

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Denounced the Zionist Regime's Supporters for Their Verbal Advocacy for Human Rights and at the Same Time Shameless Backing for the Israeli Atrocities in Gaza

# IRAN NEWS

An Accident Has Happened to the Iranian Navy's Sahand Warship at a Pier in the Southern Port City of Bandar Abbas, But the Military Vessel Has Not Sunk But Is Balance After Taking on Water in Its Tanks

VOL. XXIX, No. 8029 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

TUESDAY JULY 09, 2024 TIR 19, 1403

2

DOMESTIC

## Iran to Be Connected to Pakistan With a New Rail Line

> SEE PAGE 2

3

INTERNATIONAL

## French Voters Deliver a Win for the Left, a Blow for Le Pen

> SEE PAGE 3

### Russia, China Top the Least of Foreign Investors in Iran



According to the Ministry of Economy, from the beginning of the thirteenth administration until the end of May 2024, 690 foreign investment projects with a total approved and valid foreign investment value of \$11.8 billion have been approved by the Foreign Investment Board. Since the approved foreign investment projects that did not bring capital into the country within the specified period after the issuance of the permit have been removed from the statistics, this figure only includes valid approved foreign investments up to this date.

Accordingly, the volume of valid approved investments in the oil and gas sector amounted to \$4.826 billion, in the industrial sector \$4.215 billion, in the water, electricity, and gas supply sector \$850 million, in the services sector \$637 million, in the agricultural sector \$718 million, in the construction sector \$175 million, in the transportation and communications sector \$143 million, in the mining sector \$19 million, and in the increase of investments in existing projects \$217 million.

The statistics also show that Russia, with \$2.810 billion, followed by China with \$2.118 billion, had the highest volume of valid approved investments. Following them, the United Arab Emirates with \$1.416 billion, and Iranians abroad with \$1.358 billion, held the largest shares of valid approved investment projects in the past three years.

The unveiling of the first phase of the National Investment Atlas project and the commencement of its analytical phase in February 2024, attended by the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, was another transformative action in the thirteenth administration's foreign policy.

The features of the National Investment Atlas project include systematic and principled leadership, utilization of the country's spatial data in the placement process of investment projects, systematic participation of national and provincial agencies in updating and sharing information layers, and intelligent use of data. This atlas will be a tool to provide a real, clear, and comprehensive picture of Iran's economic investment potential.

### Hezbollah Releases Videos of Large Retaliatory Attacks Against Israeli Military Bases



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah has released a video of striking three Israeli military bases lying in the northern part of the occupied Palestinian territories amid reports that thousands of illegal settlers fled into shelters.

The resistance group issued the footage on Monday, saying the operations had been conducted a day earlier.

Hezbollah identified the targeted bases as Ayelet, Meron, and Nimra, saying the outposts had been hit with more than a hundred Katyusha rockets.

The American news website Axios reported that a US citizen was wounded in the attacks, citing American officials.

The Israeli regime's Channel 12 identified the wounded person as an American, not an Israeli settler with dual US nationality, saying the Hezbollah operation had also injured several others.

Other Israeli outlets said he had received extensive and serious injury. The reason for the American's presence in the closed military barracks remains unknown, Axios added.

The development came amid close intelligence cooperation between the United States and the Israeli regime that has been ramped up amid Tel Aviv's ongoing incursions on several regional fronts.

Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television network, meanwhile, reported that Hezbollah's operations had prompted around 250,000 illegal settlers into shelters.

The regime began carrying out sporadic attacks against Lebanon following the onset of a genocidal war that it has been staging against the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023. The attacks have prompted a firefight with Hezbollah.

The movement has retaliated against the aggression by firing hundreds of rockets into the northern parts of the occupied territories.

Tel Aviv has also been issuing recurrent threats of turning Lebanon into another Gaza.

## Expansion of Ties with Neighbors, Region; President Raisi's Achievements



TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani told Reporters on Monday that the late President Raisi's administration placed a special emphasis on shoring up relations with the neighbors and pursuing multilateralism.

Establishing relations with neighbors in various areas, resuming political relations with some countries in the region that were damaged before, and strengthening relations with other countries in the region, were the first advances he referred to as achievements, he added. Kanaani initially said: "I would like to offer my condolences to all Muslims, Shiites, and lovers of the Prophet's family on the arrival of the month of Muharram. I must mention that we have passed the fortieth day since the martyrdom of the diligent President of Iran, the esteemed Foreign Minister, and their dear companions, and I once again pay tribute to the souls of these martyrs."

He added: "About 50 days after the martyrdom of the President, the great nation of Iran once again wrote another golden page in the history of the revolution. The important and glorious elections of the fourteenth presidential term were successfully held under the guidance of the Supreme Leader, with the committed planning of the government, the responsible participation of the candidates, and, most importantly, the splendid presence of the vigilant people of Iran."

Holding two elections in two consecutive weeks after the President's martyrdom by the government and the magnificent participation of the people indicates the institutionalization of religious democracy in Iran. The government managed to organize a free and transparent election in the shortest possible time, enabling the people to vote and fulfill their responsibility.

The holding of this transparent election, following such an incident, is a brilliant record in the history of the significant and valuable developments of the Islamic Republic, demonstrating both the government's commitment to democracy and the people's vigilant fulfillment of their responsibility.

I congratulate both the government and the nation, and I also congratulate Mr. Pezeshkian for earning the trust of the great Iranian nation, and we wish him success. The diplomatic apparatus, as before, will use all its capacities in the field of politics and foreign relations to assist the President in achieving his goals and the interests of Iran."

Adding to the achievements, Kanaani touched on the Islamic Republic's success in getting full membership in the regional international forums including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS to expand multilateralism.

In response to a question about the impact of the election results in the region, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said: "Holding presidential elections is one of the major successes of a government and nation. This indicates the depth of stability in Iran and the strong bond between the system, the government, and the people. From the perspective of other countries, this shows that they are interacting with a country that possesses sufficient elements of power. This election is another great success for Iran and elevates Iran's role on the international stage, and after this, international organizations and other countries will afford Iran a special status."

