

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy's Forces Captured a Togo-Flagged Oil Tanker With Nine Indian Crews on Board for Smuggling Over 700,000 Liters of Petroleum in the Persian Gulf

IRAN NEWS

The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations in New York Has Declared That Tehran Has No Intention or Activity to Influence the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election

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DOMESTIC

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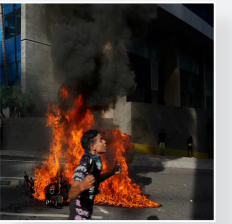
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INTERNATIONAL

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Heavy Consequences Await Israel If It Attacks Lebanon



TEHRAN - Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian warns the Israeli regime will suffer "heavy" consequences if it makes the big mistake of attacking Lebanon. The new Iranian president issued the warning in a Monday phone conversation with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron. Pezeshkian expressed his grave concern over the escalation of tensions in Lebanon's southern border with the occupied Israeli territories. Tensions have been running high between Israel and the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah following an alleged rocket attack that killed 12 people and injured 40 others in the town of the Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on Saturday. While Israel blamed Hezbollah for the attack, the Islamic Resistance categorically denied all false allegations in this regard. Since the incident, there have been continued exchanges of fire across the border, but they have seemed to fall within the bounds of the routine tit-for-tat of the past ten months. Earlier on Monday, the Israeli regime carried out a fresh bout of strikes against Lebanon under the pretext of hitting back against Hezbollah. Fears linger in the region that Israel might use the Saturday strike as a pretext to launch a full-scale offensive on Lebanon. Meanwhile, Israel's so-called security cabinet granted prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his minister of military affairs, Yoav Gallant, the authority to determine the nature and timing of a military response following the rocket attack on Golan Heights. The authorization was confirmed in a statement from the prime minister's office after a meeting held on Sunday night, where cabinet members discussed the escalating tensions along the border. Elsewhere in his remarks, Pezeshkian expressed Iran's readiness to improve relations with France based on the principles of honesty and confidence-building. Macron, for his part, expressed hope that Iran will promote its relations with France and other European countries during Pezeshkian's tenure.

Tehran Stresses Effective Fight Against Use of IT for Criminal Aims



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Iranian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Amir Saeed Irvani announced that the Islamic Republic is committed to cooperation to reach a consensus and present a draft convention with strong provisions that can include an effective fight against the use of information and communication technology for criminal purposes. Addressing the Reconvened Concluding session of Ad Hoc Committee on Elaboration of a Convention on Countering the Use of ICT for Criminal Purposes, Irvani said: "At the outset, we would like to express our appreciation for all your efforts during the previous sessions of the Ad hoc Committee. We also thank the Secretariat for its dedication and tireless work in preparation of this meeting. The important mandate conferred upon the Ad hoc Committee as per resolution 74/247 is "to elaborate a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes", this should be the central focus of the present meeting; addressing issues that are outside the scope and purpose of this Convention would deviate us from our common main goal which is to provide the international community with a sound and robust international legal framework to counter crimes committed via information and communications technologies." He added: "On a general note, we are concerned to observe that after extensive negotiations and strong opposition to certain provisions due to their inherent flaws within the draft text, such provisions have been reinserted into the text again. Equally, we are concerned that constructive proposals presented by my delegations, together with other like-minded delegations on certain provisions, have been ignored and deleted in the current text." He noted: Misuse of technological advancements and materials depicting child sexual exploitation using technologies such as artificial intelligence tends to normalize child sexual exploitation and increases the possibility of perpetration of such crimes, adding that limiting the scope of the Article to real persons or only visual material is not the appropriate response; we should not signal to our children that there is an exception in fighting this heinous crime.

