resulting in an inability to attract foreign investors. If any claims are made in this regard, they might be related to the investment of Iranian funds blocked in other countries. In other words, such investments might appear to be foreign investments but are actually leveraging Iran's own blocked funds. Realizing international financial resources without FATF is not possible.

Details on Rail Freight Transit From Russia Revealed



TEHRAN - Miad Salehi, in his press conference, referring to the performance report of the railway in the 33 months of the thirteenth government, stated: "Currently, we are utilizing important rail projects, one of which is the Bafq - Zarrin Shahr line in Yazd and Isfahan provinces, which handles the most freight transportation from these two provinces and also holds high importance for passenger transport in this route and these two provinces."

He continued: "The construction of the second railway line from Ofogh to Zarrin Shahr, spanning 500 kilometers and comprising 30 blocks, began in 2015. Ten blocks were inaugurated in the previous government, and yesterday we inaugurated 6 blocks spanning 107 kilometers, valued at 7,500 billion Tomans. Over this period, ten blocks were inaugurated in the government, and the remaining ten blocks, with an average of 50% progress, will be delivered to the fourteenth government."

The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways stated that in the past 33 months, the total railway line inaugurations have reached over 800 kilometers. He said: "Yesterday, as part of the movement to connect production units to the rail network, three industrial units were connected to the rail network, and during this period, 166 kilometers of commercial and industrial lines were constructed. Also, tomorrow, the second Ahvaz-Andimeshk line, spanning 40 kilometers and valued at 3,000 billion Tomans, will be inaugurated. With this inauguration, the total railway line inaugurations will exceed 850 kilometers. During the 33-month period, the total construction of the second railway line reached 311 kilometers."

The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development added: "Additionally, during this period, 485 kilometers of railway lines were renovated and reconstructed."

Russian, U.S. Defense Ministers Discuss Ukraine by Phone

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov and his US counterpart Lloyd Austin spoke by phone yesterday to discuss the conflict in Ukraine, Moscow's defense ministry said.

The United States is one of Ukraine's staunchest military backers, contributing billions of dollars' worth of aid and drawing condemnation from Russia, which has accused Washington of "direct involvement" in the hostilities.

Russia's defense ministry said in a statement that Belousov and Austin had "exchanged views on the situation around Ukraine", noting the conversation took place "at the initiative of the American side". "Andrei Belousov pointed to the danger of further escalation of the situation in connection with the ongoing supply of US weapons to the Armed Forces of Ukraine," it continued. "Other issues were also discussed."



Ukraine Urges Strong Decision From NATO at Washington Summit



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine wants to see a "strong" decision taken at the NATO summit in Washington next month as Kyiv tries to advance its strategic goal of joining the military alliance, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's foreign policy adviser told Reuters.

Ihor Zhovkva, who spoke in an interview before travelling to Luxembourg for a European Union meeting that will formally launch accession talks for Ukraine, said that Kyiv wanted the NATO summit to end with concrete results.

"I think this summit deserves to have a strong decision, including on Ukraine. Because, I mean, if you're having a lack of strong decisions on Ukraine, the summit will be useless," he said in Kyiv late yesterday. He did not specify what he thought such a decision would entail. Zelenskyy, who lobbied unsuccessfully for a political invitation to join the alliance at its summit in Vilnius last summer, has said that this year's summit should resolve the matter of inviting Kyiv to join. While Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg and Washington have both said they do not expect the alliance's 32 members at the July 9-11 summit to invite wartime Kyiv to join, Stoltenberg has said he hopes to show Ukraine is moving closer to membership.

Allies have been discussing possible text in the summit statement that could send that signal, such as declaring that Ukraine's path to NATO is "irreversible".

"We deserve a strong decision. Any decision (by) NATO takes consensus. And we all know this, and we do understand that maybe this time, consensus will be formed again (on) the last day before the summit," Zhovkva said.

There has been no official Ukrainian government response so far to a Reuters report early on Tuesday that advisers to US presidential candidate Donald Trump are considering telling Kyiv it will only more US weapons only if it enters peace talks.