In response to a question about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' actions in inviting foreign officials for the President's inauguration, Kanaani said: "We will use all our capacities to make any arrangements and plans in this regard."

In response to a question about the subject of negotiations in the debates and whether

these negotiations will continue, he said: "This issue has a specific mechanism, and Iran has utilized all its diplomatic efforts to this moment. This government will continue within the defined frameworks until the last day, naturally, during the election competition, the candidates also presented their views to the great nation. I will not comment on future approaches."

Diplomatic channels between Iran and the U.S. are open, and the negotiations process is ongoing, and the details will be published at the appropriate time. We will use all diplomatic capacities to achieve the nation's rights."

In response to a question about whether Russia has halted Iran's membership process in BRICS, Kanaani said: "I have neither heard anything about this nor do I confirm it."

Regarding cooperation in the area of Shtetab cards between Iran and Russia and the use of these cards by Iranians in Russia, and the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this area, he said: "This issue has been in progress for a long time, and its infrastructure is being prepared. We can say that we have made significant progress in this area. We hope to see citizens of both countries use this facility."

In response to Kamal Kharrazi's comments about Iran's direct reaction if Hezbollah is attacked, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said: "Any attack on Lebanon will escalate tensions and unrest in the region. The Zionists' adventurous actions can affect the region and the world; experience has shown that Lebanon is strong in defending its security. Iran considers support for Lebanon a principle and will take appropriate action to support Lebanon at the right time."

In response to a question about Dr. Pezeshkian's slogan regarding lifting sanctions, he said: "Every agreement has two sides, and Iran will use all its capacities to achieve the nation's interests. Naturally, the JCPOA was also the result of a diplomatic process; we aimed to stabilize the nation's rights in this path."

In response to a question about collecting documents at embassies for issues faced by voters, Kanaani said: "All Iranians are citizens of this country; Iranians abroad are the nation's assets. The over 20% participation of these citizens compared to the first round of elections showed that these citizens, despite some problems, were more determined than in the first round. The diplomatic apparatus made an honest effort in this election period so that Iranians abroad could use their rights."

Any Iranian citizen can act to demand and recover any lost rights, and our representatives will make every effort."

Regarding the U.S. reaction to holding elections in our country, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said: "The U.S. political stances on the elections are interfering, and we consider this as indicating the depth of the U.S.'s hostile policies towards Iran. The expectation is that the U.S. should bow to the process of democracy in Iran. In connection with other countries, the principle for Iran is engagement with the world. We believe that constructive engagement can ensure the interests of both sides. Iran will continue its engagement approach with world countries within the framework of the system's approach."

Relations with China, as one of the important countries in the region, will naturally continue, Iran's relations are subject to general policies and will be strengthened with a view to common interests. We hope to see further strengthening of relations with friendly countries."

## Iran Army Aviation at Cutting Edge of Technology Despite Sanctions

TEHRAN - A senior commander has praised the capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army Aviation, saying it is now a "strategic unit" and stands at the cutting edge of technology. Commander of the Iranian Army's Ground Force Brigadier General Kiousar Heidari made the remarks on Monday on the sidelines of a ceremony in the capital Tehran commemorating the martyrs of Iran's Army Aviation. "The Army Aviation is today on the edge of technology, and its weapons and special equipment cannot be compared with those [it possessed] during the Sacred Defense" against the former Iraqi regime's war on Iran in the 1980s, he said. "Today, the Army Aviation has turned into a strategic force ... from a tactical unit." Heidari also hailed the unit's offensive capabilities and the measures taken towards the mechanization of its navigation system. The Army Aviation is equipped with strategic missiles, which have a range of 200 kilometers, and all its flying objects can navigate and fly at night, he noted.

Also on Monday, Commander of the Iranian Army's Air Defense Force Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard said that his force has always been developing and making progress despite unfair sanctions. The force, he added, is equipping, optimizing, updating and increasing the efficiency of its air defense systems while upgrading its drones in an attempt to cut reliance on foreign countries. Sabahifard further expressed hope that Iran's Air Defense Force would be able to share its scientific and technical experience with other countries by the lifting of sanctions. Iranian military experts and engineers have in recent years made remarkable breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient. Iranian officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations.

### Majlis Speaker Vows Support for New Administration



TEHRAN (PresTV) - Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, has met with president-elect, Masoud Pezeshkian, to congratulate him on winning the 14th presidential election. The meeting was held at Pezeshkian's office on Sunday, during which Qalibaf emphasized that the Iranian legislature will extend its full support to the new administration. During the meeting, Qalibaf also stressed that effective supervision over the new administration's performance in order to make sure about progress of the country and people's welfare is among basic duties of the Iranian parliament.

Pezeshkian, for his part, hailed people's enthusiastic participation in the 14th presidential election, stressing the need for empathy and true synergism among all state organs with the goal of solving people's problems and facilitating progress of the country.

Ayatollah Khamenei will endorse the mandate of Iran's president-elect Pezeshkian after the Constitutional Council confirmed the result of the July 5 runoff election. Pezeshkian garnered more than 16 million votes out of over 30 million ballots cast in the presidential runoff election, which was held on Friday.

The contest followed an inconclusive first round on June 28 that was held to find a successor to late president, Ebrahim Raisi, who lost his life alongside his foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and several others in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran on May 19. Pezeshkian's new administration will hold office for four years and is scheduled to be inaugurated and sworn in late July. Earlier on Sunday, Chief of Staff of Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri expressed the Armed Forces' readiness to cooperate and interact with Pezeshkian's administration.

"As in the past, we announce the readiness of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate and interact with the 14th administration," the top general said.