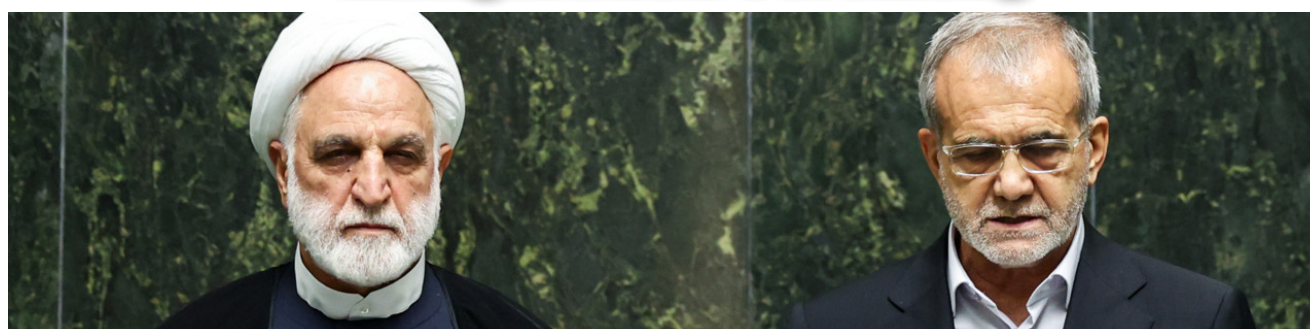


Supreme Leader Receives Officials of Different States

TEHRAN - The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei received the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon and his accompanying delegation on Tuesday morning. Earlier on Tuesday, the Tajik president met and held talks with the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf. Ayatollah Khamenei also met and held talks with the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Tuesday. Pashinyan also met with Pezeshkian during his visit to Tehran. The Leader of the Islamic Revolution also met and held talks with the leader of the Palestinian Resistance groups. The Secretary-General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement Ziad al-Nakhalah and the Head of the Political Bureau of Hamas Ismail Haniyeh held a meeting with Ayatollah Khamenei later on Tuesday. Dozens of foreign officials are visiting Iran to participate in the swearing-in ceremony of the newly-elected Iranian president Masoud Pezeshkian. In meeting with Hanich, Ayatollah Khamenei said the Palestinian nation and the people of the Gaza Strip are carrying "the highest flag of Islam" in the world today. "Today, the highest flag of Islam is in the hands of the Palestinian nation and the people of Gaza, and thanks to the resistance, the ground has been provided for the further promotion of Islam," he said. "The increasing trend toward Islam at the current juncture shows the glory and grandeur of the resistance of the Palestinian nation and the people of Gaza." The Leader also described the people of Gaza and the West Bank as the main elements behind the grandeur and glory of the resistance, hoping that the Palestinians and resistance forces will be further blessed by divine assistance. The Hamas chief, for his part, hailed Iran's good and strong position in support of Palestine and the resistance movement. The Palestinian people and resistance fighters must establish their heroism and victory against Israel as the regime's genocidal war on Gaza has reached a critical and historical stage after 300 days, he added. Meanwhile the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in a meeting with the President of Tajikistan, stated: There are opponents to the expansion of Iran-Tajikistan relations, and there must be plans to counter them. He also emphasized that the main policy and priority of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to expand relations with regional countries, especially those with a common language, culture, history, and religion. He reiterated that the Islamic Republic of Iran,

as in the past, is ready for sincere cooperation with Tajikistan in various fields. The Supreme Leader expressed gratitude for the Tajik President's visit to Tehran to attend the inauguration ceremony of Iran's president. He noted that the exchange of visits between the officials of the two countries paves the way for expanding cooperation. He stated that the Persian language is one of the important commonalities among Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan, and more efforts should be made to preserve and promote this language and to counter some efforts to marginalize it. Ayatollah Khamenei thanked the President of Tajikistan for his efforts to promote the Persian language and expressed hope that the ancient Persian script would also be reintroduced in Tajikistan. In conclusion, the Supreme Leader emphasized that there are opponents to the expansion of Iran-Tajikistan relations, and there must be plans to counter them. Meanwhile in meeting with Armenian Prime Minister, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized the preservation of Armenia's territorial integrity and stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran considers the Zangezur Corridor to be detrimental to Armenia and continues to stand by this position. The Leader described Iran's definitive and consistent policy as expanding relations with neighbors, especially Armenia. He emphasized, "We are strongly committed to developing relations with Armenia, and cooperation between the two countries will continue robustly based on defined interests, regardless of other parties' policies." He reiterated the importance of maintaining Armenia's territorial integrity and said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran views the Zangezur Corridor as harmful to Armenia and remains steadfast in this stance." Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that foreigners should not impose limitations on the relations between countries and their neighbors. He added, "What ensures the security and welfare of countries is reliance on themselves and their close ones, and the actions of some who come from afar and interfere in the affairs of other countries will end to their detriment." The Supreme Leader also referred to the good relations between the people of Iran and the Armenians in the country, noting, "Iranian Armenians played a significant role during the imposed war, and I have personally visited the homes of many Armenians."

Pezeshkian Takes the Oath of Office at the Inauguration Ceremony



TEHRAN - The ninth president of the Islamic Republic of Iran took the oath before the members of parliament during the fourteenth inauguration ceremony, pledging to utilize all his talents and abilities to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to him.

The fourteenth inauguration ceremony of the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran was held on Tuesday in Majlis.

The ceremony was attended by the head of the judiciary, the head of the Expediency Discernment Council, state and military officials, several ambassadors, foreign guests including presidents, foreign ministers, parliamentary heads, vice-presidents, and special envoys from invited countries.

Following the welcoming remarks and speeches by Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the head of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and Hojjatolislam Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i, the head of the judiciary, the inauguration process began. Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian stood at the podium and, in accordance with Article 121 of the Constitution, took the oath to utilize all his talents and abilities to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to him.

In the text of the oath read by the President, it is stated:

As the President, I swear before the Holy Quran and the people of Iran to Almighty God that I will uphold the official religion, the Islamic Republic system, and the Constitution of the country. I will utilize all my talents and qualifications to fulfill the responsibilities I have assumed, dedicating myself to serving the

people, elevating the country, promoting religion and morality, supporting justice, and avoiding any form of tyranny. I will defend the freedoms and dignity of individuals and the rights recognized by the Constitution for the nation.