High Risk of Famine Persists Across Gaza

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Gaza remains at high risk of famine as war between Israel and Hamas continues and access to aid is restricted, though delivery of supplies had limited the projected spread of extreme hunger in northern areas, a global monitor said on Tuesday.

More than 495,000 people across the Gaza Strip are facing the most severe, or "catastrophic", level of food insecurity, according to an update from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

That is down from a forecast of 1.1 million in the previous update three months ago, but is still more than one fifth of Gaza's population.

Under "catastrophic" food insecurity, households suffer an extreme lack of food, leading to acute malnutrition in young children, an imminent risk of starvation, and deaths.

The IPC assessment published on Tuesday said that to buy food, more than half of Gazan households surveyed had to sell clothes and one third gathered and sold rubbish. Over 20% reported going entire days and nights without eating. Overall, about 96% of the population faced high levels of acute food insecurity in the period until September.

The U.N.-backed monitor said deliveries of food and nutrition services in March and April seemed to have reduced the severity of hunger in northern Gaza, where the IPC had previously forecast a likelihood of famine.

However, Israel's offensive around the southern city of Rafah from early May and other hostilities and displacement have led to a renewed deterioration in recent weeks, it added.

"The humanitarian space in the Gaza Strip continues to shrink and the ability to safely deliver assistance to populations is dwindling. The recent trajectory is negative and highly unstable," the update said.

The Famine Review Committee, a group of experts which reviews IPC findings, said in a report also released on Tuesday that there was "extreme human suffering" in Gaza and the risk of famine had not diminished.

"Eight months of extreme pressure on the lives of the population make them much more vulnerable to

collapse into famine," it said.

The Rafah offensive led to the shutting of the crossing on Gaza's border with Egypt, which had been a main route for the delivery of food and other supplies, as well as an evacuation point for civilians who were critically ill or injured.

The closure, along with disruptions at the nearby Israeli crossing of Kerem Shalom, reduced humanitarian access to two million people in southern Gaza, said the IPC update, which covers the period from May 1 to Sept. 30.

Displacement to areas with less water and fewer health services "increases the risk of disease outbreaks, which would have catastrophic effects on the nutritional and health status of large segments of the population", it said.

Southern Gaza "may soon reach a tipping point that rapidly leads to a descent into famine", the Famine Review Committee said.

Israel's military campaign in Gaza was launched after Hamas-led militants raided southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people and seizing more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

The Israeli response has killed almost 37,600 people, according to Palestinian health authorities, leaving Gaza in ruins and repeatedly displacing people within the blockaded and densely-populated coastal territory.

The IPC is an initiative involving U.N. agencies, national governments and aid groups that sets the global standard on measuring food crises.

Its most extreme warning is Phase 5, which has two levels, catastrophe and famine.

Famine can be declared if at least 20% of the population in an area are suffering extreme food shortages, with at least 30% of children acutely malnourished and two people out of every 10,000 dying daily from starvation or malnutrition and disease.

Police Fire on Demonstrators Trying to Storm Kenya Parliament

NAIROBI (Dispatches) - Kenyan President William Ruto said security was his "utmost priority" after protests against a bill to raise taxes descended into violence, with police firing on demonstrators trying to storm the legislature, killing at least five.

In chaotic scenes in the capital Nairobi, protesters overwhelmed police and chased them away in an attempt to enter the parliament compound, with Citizen TV later showing damage from inside the building, which had been partially set ablaze.

Protests and clashes also took place in several other cities and towns across Kenya, with many calling for Ruto to quit as well as voicing their opposition to the tax rises.

In a televised address to the nation, Ruto said the tax debate had been "hijacked by dangerous people".

"It is not in order, or even conceivable, that criminals pretending to be peaceful protesters can reign terror against the people..." he said, pledging a swift response to Tuesday's "treasonous events".

Police in Nairobi opened fire after tear gas and water cannon failed to disperse the crowds. They eventually managed to drive protesters from the parliament building and lawmakers were evacuated through an underground tunnel, local media said.

Later on Tuesday, Defence Minister Aden Duale said the army had been deployed to help the police deal with a "security emergency" which had resulted in the "destruction and breaching of critical infrastructure".

A Reuters journalist counted the bodies of at least five protesters outside parliament.