### Iran-Pakistan Border Trade Committee Opens in Zahedan



ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - The 11th meeting of the Joint Border Trade Committee of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan opened in the southeastern Iranian city of Zahedan on Monday, where the two sides pursue the increase of bilateral trade by \$10 billion per annum.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassar Tipu, who attends the meeting online, announced that Iranian and Pakistani delegations are scheduled to discuss the mechanism to increase mutual trade.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's consul general in Quetta, Pakistan's consul general in Zahedan, and other senior officials of Sistan and Baluchestan province take part in the meeting. Such joint meetings are held to pave the way for reviewing obstacles, removing barriers, and developing trade and economic relations between the two friendly and neighboring countries. The two sides make the necessary coordination to help improve trade and economic ties, exchange economic delegations, organize joint exhibitions, attract bilateral investment, and establish joint industrial centers and retail markets. Specialized bilateral panels, including commercial, customs, banking, transportation, fisheries and agriculture affairs, will be held, and then, the two sides will sign a joint memorandum of understanding. The head of the Pakistani delegation to the 11th meeting of the Joint Border Trade Committee said that Islamabad strongly supports the development of joint markets and investment, which can increase the level of trust between the two nations. Irfan Javed added that Pakistan also calls for cooperation in the field of transportation because it can affect the livelihood of the people who are living in border regions. The deputy coordinator of economic affairs of Sistan and Baluchestan governor's office said that Iran is keen on expanding trade exchanges with Pakistan.

# IRAN NEWS



## First Cargo Shipment From the Caspian Port Railway Exported

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The first rail-sea export cargo shipment has been dispatched from the Caspian Port to the export markets of the countries bordering the Caspian Sea.

According to IRNA, citing the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines Group, in line with the group's multifaceted activities in transporting export cargo to the Caspian Sea bordering countries, the first export shipment has been transported using the wagons of the group's combined transport company. This was achieved through the planning and guidance of the Caspian Sea Shipping Company from the Caspian Port to the destination countries.

With the transportation of this export cement shipment, the Caspian Port railway has been fully operational, marking the first time the rail line has reached the sea in this port.

It has been established that following the inauguration of the Rasht-Caspian Port railway, 400,000 tons of the country's produced cement will be exported annually via this route to these countries.

## Iran's Exports to Iraq Witness 27% Rise in Q1



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Commercial Advisory Office in Iraq stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran's exports to Iraq in the first three months of Iranian calendar year 1403 (March 2024 - May 2024) increased by about 27% compared to the same period in 1402 (March 2023 - May 2023), reaching approximately 3 billion dollars.

Farzad Piltan, Advisor to the President of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization and head of Iran's Commercial Advisory Office in Iraq, mentioned in an interview in Baghdad on Sunday that Iran's exports to Iraq in the first three months of 1403 and the final months of the 13th government increased by 27% compared to 1402. He added that the most important export items to Iraq included natural gas, iron and steel rods, fresh apples, and iron and steel billets. The special trade representative of Iran in Iraq clarified that other important export goods to Iraq included tiles and ceramics, watermelons, evaporative coolers, tomatoes, household items, gas turbines, polyethylene compounds, other hot-rolled rods, plastic tableware and kitchen utensils except melamine dishes, transformers, cheese, clinker, eggs, melons, milk powder, non-circular tires, and ice cream. In response to the question regarding the value of these exports to Iraq, Piltan noted that according to the statistics published by the Customs Administration of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran's exports to Iraq grew by more than 27%, from 2,346 billion dollars in the same period in 1402 to 3 billion dollars, marking an increase of approximately 650 million dollars. He further explained the share of each export product from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Iraq, noting that the shares were as follows: natural gas (\$1,210 billion), iron and steel rods (\$176 million), tiles and ceramics (\$55 million), fresh apples (\$49 million), iron and steel billets (\$47 million), watermelons (\$45 million), evaporative coolers (\$45 million), tomatoes (\$36 million), household items (\$33 million), gas turbines (\$26 million), polyethylene compounds (\$25 million), other hot-rolled rods (\$25 million), plastic tableware and kitchen utensils except melamine dishes (\$24 million), transformers (\$20 million), cheese (\$18 million), clinker (\$18 million), eggs (\$17 million), melons (\$17 million), milk powder (\$17 million), non-circular tires (\$17 million), and ice cream and other frozen syrups (\$16 million).

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## Iran to Be Connected to Pakistan With a New Rail Line

TEHRAN - Mi'ad Salehi in an interview about Pakistan's readiness to join the North-South Corridor and the rail capacities of the two countries, stated: "The railway sector is striving to increase rail exchanges with neighboring countries. To achieve this goal, we have signed protocols with neighboring countries to allow the entry of wagons into each other's territories if software issues were an obstacle. If tariff harmonization was required or discounts needed to be applied, or preferential tariffs to be implemented, efforts were made to address these issues with all neighboring countries."

He continued: "Additionally, if there was a missing link for rail connection between countries, we moved towards constructing a rail route."

The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways said: "Specifically regarding Pakistan, from Zahedan to Mirjaveh (the Iran-Pakistan border), there is a 96-kilometer distance, but rail-wise, we both have and don't have a connection to Pakistan. We have a connection through a very old broad-gauge line built 110 years ago, which is very worn out. However, we do not have a connection with our standard rail line that meets European standards."

Salehi emphasized: "To connect to Pakistan by rail, we need to build a normal and standard rail line so that our locomotives and freight wagons can travel to the zero border point."

The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development stated

that the current rail line between Iran and Pakistan is broad-gauge and added: "Currently, this line is used to a limited extent, but the cargo must be transferred by Pakistani locomotives to Zahedan, which complicates the process."

He said: "The current rail line from Zahedan to Mirjaveh is 96 kilometers long and is non-standard, and cargo must be transhipped in this route either by truck or by shifting from rail to road and vice versa. Currently, cargo transfer via this route is not cost-effective, but with the construction of the new line, the transfer will be feasible."

Referring to the financing for the construction of the new Zahedan-Mirjaveh rail line, the CEO of the Railways continued: "A \$10 billion oil barter has been allocated for the modernization of the rail fleet and the construction of rail lines, with \$5 billion of this oil barter dedicated to five rail lines: Shalamcheh-Basra, the second line of Bafq-Torbat Heydariyeh-Sangan, Zahedan-Mirjaveh, the Shirgah-Mianeh variant of the Veresk Bridge, and fleet modernization."