I will spare no effort in safeguarding the borders and the political, economic, and cultural independence of the country. With the help of God and following the Prophet of Islam and the infallible Imams, peace be upon them, I will faithfully and devotedly safeguard the power entrusted to me by the people as a sacred trust and will pass it on to the people's elected representative after me."

Then addressing the participants in the ceremony, Pezeshkian said: The opportunity arising from the elections is a new arena for national cooperation and unity within the government, between the government and society, and within society. The government that will take on executive responsibilities with the vote of confidence from the representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly is a government of national consensus. It is obligated to ensure the civil rights of all Iranians and committed to prioritizing national interests above all else. The axis of convergence will be adherence to the Constitution, the vision document, and the general policies communicated by the Supreme Leader."

Previously, on June 28, the President's inauguration ceremony was held by the Supreme Leader with the presence of other state, military officials, and ambassadors at Imam Khomeini's Hosseiniyeh.

Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy Inalienable Right of NPT Members



LONDON (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Office and International Organizations in Geneva, Ali Bahraini has emphasized that members and signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) have an inalienable right to use atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

According to IRNA, Ali Bahraini made the remarks on Monday during a speech at the second preparatory committee meeting of the NPT Review Conference in Geneva.

He stated that the right to produce nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and full exchange of nuclear equipment, materials and know-how for its peaceful uses is one of the fundamental goals of the NPT.

Elaborating on Article 4 of the treaty he said that "all member countries with advanced nuclear technology must fulfill their obligations under this article".

Bahraini also criticized some countries for abusing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its monitoring system. "None of the provisions of the treaty should be interpreted in a way that deprives the (other) member countries of their inalienable rights and prevents them from benefiting. They should be fully entitled to their rights as per the treaty".

The Iranian diplomat expressed concerns that some member countries are trying to impose arbitrary restrictions against other NPT members to pursue their political goals.

The NPT members have agreed in the framework of the review conferences that priority should be given to the non-signatories in all the activities aimed at developing peaceful nuclear energy, Bahraini said, adding that "in practice, however, we are witnessing that countries outside of NPT have started producing nuclear weapons".

In this connection, the Iranian ambassador in Geneva-based international organizations warns that the Islamic Republic considers any attack or threat of attack against peaceful nuclear facilities as a violation of international obligations and condemned the Zionist regime for issuing such threats.

Iran Supports Any Initiative to End Israel Genocide in Gaza



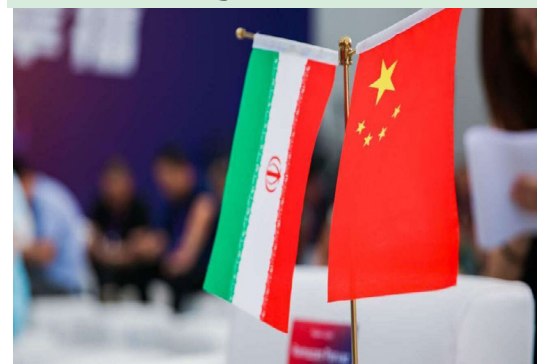
TEHRAN - Interim Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani has expressed Iran's strong support for any initiative aimed at countering Israel's genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. He made the remarks on Monday during a meeting with South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola, who is in Tehran to attend Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's swearing-in ceremony. Bagheri Kani praised Lamola as a "brave and innovator diplomat" who has followed up on the case filed with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against the Zionist regime's war crimes in Gaza. He also hailed the South African government's efforts at international legal and judicial bodies in condemnation of Israel's atrocities. "The Islamic Republic of Iran backs any initiative and measure in the international arena meant to support the oppressed people of Palestine, and to confront and condemn the Zionist regime's genocide and crimes against humanity in Gaza," he added. Bagheri Kani further emphasized the importance of continued cooperation between Iran and South Africa in international and multilateral mechanisms, such as the BRICS group of emerging economies, to defend the rights of independent countries and the Palestinian people. South Africa's top diplomat, for his part, expressed his country's keenness to boost economic, commercial and cultural ties with Iran, and develop interactions within the frameworks of the ICJ and the International Court of Justice (ICC). He also called for enhanced Tehran-Pretoria consultations in the fight against the Israeli genocide in Gaza. South Africa lodged a complaint against Israel in the ICJ last year, asking judges at the United Nations' top court to declare that the occupying regime was committing genocide in Gaza.



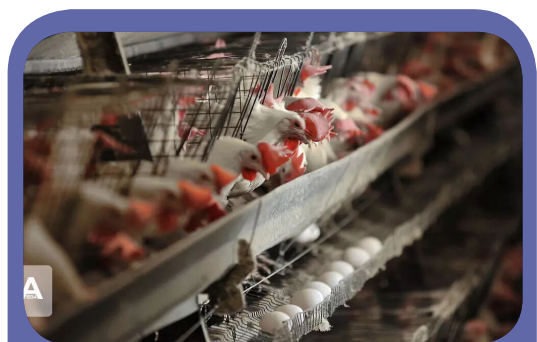
13% Growth in Iran-Pakistan Trade Exchanges

TEHRAN (Fars News) - Trade exchanges between Iran and Pakistan have increased in both volume and value in the first four months of this year compared to the same period last year. Iran's trade exchanges with Pakistan have risen by 7% in volume and 13% in value in the first four months of this year. Fars reports that in 2023, the trade exchanges between Iran and Pakistan were valued at \$820.419 million, which has grown by 13% this year to reach \$928.185 million. After the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Iraq, Pakistan ranks fourth in terms of trade exchanges with Iran. According to the Customs Administration of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the first four months of this year, trade exchanges between Iran and its neighbors reached approximately \$20 billion.