The Kenya Medical Association said that at least five people had been shot dead while treating the injured, and that 31 people had been injured, with 13 shot with live bullets and four with rubber bullets.

The association called on authorities to establish safe medical corridors to protect medical staff and ambulances.

Ruto won an election almost two years ago on a platform of championing Kenya's working poor, but has been caught between the competing demands of lenders such as the

International Monetary Fund, which is urging the government to cut deficits to obtain more funding, and a hard-pressed population.

Kenya has been struggling to cope with several economic shocks caused by the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, two consecutive years of drought and depreciation of the currency.

The finance bill aims to raise an additional \$2.7 billion in taxes as part of an effort to lighten Kenya's heavy debt load, with interest payments alone consuming 37% of annual revenue.

In Washington, the White House said the United States was closely monitoring the situation in Nairobi and urging calm.

Ambassadors and high commissioners from countries including Britain, the U.S. and Germany said in a joint statement they were deeply concerned by violence they had witnessed during recent anti-tax protests and called for restraint on all sides.

Kenyan activist Auma Obama, the half-sister of former U.S. President Barack Obama, was among protesters tear-gassed during the demonstrations, a CNN interview showed.

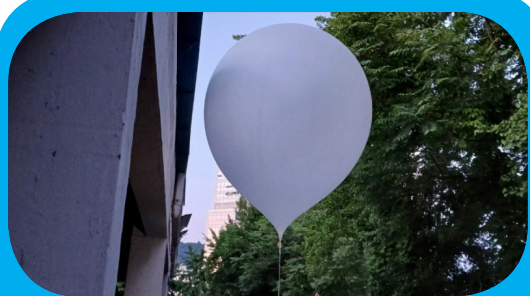
Internet services across the East African country experienced severe disruptions during the police crackdown, internet monitor Netblocks said. Kenya's leading network operator Safaricom said outages had affected two of its undersea cables but the root cause of the outages remained unclear.

Parliament approved the finance bill, moving it through to a third reading by lawmakers. The next step is for the legislation to be sent to the president for signing. He can send it back to parliament if he has any objections.

Opposition politicians called on Ruto to step down. "Ruto must go, Ruto must resign, he must do the honourable thing," senior opposition leader Eugene Wamalwa said in a statement on TV.



Incheon Airport Briefly Shuts Down Runways Because of North Korea Trash Balloons



SEOUL (Dispatches) - Take-offs and landings at South Korea's Incheon international airport were disrupted today for about three hours before dawn because of balloons launched by North Korea filled with refuse, an airport spokesperson said.

One balloon landed on the tarmac near passenger Terminal 2 and the three runways at Incheon were temporarily shut down, the spokesperson said. North Korea has flown balloons carrying trash into South Korea since late May, with hundreds landing in South Korea. Several balloons were spotted in and around the airport boundaries, the spokesperson said, adding that this was not the first time operations at the airport — which is about 40km from the North Korean border — had been disrupted by balloons nearby.

The disruption to domestic and international flights occurred between 1.46am and 4.44am, and the runways have re-opened since then, Incheon International Airport Corporation said.

Flight volume at that time of day is usually low. FlightRadar24 showed shows eight arriving cargo and passenger flights were diverted to South Korea's Cheongju or Jeju airports during that time, and one China Cargo freighter from Shanghai was diverted to Yantai, China.

U.S. Pushing Israel to Avoid War With Hezbollah



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States is pressing Israel to avoid a major war against Lebanon's Hezbollah, with top American officials urging a diplomatic solution in order to prevent another Middle East crisis.

Israeli forces and Iran-backed Hezbollah are exchanging fire on a near-daily basis, and the Israeli army said last week that plans for an offensive in Lebanon were "approved and validated."

Washington is working to lower the temperature, but those efforts — which come on top of disagreements between the administrations of US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — may further add to

tensions between the two leaders. "There is increasing concern among the Biden administration that tit-for-tat violence along the Israel-Lebanon border will escalate into a full-fledged war," said Raphael Cohen, a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation. "The stakes are significant for two reasons. First, another Israel-Lebanon war would be very destructive on both sides," Cohen said.