Salehi stressed: "This route has the capacity to transit and transport 8 million tons of cargo annually."

He pointed out the political relations between the two countries and their impact on the construction of the new rail line and trade exchanges, stating: "Currently, despite the current conditions, the volume of cargo exports is good, and the aim is to transfer this cargo to Pakistan via rail."

## 70% Growth in Road Transit in Q1



TEHRAN - The head of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization announced that 4.5 million tons of goods have been transited in the country from the beginning of this year to the end of June, showing a 70% increase compared to the first quarter of last year.

Dariush Amani stated at a press conference: Last year, 147 million tons of goods were transported via road transit in the country, which showed a significant increase compared to previous years, mainly due to agreements with neighboring countries.

The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development added: Last year, 515 million tons of goods were transported domestically, marking a 10% growth compared to 2022.

He noted: In the first quarter of this year, there was a 4.5% increase in goods transportation, with 145 million tons of cargo moved.

Amani mentioned the shortage of bus fleets in the country, which was severely impacted after the COVID-19 pandemic, saying: Despite these challenges, last year 148 million passenger transfers were made, reflecting an 18% increase compared to 2022.

He added: Regarding the transportation of Arbaeen pilgrims, despite the need for seven bus fleets, last year was one of the best years for the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

Amani stated: In the past three years, 33,000 new freight fleets have been brought into the country, and in addition, the import of 2,000 bus fleets is being pursued.

He stated that maintaining 230,000 kilometers of main and arterial roads, addressing high-accident areas, road marking, maintaining rural roads, installing Jersey barriers, etc., require 200 trillion Rials in funding.

He said: In the past three years, 7,435 kilometers of rural roads have been constructed in the country, with 3,130 kilometers of it completed last year.

Amani continued: Regarding the resurfacing of main and arterial roads, three highways—Qom-Kashan, Kashan-Isfahan, and Zanjan-Tabriz—were handed over to the Road Maintenance Organization, with 20 trillion Rials allocated for the Qom-Kashan-Isfahan highway and 15 trillion Rials for the Zanjan-Tabriz highway.

He added: During the three years of the thirteenth government, a total of 24,000 kilometers of road resurfacing was carried out, with 12,000 kilometers completed last year.

## Mining Value Chain One of Essential Axes Iran-Afghanistan Trade

TEHRAN - The President of the Kerman Chamber, referring to Afghanistan's mines and Iran's capabilities in the mining sector, stated that the mining value chain is one of the essential axes of Iran-Afghanistan trade, especially as we will need to secure some mineral materials in the future.

The President of the Kerman Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture said: The mining value chain can form a wide range of activities in the Afghanistan market. The presence of advanced technologies in exploration, extraction, and processing in our country, as well as the rich and untouched mines like copper, titanium, iron, zirconium, and cobalt in both Afghanistan and Iran, can be the source of significant value chains. Seyyed Mahdi Tabibzadeh, in a meeting on practical solutions and necessary points for entering the Afghan market, added: Kerman will severely need mineral materials, especially copper, chromite, and iron ore, in the future. Given the capacities created in the province, the current mines will not meet our needs in the future. Therefore, if economic activists can facilitate mining activities between the two countries, they will have a guaranteed future and successful trade.

He continued: Another area for increasing trade interactions with Afghanistan is the agricultural value chain. Due to water limitations, high water transfer costs, and declining water quality in some areas, overseas farming can be a suitable suggestion for working in Afghanistan. Tabibzadeh stated: On the other hand, by producing agricultural products in that country, Afghanistan can be considered a re-export base and an import base for our country.

He described the Afghan market as highly strategic and stated: Limiting ourselves to Afghanistan's consumer market creates intense competition in this country's market. Therefore, we must use our capacities for trade exchanges with this country.

He added: Energy production in Afghanistan, due to the high cost of electricity in this country, technical and engineering services, contracting and consulting, knowledge-based companies, medical tourism, and the current capacities of universities are among the areas that should be utilized for establishing trade relations with Afghanistan.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



Tabibzadeh continued: Over the years, the Kerman Chamber has always strived to establish connections between Kerman and Afghan traders, signing memorandums of understanding with the chambers of commerce of various Afghan states; however, they have not yet been implemented.

The President of the Kerman Chamber

mentioned that one of Afghanistan's primary needs is iron and steel, stating: The volume of iron and steel exports from our country to Afghanistan is 153 million dollars, of which Kerman's share is only 283 thousand dollars. This raises the question of why Kerman has not been able to secure a significant share in the Afghan market despite having rich mines. In this meeting, the head of the executive board of the Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, Kerman Branch, said: In recent years, due to political developments in Afghanistan, the decline in people's purchasing power, the outflow of currency, and the reduction of aid from other countries to Afghanistan, trade exchanges between the two countries have decreased, especially in 2021 and 2022.

Seyyed Mohammad Reza Torabi Mousavi added: Iran's competitors in the Afghan market include Pakistan, the United States, India, Kazakhstan, and China. The most advantageous Iranian goods exported to the Afghan market include detergents, food products, building and sanitary materials, pharmaceuticals, plastics, liquid and gas fuel, carpets, and machine-made carpets.

The Iranian Commercial Attaché in Afghanistan said: Afghanistan is a landlocked country with access to open waters only through Pakistan's Karachi port and Iran's Chabahar port. Over 90% of its needs are met through imports, especially from Iran.

Hossein Roustai pointed out that Iran has always been Afghanistan's top trading partner, stating: The Afghan government has minimal intervention in this country's trade, and the private sector advances the work through its efforts.

He referred to the 14% growth in the export of Iranian products to Afghanistan in 2023, adding: Iran's share of Afghanistan's imports is 27%, while we have also recorded a 40% import share.