License for Establishing an Iranian Trade Center in Shanghai Issued



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Trade Promotion Organization has approved the establishment and operation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's commercial center in Shanghai, China. The validity period of this license is until the end of this year. The executing company is obligated to operate within the framework of the communicated regulations and conditions. If the relevant conditions and requirements are not met, the above-mentioned license may be suspended or revoked according to the decision of the Trade Centers Working Group. Based on this report, the license for the establishment and operation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's commercial center in Minsk, Belarus has been issued. This organization has approved the issuance of the license for the establishment and operation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's commercial center in Minsk, Belarus under the supervision of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran. The validity period of this license is until the end of May next year. It should be noted that the executing company is obligated to operate within the framework of the communicated regulations and conditions. If the relevant conditions and requirements are not met, the above-mentioned license may be suspended or revoked according to the decision of the Trade Centers Working Group.



Export of 55,000 Tons of Eggs in 4 Months

TEHRAN - The chairman of the board of directors of the nationwide Union of Egg-Laying Poultry Farmers of Mihan evaluated the production of eggs in the country as satisfactory and said: Since the beginning of this year, 55,000 tons of eggs have been exported to target countries. In an interview with, Hamidreza Kashani discussed the status of egg production and export. He said that according to the Ministry of Agriculture's plan, 1,350,000 tons of eggs are expected to be produced in the country this year. The chairman of the board of directors of the nationwide Union of Egg-Laying Poultry Farmers of Mihan stated: Currently, around 110,000 tons of eggs are produced monthly in the country, and in addition to meeting domestic needs, a portion of the surplus product is exported to target countries, amounting to between 10,000 and 13,000 tons monthly. He announced the export of the first shipment of Iranian eggs to Sudan and clarified: Currently, our country's eggs are exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Qatar, and the UAE. Kashani noted that egg exports resumed in 2022 and added: This year, it seems that approximately 150,000 tons of eggs will be exported to target countries given the production volume. The chairman of the board of directors of the nationwide Union of Egg-Laying Poultry Farmers of Mihan said: Currently, each kilogram of eggs is sold at production units for 42,000 toman, while the approved price for this product two years ago was 47,300 toman, which is still in effect. He stated: Given the increase in inflation rates, raw materials, micronutrients, supplements, drugs, poultry feed (corn and soybean meal), transportation, labor wages, and packaging, the production cost of each kilogram of eggs is estimated at 57,500 toman, necessitating a price adjustment; otherwise, producers are incurring losses. Kashani said: Therefore, we have requested a price adjustment for eggs from the Deputy of Livestock Affairs at the Ministry of Agriculture. The chairman of the board of directors of the nationwide Union of Egg-Laying Poultry Farmers of Mihan added: To support egg producers in the country, the nationwide Union of Egg-Laying Poultry Farmers of Mihan has stepped in since last week and has purchased 2,000 tons of surplus products from producers. He reported an increase in the price of corn and emphasized: Price adjustments can not only support domestic production and producers but also significantly impact the production and increase the volume of egg exports. According to IRNA, current statistics show that 1,700 egg production units and 600 pullet rearing units are active in the country, producing 1,260,000 tons of eggs last year, with about 136,000 tons of that exported to target countries.



8% Growth in Exports by End of July

TEHRAN - The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration highlighted an 8% growth in the country's exports in the first four months of this year. He stated that from the beginning of the year until the end of July, \$18.5 billion worth of goods were imported into the country, showing a 6% decrease compared to the same period last year. Mohammad Rezvani-Far mentioned at the contract signing ceremony for the construction of 12 truck scanners and the signing of the memorandum for the construction of the country's first rail scanner: As a result, the trade balance of the country, excluding oil, is negative by one billion dollars. He noted: It should be considered that by the end of July this year, \$800 million worth of gold bullion was imported. Taking into account the oil exports amounting to \$15.7 billion, the total foreign trade of the country is \$51 billion. Hence, with oil included, the trade balance is positive by \$14.8 billion. The Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance continued: During this period, \$7.7 billion worth of petrochemical products were exported. He recalled: During this period, the average value per ton of exported goods increased by 4%, and from the total imports of \$18.5 billion, \$6 billion were essential goods. Additionally, the average price per ton of essential goods decreased to \$1,546. Rezvani-Far pointed out the target countries for imports, stating: In the first four months of this year, the UAE, China, Turkey, Germany,