"Second... an Israel-Hezbollah war incurs a greater risk of escalating into a wider regional war than the Gaza war has so far. Hezbollah is the crown jewel in Iran's proxy network, so the thought is that Iran would be more likely to intervene," he said. Eight months of cross-border violence has killed at least 481 people in Lebanon, mostly fighters but also including 94 civilians, according to an AFP tally. Israeli authorities say at least 15 soldiers and 11 civilians have been killed in the country's north. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant is on a visit to Washington seeking to reaffirm the value of ties with Israel's top ally, and American officials have taken the opportunity to push for a diplomatic solution to the fighting between Hezbollah and Israeli troops. US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin hosted Gallant at the Pentagon on Tuesday, warning that "another war

between Israel and Hezbollah could easily become a regional war, with terrible consequences for the Middle East." "Diplomacy is by far the best way to prevent more escalation," he said.

Gallant, speaking at the opening of the meeting with Austin, said that "we are working closely together to achieve an agreement but we must also discuss readiness (for) every possible scenario." The previous day, Gallant met for two hours at the State Department with top US diplomat Antony Blinken, who delivered a similar message. Blinken "underscored the importance of avoiding further escalation of the conflict and reaching a diplomatic resolution that allows both Israeli and Lebanese families to return to their homes," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said. Miller told journalists Tuesday that "we think a diplomatic resolution is possible. We think it is in the interests of all parties. And I will say that Minister Gallant confirmed to the secretary yesterday that that is Israel's preferred outcome." Gallant said Monday that the United States and Israel "must resolve the differences between us quickly and stand together — this is how we will achieve our goals and weaken our



England Tops Group at Euro 2024 But Fails to Shine

LONDON (Dispatches) - England manager Gareth Southgate was met with boos and thrown beer cups by his own fans despite topping Group C as Slovenia also progressed to the knockout stages thanks to a 0-0 draw in Cologne.

The Three Lions were already assured of a place in the last 16 but can expect more criticism after failing to improve on underwhelming performances in edging past Serbia and drawing with Denmark.

England will have to wait until Wednesday's final group games to find out which of the four best third-placed teams they will face in the last 16.

But more questions will be asked over one of the favourites' ability to end a 58-year wait for major tournament glory as a star-studded forward line was snuffed out by Slovenia.

"That was the aim before the start of the tournament. Come top of the group and control our destiny," said England captain Harry Kane.

"I thought we played a lot better than the other games. We couldn't just find that finish but we look forward to the next one."

Southgate made a statement with his team selection, resisting the calls to make mass changes as Conor Gallagher replaced Trent Alexander-Arnold in the only alteration from the opening

two games.

If the England boss was looking for a reaction by showing faith in the other 10 who have started all three matches in Germany, he was left disappointed.

Slovenia are now nine games unbeaten, which included beating Portugal 2-0 in a pre-tournament friendly.

Declan Rice had highlighted Benjamin Sesko as their big threat on Monday.

Sesko could have been lining up alongside Rice at Arsenal next season had he not shunned interest to extend his contract at RB Leipzig.

The 21-year-old shrugged off a thigh injury to start and had the first chance of the game when he tamely headed straight at Jordan Pickford four minutes in.

It took 20 minutes for England to pose a serious threat and only the offside flag denied them a slick opening goal.

Rice picked out Phil Foden's run but the Manchester City midfielder had strayed beyond the Slovenian defence before squaring for Bukayo Saka to tap in.

England's lack of attacking threat down the left had been pinpointed as a major weakness against Serbia and Denmark.

De Minaur to Make Olympic Debut



SYDNEY (Dispatches) - World tennis number nine Alex de Minaur will make his Olympic debut in Paris next month, three years after missing out at the Tokyo Games because of Covid.

De Minaur was selected Wednesday to spearhead a four-pronged Australian medal assault in the men's singles alongside Alexei Popyrin, Chris O'Connell and Rinky Hijikata -- who will all be taking part in their first Olympics.

"Obviously last time round I got a little bit unlucky to not be able to play in Tokyo," said De Minaur.

"But I've had my eyes set on Paris and I am super excited to now be officially part of this team."

"I am really looking forward to just immersing myself in what it means to be an Olympian."