## Petrochemicals Production Capacity Surpasses 95 mt



TEHRAN (Shana) - Balanced development and completing the value chain are two main targets of the petrochemical industry which are expected to be attained over the next seven years.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 6th edition of the Middle East Pharnex Exhibition, the NPC managing director Morteza Shahmirzaei said that balanced development of the industry through the completion of the value chain was one of the strategies of Iran's petrochemical industry.

He further noted that the petrochemical sector should move toward completing the value chain and halting selling unfinished and semi-finished products in line with the Petroleum Ministry policies, adding a very comprehensive document has been provided and notified to this end. Referring to six decades of Iran's petrochemical sector activities, the NPC head said: "Iran's petrochemical sector's production capacity has surpassed 95 million tons per year with a basket of diversified products." He continued: The petrochemical sector is leading the exports of non-oil products adding that the sector production capacity will reach 100 million tons annually when 15 petrochemical projects are put into operation before the end of the current Iranian calendar year on March 20, 2025. Elsewhere in his remarks, he said that Iran had become one of the pillars of producing basic materials and petrochemicals, providing more than 70 to 80 percent of the pharmaceutical industry's needs for raw materials.

We will take a great step towards drug self-sufficiency if we can produce intermediate goods and create a connection between the production of petrochemicals and basic materials of drugs on the one hand and drugs finished products on the other hand, Shahmirzaei said.

He invited the health sector companies to invest in the petrochemical sector, which can produce further value-added.

## Iran-China's Qinghai Province Hold Joint Media Meeting



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian and Chinese media from Qinghai province have held a joint meeting in Xining.

Addressing the event, Ying Xiuli, the Deputy Director of the Foreign Affairs Office of Qinghai province, said that Media is an important way to promote friendly cooperation.

She added that Iran and China are in Asia and efforts have recently been made to expand relations based on the new concept of comprehensive strategic partnership.

The two countries have decided to strengthen the comprehensive strategic partnership, she said, adding that Qinghai's governor visited Iran, especially Ardebil province, where a bilateral agreement was also signed.

She noted that it created a new platform for deepening the practical relations between the two countries. Based on last year's agreement between the Qinghai Governorate and Ardebil province, the two sides decided to cooperate on Tibetan carpets, potatoes, and corn oil and planting crops.

Environmental protection and clean energy are among the capacities of this province, she said.

We hope to experience pleasing results in these cases and the rapid development of the green industry, Ying added.

Meanwhile, an expert from the Center for Public and Media Diplomacy of Iran said the relations between Iran and China have a long history and have always been peaceful.

The civilizational complexities of Iran and China have never been comprehensible to the West, and Westerners are unable to understand the cultural and social relations of the two countries, he added.

### South Korea Samsung Workers Start Strike

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Workers at South Korean tech giant Samsung began a three day general strike Monday, the head of a union representing tens of thousands of employees told AFP, after talks with management broke down. "The strike has started from today," Son Woo-mok, head of the National Samsung Electronics Union, told AFP, adding that a major rally was scheduled later in the day. The union, which has around 28,000 members, or more than a fifth of the company's total workforce, announced the three day general strike last week, saying it was a last resort after talks broke down. The move follows a one-day walkout in June, the first such collective action at the company, which went decades without unionisation. Management at the firm, the world's biggest producer of memory chips, has been locked in negotiations with the union over wages and benefits since January but the two sides have failed to narrow their differences. "We are now at critical crossroads," the union said in an appeal sent out to members last week, urging them to support the "critical" strike. "This strike is the last card we can use," the union said, saying that workers at the company needed to "act as one".



### North Korea's Accuses S. Korean Leader of Using Tensions as Political Distraction



SEOUL (Dispatches) - Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, accused South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol of generating tensions on the Korean peninsula to divert attention from problems at home, state media said on Monday.

Tensions between the two Koreas are running high after Pyongyang signed a mutual defence pact with Russia and sent trash-filled balloons over to South Korea in response to South Korean activists' balloon launches with anti-North Korea leaflets.

"Yoon and his group, plunged into the worst ruling crisis, are attempting an 'emergency escape' through the platform of ever-escalating tensions," Kim Yo Jong said, according to KCNA.

She cited an online petition calling for Yoon to be impeached, with more than 1 million signatures.

Seoul's unification ministry handling inter-Korean affairs expressed regret over Kim's remarks condemning Yoon.

"The North Korean regime which...turns a blind eye to people's livelihoods and oppresses basic human rights should reflect on itself," Koo Byoung-sam, a spokesperson for the ministry, told a briefing.

Kim Yo Jong also called South's recent firing drills near the border an "inexcusable and explicit provocation".

The South Korean military resumed live-fire artillery drills near the western maritime border in late June, the first time since 2018.



PARIS (Dispatches) - France faced potential political deadlock after elections on Sunday threw up a hung parliament, with a leftist alliance unexpectedly taking the top spot but no group winning a majority.

Voters delivered a major setback for Marine Le Pen's nationalist, eurosceptic National Rally (RN), which opinion polls had predicted would win the second-round ballot but ended up in the third spot, according to pollsters' projections.

The results were also a blow for centrist President Emmanuel Macron, who called the snap election to clarify the political landscape after his ticket took a battering at the hands of the RN in European Parliament elections last month.

He ended up with a hugely fragmented parliament, in what is set to weaken France's role in the European Union and elsewhere abroad and make it hard for anyone to push through a domestic agenda.

The election will leave parliament divided in three big groups - the left, centrists, and the far right - with hugely different platforms and no tradition at all of working together.

What comes next is uncertain. The leftist New Popular Front (NFP) alliance, which wants to cap prices of essential goods like fuel and food, raise the minimum wage to a net 1,600 euros per month, hike wages for public sector workers and impose a wealth tax, immediately said it wanted to govern.

"The will of the people must be strictly respected ... the president must invite the New Popular Front to govern," said hard-left leader Jean-Luc Melenchon.

The RN has worked under Le Pen to shed a historic reputation for racism and antisemitism but many in French society still view its France-first stance and surging popularity with alarm.