and India were the major sources of the country's imports, with customs revenues amounting to 71 trillion Tomans collected so far. He added: During the same period, transit also grew by 59%. The head of customs also mentioned drug seizures, stating: This has increased by 150%, with 153 human trafficking cases filed this year, which is a significant decrease. He added: The signing of the contract for 12 X-ray machines will have a substantial impact on the growth of transit. The contract for the construction of 12 truck scanners and the memorandum for the construction of the first rail scanner in the country was signed in the presence of the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and the Vice President for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy. At this ceremony, the contract for the construction of 12 truck scanners valued at 2.4 trillion Tomans, the contract for the construction and installation of four truck scanners between customs and a domestic investor for the customs offices in Mehran, Chazabeh, Shalameh, and Bazargan, the contract for the construction and installation of four truck scanners between customs and a knowledge-based company for the customs offices in Shahid Rajaei, Poldasht, Bandar Lengeh, and Kileh Sardasht, and the contract for the construction and installation of four truck scanners between the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration and another company for the customs offices in Bashmaq, Milak, Parviz Khan, and Sheikh Saleh will be signed.

Over \$3b in Revenue From Petrochemical Exports in Q1



TEHRAN - In a press conference, Secretary of the Petrochemical Employers Association Ahmad Mahdavi Abhari stated that the country's economic situation needs transformation, which can be achieved through the efforts of officials in this area to pull the economy out of stagnation. He expressed hope in the 14th government and Dr. Pezeshkian to solve these issues. He also expressed optimism that with the appointment of a competent minister in the Ministry of Petroleum, we would witness a transformation in the country's petrochemical industry. He noted that in the first three months of 2024, 20.41 million tons of petrochemical products were produced. The Secretary of the Petrochemical Employers Association announced that the domestic sales of products amounted to 2.98 million tons and the export figure reached \$3.39 billion. He emphasized that the value of petrochemical product exports in 2024 will definitely surpass last year's. Mahdavi stated that all efforts are being made to launch physical projects that have progressed more than 80% in line with the year's slogan. In this regard, 11 projects were submitted to the Central Bank for review to boost petrochemical production. The Central Bank is expected to support projects needing less than \$50 million in resources. He mentioned that since November 2019, the association has been working to rationalize the sale price of urea to the Ministry of Agriculture and to address the demands of urea producers. He continued that after extensive follow-ups and meetings at the presidency and the Ministry of Agriculture, an agreement was reached to increase the sale price of urea to the Ministry of Agriculture, and the payment of urea producers' demands is also being pursued.

He noted that out of the 20 million tons of petrochemical products produced in the first three months of 2024, 3 million tons were sold domestically, 7.74 million tons were exported, and about 11 million tons were used as feedstock within the complexes. Mahdavi emphasized the necessity of establishing regulatory bodies in the petrochemical sector, saying that one of the necessary infrastructures for increasing public participation in the petrochemical industry is the formation of a regulatory institution, which would invigorate the private sector. Referring to the energy imbalance and the fact that petrochemical industries are gas consumers, he stated that since the beginning of the current administration, the Petrochemical Employers Association has initiated the investment of the petrochemical industry in developing oil and gas fields to secure feedstock. To this end, 10 agreements were signed this year between the Ministry of Petroleum and petrochemical companies. He mentioned that there were some issues in the designated fields, which are being addressed. A meeting was held today to make the \$8 billion investment by petrochemical companies in oil and gas fields more attractive. This investment is expected to add 200 million cubic meters to the country's gas production. He reported that the opportunity cost due to gas supply shortages was about \$700 million in 2022 and \$1 billion last year. He added that the opportunity cost is increasing each year, and if the situation continues, petrochemical plants will shut down by 2033 unless investments and optimizations are made.

Boosting Ties With Muslim States Among Foreign



TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Masoud Pezeshkian, while emphasizing the need for unity among Islamic nations in confronting the Zionists' brutality and stopping the crimes in Gaza, has said that his government's foreign policy priorities include strengthening relations with Muslim countries as well as creating synergy in Islamic societies. Pezeshkian made the remarks on Monday evening while meeting with Deputy Secretary General of Lebanon's Hezbollah Movement, Sheikh Naim Qassem who has arrived in Tehran to participate in the 14th presidential inauguration scheduled for Tuesday. While honoring the standing and firmness of Hezbollah fighters against the aggression and crimes of the Zionist regime, Pezeshkian called the support for the resistance front a religious obligation and one of the fundamental policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Iranian president called the Zionist brutalities against the oppressed people in Gaza and the support for the regime by the United States and some Western countries another stain on the records of human rights claimants. "If Islamic countries and Muslim nations had maintained their unity and cohesion as well as followed the advice and command of the Holy Prophet of Islam, the Zionist regime and its backers would never dare commit such crimes against the oppressed Palestinians", he underlined. Pezeshkian stressed that developing relations with Muslim countries as well as creating convergence and synergy in Islamic societies will be among foreign policy priorities of his government and emphasized the necessity of the Islamic unity in confronting and stopping the brutality of the Zionist regime in Gaza. In this meeting, Sheikh Qassem, while congratulating the election of Pezeshkian as the new Iranian president, hailed his response to the message of Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hezbollah, and expressed hope that his personality and managerial abilities and characteristics will take the Islamic Republic on the path of progress and success more than in the past. He stated that Hezbollah considers itself the child of the founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution and will do its part to realize the valuable ideals of the revolution, and explained the achievements and actions of Hezbollah's resistance in recent years. The Hezbollah official attributed the withdrawal of the Zionist regime from southern Lebanon, the numerous failures of this regime against the Palestinian resistance, as well as the defeat of the Daesh terrorist group in Syria, to Iran's support for the regional resistance front.