Ajla Tomljanovic will be the only Australian in the women's singles draw.

"It feels amazing to be selected to my second Olympic team," said the world number 135.

Roland Garros will host the tennis in Paris, marking only the second time in Olympic history that the tournament will be played on clay, after Barcelona in 1992.

Top-ranked doubles player Matt Ebden will partner Tokyo mixed-doubles bronze medalist John Peers in the men's doubles, in which De Minaur will also compete as he teams up with Popyrin.

World number nine doubles player Ellen Perez will partner Daria Saville in the women's doubles for Australia.

Lautaro's Late Strike Sends Argentina Into Copa Quarters

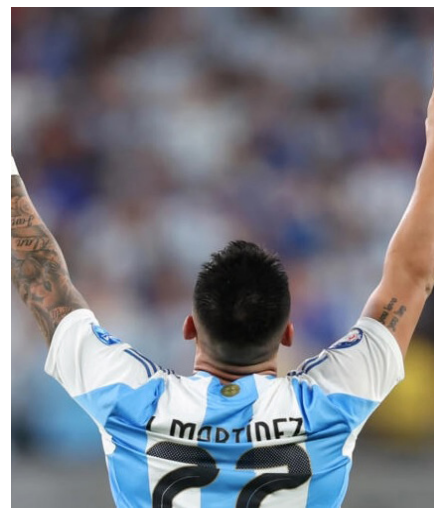
NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Substitute Lautaro Martinez grabbed an 88th-minute winner as Argentina finally overcame Chile 1-0 to book their place in the quarter-finals of the Copa America on Tuesday.

Lionel Messi hit the post for Argentina in the first half but the World Cup winners had their goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez to thank for keeping them on level terms before Lautaro's late strike settled a pulsating clash in front of 82,000 fans at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

There were enough openings for the 15-times Copa America champions to get the breakthrough much earlier but a combination of poor finishing and an inspired performance from Chile's 41-year-old goalkeeper Claudio Bravo left the score deadlocked.

The home of the NFL's New York Jets and New York Giants -- and venue for the 2026 World Cup final -- was transformed into a home venue for Argentina and the expectant crowd saw Messi and company dictate proceedings in the early stages.

Messi's strike partner Julian Alvarez forced Bravo into a save in the 22nd minute with a first-time shot after Nicolas Gonzalez had pulled the



ball back from the byline. Chile were doing a good job of neutralizing Messi, closing him down with three players on occasions. But the eight-times Ballon d'Or winner was inches away from an opener in the 36th minute with a shot from 25 yards which clipped the outside of the post. Chile had twice left Argentina distraught with victories in the Copa America finals of 2015 and 2016, the latter at MetLife Stadium on a night when Messi reacted by briefly quitting the national side.

But while Chile proved stubborn, there is a real swagger about the world champions and a belief that they can always turn a game their way.

As Argentina piled on the pressure, Bravo did well after the break to parry out a blast at the near post from Nahuel Molina and then showed great reactions to push a fierce Nicolas Gonzalez drive against the bar.

Chile threatened on the counter and twice Argentina goalkeeper Martinez had to be at his best to deny drives from Rodrigo Echeverria.

The decisive moment came when Chile failed to clear an in-swinging corner from Messi and Lautaro Martinez pounced to grab the winner, confirmed after a lengthy VAR offside check.

Bautista Agut Upsets Ugo Humbert at Mallorca



MADRID (Dispatches) - Unseeded Roberto Bautista Agut, playing in his home country, upset No. 2 seed Ugo Humbert of France 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 to reach the quarterfinals of the Mallorca Championships in Mallorca, Spain.

In a 2 1/2-hour match, Humbert had 34 winners to 18 for Bautista Agut and 12 aces to three for his opponent. But the native of Spain had five fewer unforced errors (19-14). At 2-2 in the decisive set, Bautista Agut broke Humbert's serve for the third time en route to the win.

In other upsets, unseeded California teen Alex Michelsen took down third-seeded Adrian Mannarino of France 7-6 (5), 6-4, while unseeded Austrian Sebastian Ofner upended No. 5 seed Luciano Darderi of Italy 6-3, 7-5. No. 6 seed Gael Monfils of France knocked off unseeded Roberto Caraballes Baena of France 6-3, 6-4.