There were hugs, screams of joy and tears of relief at the left's gathering in Paris when the voting projections were announced.

Republique square in central Paris filled with crowds and a party atmosphere, with leftwing supporters playing drums, lighting flares, and chanting "We've won! We've won!"

"I'm relieved. As a French-Moroccan, a doctor, an ecologist activist, what the far right was proposing to do as a government was craziness," said 34-year-old Hafsa Hachad.

The awkward leftist alliance, which the hard left, Greens and Socialists hastily put together before the vote, was far from having an absolute majority of 289 seats in the 577-seat assembly.

Official results were trickling in, with the results from most, if not all, constituencies likely in the early hours of Monday. Polling agencies - which are generally accurate - forecast the left would get 184-198 seats, Macron's centrist alliance 160-169 and the RN and its allies 135-143.

The euro fell on Sunday after the vote projections were announced. "We should get a brief respite in the market ... because we're not seeing an extremist RN majority take place, but it's likely to lead to political gridlock at least until the autumn of 2025," said Aneeka Gupta, macroeconomic research director at WisdomTree.

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said he would hand in his resignation on Monday but would stay on in a care-taking capacity as long as needed.

A key question is whether the leftist alliance will stay united and agree on what course to take.

Melenchon, leader of the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI), ruled out a broad coalition of parties of different stripes.

Raphael Glucksman, from the Socialist Party, urged his alliance partners to act like "grown-ups."

"We're ahead, but we're in a divided parliament," he said. "We're going to have to talk, to discuss, to engage in dialogue."

## Hamas Waiting for Israeli Response on Gaza Ceasefire Proposal

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Hamas is waiting for a response from Israel on its ceasefire proposal, two officials from the militant Islamist group said, five days after it accepted a key part of a US plan aimed at ending the nine-month-old war in Gaza.

"We have left our response with the mediators and are waiting to hear the occupation's response," one of the two Hamas officials told Reuters, asking not to be named.

The three-phase plan for the Palestinian enclave was put forward at the end of May by US President Joe Biden and is being mediated by Qatar and Egypt. It aims to end the war and free around 120 Israeli hostages being held by Hamas.

Another Palestinian official, with knowledge of the ceasefire deliberations, said Israel was in talks with the Qataris.

"They have discussed with them Hamas' response and they promised to give them Israel's response within days," the official, who asked not to be named, told Reuters on Sunday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that negotiations would continue this week but has not given any detailed timeline.

Hamas, which controls Gaza, has dropped a key demand that Israel first commit to a permanent ceasefire before it would sign an agreement. Instead, it said it would allow negotiations to achieve that throughout the six-week first phase, a Hamas source told Reuters on Saturday on condition of anonymity because the talks are private.

A Palestinian official close to the peace efforts has said the proposal could lead to a framework agreement if embraced by Israel and would end the war.

US Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns will travel to Qatar this week for



negotiations, a source familiar with the matter said.

The conflict was triggered nine months ago on October 7 when Hamas-led fighters attacked southern Israel from Gaza, killing 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostages in the worst assault in Israel's history, according to official Israeli figures.

More than 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's military onslaught, according to Gaza health officials, and the coastal enclave has largely been reduced to rubble.

The UN agency for Palestinians, UNRWA, called the situation increasingly tragic, saying in a post on X, "families continue to face forced displacement, massive destruction and constant fear. Essential supplies are lacking, the heat is unbearable, diseases are spreading".

Protesters took to the streets across Israel on Sunday to pressure the government to reach an accord to bring back hostages still being held in Gaza.

They blocked rush hour traffic at major intersections across the country, picketed politicians houses and briefly set fire to tires on the main Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway before police cleared the way.

Meanwhile, fighting continued to rage across Gaza, and north Israel came under rocket attack from Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Air raid sirens sent residents of 24 Israeli towns running for shelter. One person was seriously wounded, police said. Hezbollah said it had fired rockets at an army base.



### Philippines, Japan on Verge of Key Defense Pact

MANILA (Dispatches) - The Philippines and Japan are set to sign today a key defense pact that will allow the deployment of troops on each other's territory.

Japanese Defence Minister Minoru Kihara and Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa will hold high-level talks with their Philippine counterparts Gilberto Teodoro and Enrique Manalo in Manila. The Philippines and Japan—longtime allies of the United States—have been deepening defence ties in the face of an increasingly assertive China. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos will witness the signing of the reciprocal access agreement (RAA), which the countries began negotiating in November, the Philippine Presidential Communications Office said.

The accord would provide the legal framework for Japan and the Philippines to send defence personnel to each other's territory for training and other operations.

Negotiations were "close to conclusion", Tokyo's ambassador to Manila, Kazuya Endo, said in a speech on Thursday, as he flagged "significant developments" in Japan's defence equipment supplies to the Philippines.

The talks follow escalating confrontations at sea between Chinese and Philippine ships as Beijing steps up efforts to push its claims to nearly all of the South China Sea.

## Biden Makes Campaign Sweep as Democratic Pressure Mounts



HARRISBURG (Dispatches) - Embattled U.S. President Joe Biden hit the campaign trail Sunday seeking to reassure voters he was up for a grueling reelection fight, even as more top Democrats reportedly joined the chorus urging him to quit the race.

The 81-year-old remained defiant as he hop-scotched across Pennsylvania—first to the relative safe ground of a predominantly Black church and a campaign field office, and then to a rally with union workers.

As Biden arrived in the state capital Harrisburg, reporters shouted questions including whether the Democratic Party was behind him, to which the president grinned and loudly responded: "Yes."

But an uprising has swelled among some fellow Democrats, analysts and voters concerned he lacks the mental acuity and physical fitness to serve a second term—worries brought to the fore by a disastrous debate performance last month against Republican challenger Donald Trump.

So far, five Democratic lawmakers have publicly called on Biden to drop out. The drip-drip of dissent increased Sunday as four senior congressmen, including

ranking House Judiciary Committee Democrat Jerrold Nadler and ranking Armed Services Committee Democrat Adam Smith, said on a call with senior party lawmakers that it was time for Biden to exit the race, according to The New York Times and Politico, which cited people familiar with the call.