Record Oil Exports Broken



TEHRAN - Minister of Economy Hsran Khandouzi, during the inauguration ceremony of detection devices and the signing of contracts for 12 truck detection devices and a memorandum of understanding for the construction of the first rail detection system, stated: "We are pleased that in the final days of the late President Raisi's administration, we are inaugurating another project aimed at facilitating production and trade processes. The common thread of our actions in the Ministry of Economy has been to facilitate production and trade to make these processes more predictable for traders and producers." He continued: "Although we haven't reached a perfect 100% condition, we have made significant progress compared to the early days of the 13th government, particularly evident in the facilitation of business licenses." The Minister of Economy noted that for the first time, the government has committed itself to obtaining the opinions of the private sector for regulations. "We implemented every decision with transparency and advance notice to the private sector. Among other facilitation measures was the reduction of taxes in this sector." Khandouzi emphasized: "During this period, without increasing personnel and amidst increasing national trade, the time for customs procedures was halved. This achievement resulted from better resource management and the use of smart procedures and jihadist management." He added: "During this period, we also broke records in oil exports and transit, and it was a prosperous time for goods imports." The Minister of Economy stated: "While previously, one directive in the field of national trade was issued for each working day, including holidays, last year we reduced the number of directives by 50%, and this year by 20%. This action was taken in a context where 25 agencies are involved in national trade, and we changed these conditions in the battle against bureaucratic obstacles to trade by monitoring discretionary behaviors. We were able to implement these measures with the support of the President." Khandouzi highlighted the significant impact of leveraging the capabilities of knowledge-based companies: "In the past three years, we have installed as many detection devices for luggage and trucks as half the entire lifespan of the country's customs. Currently, there are 150 luggage detection devices and 28 truck detection devices active in the country's customs."

Australian FM Condemns Russia-North Korea Ties

PAJU (Dispatches) - Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said on Tuesday that a security pact signed by Russia and North Korea was destabilizing the region, adding that North Korea was giving weapons to Russia in "flagrant violation" of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Wong was speaking to reporters in the city of Paju after a visit to the nearby Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas, which remain technically at war.

"We see Russia behaving in ways which are not conducive to peace but are escalatory," she said, referring to a security pact signed between the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin in June.

Under the pact, North Korea and Russia agreed to provide immediate military assistance if either faces armed aggression.

Washington and its allies are also alarmed by the deepening military cooperation between Russia and North Korea, and have accused both nations of breaching international laws by trading in weapons for Russia to use against Ukraine.



Blinken, Austin Hold Defense Talks With Philippine Counterparts



MANILA (Dispatches) - U.S. foreign and defence ministers met their Philippine counterparts in Manila on Tuesday, with Beijing's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea likely to dominate talks.

A series of escalating confrontations between Philippine and Chinese vessels in the disputed waterway have raised concern that Washington could be dragged into a conflict due to its mutual defense treaty with Manila. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin are in Asia to strengthen a latticework of regional alliances as Washington counters China's growing military and diplomatic influence. Blinken and Austin kicked off their Manila leg with a meeting with President Ferdinand Marcos, before holding "2+2" talks with their Philippine counterparts Enrique Manalo and Gilberto Teodoro. It marks the first time the Philippines has hosted the "2+2" talks, which Blinken said were evidence of "a steady drum beat, a very high level of engagements between our countries". "We are truly grateful for this partnership," Blinken told Marcos at the presidential palace. The Philippines' proximity to the hotly contested South China Sea, as well as self-ruled Taiwan, would make it a key partner for the United States if a conflict were to break out. Beijing claims almost the entire waterway, despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis, and considers democratic Taiwan to be part of its territory.