In his first tour-level match, lucky loser Giles Hussey of Great Britain stunned No. 6 seed Mariano Navone of Argentina 6-4, 6-2 in first-round action at Eastbourne, England.

A late fill-in after Japan's Kei Nishikori withdrew, Hussey won 89 percent of his first serves (24 of 27) and had 16 winners to 11 for Navone, who committed 13 unforced errors.

Other first-round winners included Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori, Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka, Brazil's Thiago Seyboth Wild, Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic and Italy's Flavio Cobolli and Lorenzo Sonego.

Meanwhile in the continuation of a first-round match suspended on Monday due to darkness, Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki upset No. 7 seed Elina Svitolina of Ukraine 6-3, 6-7 (4), 7-5 at the Bad Homburg Open in Germany.

In her first victory on a grass court since 2019 at Wimbledon, Wozniacki -- a former World No. 1 -- pulled off her second win in seven meetings with Svitolina by rallying from a break down in the final set. Wozniacki won 74.3 percent of her first serves (52 of 70) and saved 7 of 12 break points.

Mbappé Scores But France Draws With Poland

BERLIN (Dispatches) - A Kylian Mbappé penalty was cancelled out by Robert Lewandowski's spot kick as already-eliminated Poland held France to a nervy 1-1 draw in Dortmund on Tuesday, meaning the French finish second in Group D.

Mbappé broke the deadlock in the 56th minute with his first European Championship goal -- and the first scored by a French player at Euro 2024 -- when he calmly slotted home a penalty given for Jakub Kiwior's clumsy challenge on Ousmane Dembele.

The lead would have meant France topped the group regardless of the result of a see-saw game between Netherlands and Austria.

However, Dayot Upamecano brought down Polish substitute Karol Swiderksi, which allowed Lewandowski to level from the spot in the 79th minute -- after his first effort was saved by Mike Maignan, who was adjudged to have advanced off his line too early.

With Austria then grabbing a later winner against the Dutch, the draw means France finish second in Group D behind Austria and will face whoever comes second in Group E, where Romania, Belgium, Slovakia and Ukraine are all on three points. It is the first time France have failed to finish top of their group at a major tournament in 12 years under manager Didier Deschamps. Read more Injured Mbappé asks for mask ideas -- and receives rollicking response It was another uninspired performance by France, who lacked imagination from top to bottom. They dominated possession



but were denied by Poland's excellent goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski who made a string of decent saves to deny Mbappé, Theo Hernandez, Ousmane Dembele and Bradley Barcola's close-range efforts. But after Poland found the equaliser, France had to endure a late flurry by the animated Polish who were roared on by their fans who woke up after Lewandowski's goal to create a raucous atmosphere at Dortmund BVB Stadion. "I'm not frustrated. The aim was to take first place but we had to win. As soon as you don't win,

you have to accept it," Deschamps told TF1. "We did what we had to do, we had chances ... You have to appreciate what we did. We achieved our first objective, even if we didn't get the place we wanted." "We could have been more effective, even if their keeper made some fine saves. We weren't able to find a safe place..." Deschamps still seems to be figuring out how to play his forwards after three games, opting to start talisman Antoine Griezmann on the bench against Poland and his role is still unclear. With Mbappé back into the starting eleven after breaking his nose in their opening match versus Austria, Deschamps deployed two holding midfielders in Adrien Rabiot and Aurelien Tchouameni which allowed France to use their full backs Jules Kounde and Theo Hernandez in full attacking mode, almost as wingers.

The move, however, didn't help France to be more vertical or aggressive and ended up leaving them exposed to counter attacks as William Saliba and Upamecano were often left alone one-on-one against rival attackers.

After Hernandez and Dembele were denied by Skorupski early on, France looked clueless on how to deal with Poland's deep five-man defence and Lewandowski almost scored with a close-range header in the 38th minute.

Mbappé finally made his presence felt with two efforts before the break, missing just wide an angled effort and having another denied by Skorupski. The striker came back looking livelier from the start of the second half running up and down the left channel and forced Skorupski to keep working his magic.