The president, however, has unequivocally declared he is fit to serve, saying that he is the only one who can defeat Trump, and that he is staying in the race.

Democratic lawmakers will return to Capitol Hill Monday under pressure to either fall in line behind Biden or urge him to step aside.

Reported attempts by Senator Mark Warner to assemble his colleagues to address the crisis were called off, US media reported Sunday, with senators expected at their regular caucus meeting on Tuesday instead.

As for the president, his next major test will come on Thursday, when he is scheduled to hold a press conference during the NATO leaders' summit in Washington.

Two high-profile congressional Democrats on Sunday stopped short of calling for Biden to quit, but warned he still needed to win over worried voters.



## Tearful Hamilton Ends Long Wait With Record British Win

SILVERSTONE (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton shed pent-up tears of joy after ending a 945-day wait for a win with a record ninth British Grand Prix victory in front of his home fans on a fairytale Sunday at Silverstone. Mercedes' seven-times Formula One world champion was overcome by the emotion as he took the chequered flag in triumph for the first time since Saudi Arabia on Dec. 5, 2021 - 56 races ago. Red Bull's triple world champion Max Verstappen finished 1.465 seconds behind, extending his overall lead to 84 points, and McLaren's Lando Norris was third after being passed four laps from the end. Mercedes' pole-sitter George Russell, winner of the previous race in Austria, retired with a suspected water system issue at the end of lap 33. "Get in there Lewis, you are the man. You are the man. Mate, I have been waiting for this," yelled Hamilton's race engineer Peter Bonnington, who joined the driver on the podium where he was drenched in champagne, over the team radio. "Thank you so much guys," sobbed Hamilton in reply, his voice faltering as he choked back the flow of tears inside the helmet while the grandstands --- and a crowd of 164,000 -- erupted on a cold afternoon punctuated by showers. "It means a lot. Big thank you to all the fans here." The record-extending 104th win of Hamilton's career set new benchmarks - not least the first F1 driver to win a race in 16 different seasons and first to win nine times at the same circuit. Hamilton had previously shared the latter record with Ferrari great Michael Schumacher. He is also the first driver to win a race after reaching the

rare milestone of 300 starts. Sunday's was the 344th race of Hamilton's F1 career that started with McLaren in 2007. "I'm still crying," the Briton told 2009 champion and compatriot Jenson Button, doing the pre-podium interviews, with the flag draped around his shoulders after stepping out of the car and hugging his father in a tight embrace. "This is my last race here with this team so I wanted to win this so much for them because I love them and I appreciate them so much and all the hard work they've been putting in over the years," added the Ferrari-bound driver. McLaren's Oscar Piastri finished fourth with Ferrari's Carlos Sainz fifth. Nico Hulkenberg was sixth for Haas with the Aston Martins of Lance Stroll and Fernando Alonso eighth. Alex Albon took two points for Williams and Yuki Tsunoda was 10th for the Red Bull-owned RB team. Red Bull are now on 373 points to Ferrari's 302 and McLaren's 295, with Mercedes on 221. The race started with Russell leading a Mercedes one-two while Verstappen got ahead of Norris, squeezed into the first corner, for third place from fourth on the grid. Norris took the place back at Stowe on lap 15 while Piastri also got ahead of the Red Bull two laps later. Hamilton took the lead on lap 18 of 52, using the drag reduction (DRS) advantage, but both then slid off track and Norris hit the front on lap 20 while Piastri followed him through to slot into second. The rain then came just before the halfway distance, with Verstappen's Mexican off-form teammate Sergio Perez lapped after starting from the pitlane, and Verstappen pitted for intermediates on lap 27.

## Alcaraz, Sinner Stay on course for Wimbledon Meeting

LONDON (Dispatches) - Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz and world number one Jannik Sinner stayed on track for a blockbuster Wimbledon showdown by reaching the quarter-finals, while women's second seed Coco Gauff was sent tumbling out.

French Open champion Alcaraz, who is looking to defend his Wimbledon trophy and complete what is dubbed the "Channel Slam" about the English Channel that separates Britain and France, battled past Metz-born Ugo Humbert 6-3 6-4 1-6 7-5. "I think I'm getting better and better every match that I'm playing," said Alcaraz, who was happy to avoid another five-set tussle after being taken the distance by Frances Tiafoe in the previous round. "I'm feeling comfortable on the court and hitting good points, good shots." American 12th seed Tommy Paul set up a last-eight meeting with the 21-year-old Spaniard after the Queen's Club champion downed Roberto Bautista Agut 6-2 7-6(3) 6-2. Italian Sinner, who could face Alcaraz in the semi-finals in a rematch of their Roland Garros meeting, was equally impressive in his 6-2 6-4 7-6(9) win



over 14th seed Ben Shelton. "I'm happy how I handled the situation," said Sinner, who neutralised the feisty American's big serves to prevail. "It was obviously very, very tough to play against him, one of the best servers we have on tour, very aggressive player." "I'm happy how I returned today. Yeah, I think that's for sure one of the keys today." The 22-year-old will next meet fifth seed Daniil Medvedev, who he defeated in January to win his maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open. Russian Medvedev progressed when Bulgarian 10th seed Grigor Dimitrov retired from their clash while trailing 5-3. Sinner's fellow Italian Jasmine Paolini also advanced thanks to an injury to her opponent, as the teary Madison Keys withdrew at 5-5 in the deciding set of their encounter with a suspected groin problem.

"I hope she recovers soon. We played a really good match. Of course, it's not the easiest to end like this," Paolini said. "But I have to say that a part of me is happy to be here in the quarter-final in Wimbledon."