Venezuela Opposition Says Its Victory Is Irreversible



CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela opposition leader Maria Corina Machado said on Monday the country's opposition has 73.2% of the voting tallies from Sunday's election, allowing it to prove election results it says give it a victory. The national electoral authority has proclaimed incumbent President Nicolas Maduro the winner of the vote, giving him a third term in office and extending 25 years of socialist party rule. But independent pollsters called that result implausible, and opposition leaders and foreign observers urged the electoral authority to release vote tallies. The tallies in possession of the opposition showed a total of 2.75 million votes for Maduro and 6.27 million for his rival, former diplomat Edmundo Gonzalez, Machado said. The numbers were sharply different to the 5.15 million votes the electoral authority said Maduro had won, compared to 4.45 million for Gonzalez. Witnesses assigned to observe vote counts have a right to a copy of each voting machine's tally, but the opposition said overnight that some witnesses were blocked from following counts and that at other sites the tallies were not printed. The opposition has long warned about whether the vote would be fair, saying decisions by officials and the arrests of opposition staff were meant to create obstacles. The electoral authority said just after midnight Maduro had won 51% of the vote. Later it proclaimed Maduro president for 2025 to 2031, adding he had won "the majority of valid votes." Governments in Washington and elsewhere cast doubt on the results and called for a full tabulation of votes. Independent exit polls pointed to 65% support for Gonzalez and between 14% and 31% backing for Maduro. At least two people were killed in connection with the vote count or protests - one overnight in the border state of Tachira and another in Maracay on Monday. Protesters gathered in towns and cities across Venezuela on Monday, including near the presidential palace in Caracas. Gonzalez has repeatedly warned against bloodshed. But Maduro, whose 2018 re-election is considered fraudulent by the United States and others, said in evening remarks on state television that paid agitators had assaulted electoral agency offices. "We know how to confront this situation and how to defeat those who are violent," Maduro said. Jorge Rodriguez, a ruling party lawmaker and Maduro's campaign manager, called for supporters to march in support of the government on Tuesday. Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino warned

against allowing a repeat of the "terrible situations of 2014, 2017 and 2019". Anti-government protesters took to the streets those years and hundreds were killed. Machado had called on the country's military to uphold the results of the vote. The armed forces have long supported Maduro and there have been no public signs leaders were breaking from the government. Machado also called on supporters to gather on Tuesday in front of United Nations offices in Caracas. Protesters gathered in towns and cities across Venezuela, with the Venezuelan Conflict Observatory saying it had registered 187 protests in 20 states. "We're fed up with this, we want freedom," motorcycle taxi driver Fernando Mejia, 41, said as he marched in Maracay. The street protests followed earlier "cacerolazo" demonstrations - a traditional Latin American protest in which people bang pots and pans - throughout the country. In the Caracas neighborhood of El Valle and the city of Maracay, police fired tear gas, while protesters blocked a part of a major in Barquisimeto. In Coro, the capital of Falcon state, protesters tore down a statue depicting late president Hugo Chavez, Maduro's mentor. An opposition adviser said on social media that security forces had made two failed attempts to enter the Argentine embassy in Caracas where he and five others have been living since March after warrants were issued for their arrests. Many Venezuelan voters despaired at news of another six-year term for Maduro, who has presided over an economic collapse, the migration of about a third of the population and sanctions imposed by the United States and others which have crippled an already struggling oil industry. U.S. nonprofit the Carter Center, which sent observers for the vote, called on the electoral authority to immediately publish the results by polling station. A source said further information from the group would not be released until its final report. Biden administration officials accused the government of "electoral manipulation". They did not announce any new punitive measures but left open the door to additional sanctions. Brazil and the European Union called for transparency over polling data. Venezuela's bonds and those of state oil firm PDVSA fell deeper into distressed territory on Monday. Venezuela's attorney general Tarek Saab said the results had been delayed by an attack on the electoral system from North Macedonia. He did not offer any evidence.



Russia Inches Toward Strategic Supply Route in Ukraine's East

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russian forces are focusing their heaviest assaults near Ukraine's strategic eastern city of Pokrovsk, Kyiv said on Monday, as Moscow bears down on a key Ukrainian supply route more than 29 months since its full-scale invasion. Fighting on the Pokrovsk front was the fiercest anywhere in the war-scarred east, the General Staff said in a regular battlefield update, adding that Ukraine had fought off 52 Russian assaults there in the last 24 hours. Pokrovsk, a transport hub with a pre-war population of 61,000, lies on a main road that serves as an important supply route to other embattled Ukrainian-held outposts, such as the towns of Chasiv Yar and Kostiantynivka in the Donetsk region. Some residents have fled during the war, but others have settled there after fleeing elsewhere. "As of today, the city is 20 km (12 miles) from the front line," Serhiy Dobriak, head of the city's military administration, told U.S. broadcaster Radio Free Europe. To the northeast of the city, Russian troops have advanced even closer to the strategic road. On Saturday, Moscow claimed control of the village of Lozuvatske, which lies about 6 km from it. Ukraine did not comment on the claim. Dobriak said many of Pokrovsk's residents were reluctantly deciding to evacuate. He put the current population at 60,000, including 4,000 children. "The greatest concentration of enemy attacks was around Zhelanne and Novooleksandrivka," Ukraine's General Staff said, referring to two villages that lie to the east of Pokrovsk. Russia's defense ministry said that its forces had also taken the villages of Prohres, Yevhenivka and Vovche. All three settlements lie east of Pokrovsk. Kyiv did not comment on the claim. Donetsk's regional governor said at least three people had been killed and three others wounded in Russian shelling of Toretsk, another town reeling from heavy fighting in recent weeks. Dobriak said civilians from Toretsk were evacuating to Pokrovsk. Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022 and still occupies nearly a fifth of Ukraine.