## Giannis Ends Greek Olympic Wait

PIRAEUS (Dispatches) - Giannis Antetokounmpo steered Greece to an Olympic berth on Sunday as he overcame a slow start to score 23 points in an 80-69 qualifying tournament victory over Croatia in Piraeus. The game was one of four finals on Sunday to determine the last qualifiers for the Paris men's basketball tournament. In Riga, Brazil beat hosts Latvia 94-69. In Valencia, Spain edged the Bahamas 86-78. In the Olympic tournament in Lille, Greece and Spain will play in Group A with Australia and Canada. Brazil will line up in Group B with France, Germany and Japan. The final place in the Olympics went to qualifier hosts Puerto Rico, who upset Lithuania 79-68 in San Juan. Puerto Rico advanced into Olympic Group C with the United States, South Sudan and Serbia. Before the qualifying tournament started, Antetokounmpo had not played competitively since injuring a calf on April 9 playing for the Milwaukee Bucks. He returned for the tournament opener in Piraeus on July 2 and, even though he was rested for Greece's second game, ended up collecting the tournament most valuable player award. On Sunday, Croatia, with 2.16-metre (7-foot-1) Los Angeles Clippers centre Ivica Zubac at the heart of their defence, packed the paint to deny Antetokounmpo. Croatia led by as many as four points in the first quarter. As Antetokounmpo began to penetrate and Greece went 12-of-32 on three-point attempts, the hosts took control. Antetokounmpo finished as the top scorer and also grabbed eight



rebounds to ensure his first Olympic appearance. "It's incredible. I don't think the scenario could have been better. Being in your house, with people that support you. It's an

incredible feeling," Antetokounmpo said. "Since I was a kid I always wanted to play the Olympic Games." "I don't want to get ahead and be talking about medals," he said at the press conference. "The last time we went to the Olympic Games was 2008. One step at a time." Zubac had 19 points and 13 rebounds for Croatia. In Riga, Brazil hit eight out of eight three-point attempts as they took a 34-11 lead at the end of the first quarter and then cruised to victory. Forwards Leo Meindl and Bruno Caboclo each scored 21 points. Caboclo, who plays for Red Star in Serbia, was voted tournament MVP. "I'm so excited, I'm so happy. These are the best plans I could imagine," he said looking ahead to the Games. In Valencia, Spain took the lead for the first time against Bahamas midway through the second quarter and nursed their advantage the rest of the way. Guard Lorenzo Brown top scored for Spain with 19. He was matched by NBA guard Buddy Hield for Bahamas. Rudy Fernandez scored nine points for Spain to book a record sixth trip to the Olympics at the age of 39. He is tied with six other men and four women on five Olympic basketball tournaments. At Puerto Rico, New Orleans Pelicans guard Jose Alvarado scored 23 points and grabbed six rebounds while guard Tremont Waters, who played 45 NBA games from 2019-2022, added 18 points to spark the hosts to victory. Rokas Jokubaitis led Lithuania with 16 points while Sacramento Kings star centre Domantas Sabonis had 10 points, nine rebounds and four assists.

## Sharma Smashes India to Comfortable Win Over Zimbabwe



HARARE (Reuters) - Abhishek Sharma thrashed his way to a quick-fire century to set the foundation for a comfortable 100-run victory for India over Zimbabwe in the second of their Twenty20 internationals at the Harare Sports Club.

Abhishek, in his second T20 international, lashed 15 boundaries as he scored 100 runs in 47 balls after the World Cup winners won the toss and elected to bat, scoring 234-2 in their 20 overs.

Zimbabwe, who pulled off a surprise 13-run win over India in Saturday's opening clash of the five-match series, were bowled out for 134 in 18.4 overs in reply as they never came close to reaching the daunting target.

After completing his half-century in 33 balls, Abhishek took just 13 more deliveries to reach triple figures. The 23-year-old hit 26 runs off the 11th over, bowled by Dion Myers, and brought up his century with three successive sixes in a display of devastating batting, becoming the first batter to score a century for India in only his second T20 international innings.

Ruturaj Gaikwad was 77 not out and Rinku Singh scored 48 in other solid contributions.

Zimbabwe were never in the chase after losing their first wicket after only three balls. Wesley Madhevere top scored for them with 43.

## Uruguay Knock Brazil Out on Penalties



PARADISE (Dispatches) - Uruguay edged Brazil 4-2 in a penalty shootout after going down to 10 men in a bruising 0-0 draw at the Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas to march into the semi-finals of the Copa America where they will face Colombia.

With Vinicius Jr suspended for Brazil and watching on from the stands, Davivel Jr's side struggled to create opportunities despite having a man-advantage late in the second half when Uruguay's Nahitan Nandez was sent off.

In the ensuing shootout, Sergio Rochet saved Brazil's first penalty from Eder Militao while his teammate Douglas Luiz hit the post to give Uruguay the upper hand.

Although keeper Alisson Becker denied Jose Maria Gimenez and Gabriel Martinelli scored to keep Brazil alive, Manuel Ugarte buried the decisive spot kick as Uruguay continue their quest for a record 16th Copa crown.

"It was a very tense match, against a very tough opponent, suffering in the last minutes a man down. But we showed character despite our youth," Rochet said. "To finish with penalties and winning, I was able to save one... The truth is that it is a tremendous happiness that this group deserves, the country deserves it. We are very excited, so we are going for more." In a bruising encounter with 41 fouls from both teams, players from both sides were involved in physical battles across the pitch. Brazil's 17-year-old forward Endrick was on the receiving end of brutal challenges as a high-pressing Uruguay refused to give him space to breathe. On one occasion, Raphinha acted out when Endrick was pushed to the ground by Ronald Araujo as the Brazil skipper retaliated in anger by shoving back before the referee stepped in and had a stern word with both players, keeping his cards in his pocket.

But Araujo's night ended early when he was taken off with an injury after the half-hour mark and the match suddenly burst into life moments later when Darwin Nunez missed a close range header that sailed over the net.

Within seconds, Raphinha saw his shot on a counter-attack thwarted by keeper Rochet, Brazil's best chance of the half.

With Uruguay unable to find a way through, coach Marcelo Bielsa made three substitutions by the 67th minute but his plans were thrown into disarray when Nandez saw red for a painful tackle on Rodrygo.