New Mass Exodus Hits Central Gaza as Israel Stalls on Ceasefire

CAIRO (Dispatches) - thousands of Palestinians fled a community in the central Gaza Strip on Monday in the face of new Israeli evacuation orders, worsening the humanitarian plight in an area already inundated with displaced people fleeing an assault in the south. Islamist group Hamas accused Israel of blocking a ceasefire, saying Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government had inserted new conditions into a longstanding truce proposal at the latest talks, conducted through international mediators. Israeli forces, which have now captured nearly the entire Gaza Strip in nearly 10 months of war, have spent the last several weeks launching major operations in areas where they had previously claimed to have uprooted Hamas fighters.

Hundreds of thousands of people have converged on Deir al-Balah, a small city in the centre of the enclave that is the only major area yet to be stormed, many forced there by fighting in the ruins of Khan Younis further south since last week. In its latest assault, Israel ordered residents on Sunday to flee Al-Bureij, just northeast of Deir. "What is left? Deir? Deir is full of people. Everyone is in Deir. All of Gaza. Where should people go?" Aya Mansour told Reuters in Deir after fleeing from Bureij. The Israeli military said fighter jets hit 35 targets across the Gaza Strip over the past day as troops battled fighters in Khan Younis and Rafah, close to the border with Egypt. The armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fierce gun battles have been ongoing in those two areas as well as in the suburb of Tel Al-Hawa in Gaza City further north. Palestinian medical officials said at least eight people were killed in an Israeli air strike earlier in Khan Younis. In the latest sign of a worsening public health emergency, the Gaza Health Ministry declared a polio epidemic, following the detection of the virus in sewage samples. On Sunday, the military issued new evacuation orders to some districts in Bureij, forcing thousands to leave before the army blew up several houses. Some families used donkey carts and rickshaws to carry whatever belongings remained. Many walked for several km on foot to reach Deir



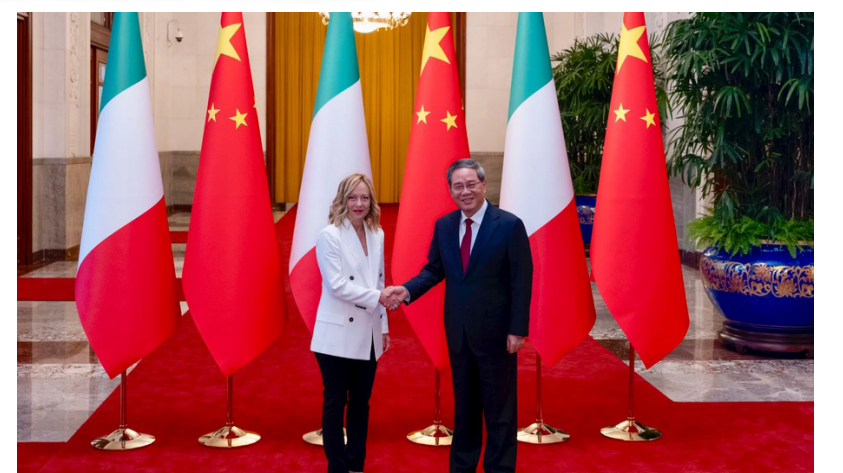
or al-Zawayda town to the west. Philippe Lazzarini, head of UNRWA, the United Nations relief agency for Palestinians, said only 14% of the Gaza Strip had not been placed under evacuation orders by the Israeli military. People have been forced to evacuate repeatedly, often with only a few hours notice. Although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has faced weekly demonstrations from Israelis demanding a ceasefire to bring back more than 100 hostages still held in Gaza, there has been little visible progress in talks brokered by Qatar and Egypt. Negotiations are set to continue after Israeli officials returned from the latest round in Rome on Sunday. Washington, which sponsors the talks, has repeatedly said a deal is close; the latest talks are over a proposal President Joe Biden unveiled back in May. But Hamas said the latest Israeli response included new conditions. "It is clear from what the mediators conveyed that Netanyahu has returned to his strategy of procrastination, evasion, and avoiding reaching an agreement by setting new conditions and demands," Hamas said in a statement on Monday. The Gaza Health Ministry said the detection of polio, long since eradicated in the enclave, "poses a health threat to the people of Gaza, to neighboring countries, and a setback to global efforts to end polio." According to the World Health Organization, polio is endemic only in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but 35 countries are still listed as subject to outbreaks, including Gaza's neighbour Egypt, and any country risks the return of the disease if an outbreak goes unchecked. Israel said last week it was offering polio vaccines to troops deployed in Gaza. The limited access to water has worsened health complications from poor sanitation. Many displaced people were suffering from skin diseases, and children are afflicted by fevers, continuous weeping, and declining to eat or be breastfed, said Hussam Abu Safiyah, the director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza.

The war began with an assault on southern Israel by Hamas-led fighters who killed 1,200 people and captured around 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Italy and China Sign a 3-Year Action Plan

BEIJING (AP) - Italy and China signed a three-year action plan to implement past agreements and experiment with new forms of cooperation, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said on an official visit to the Chinese capital. Meloni is trying to reset relations with China as fears of a trade war with the European Union are interwoven with continued interest in attracting Chinese investment in auto manufacturing and other sectors. "We certainly have a lot of work to do and I am convinced that this work can be useful in such a complex phase on a global level, and also important at a multilateral level," she said in remarks at the start of a meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang. Her five-day visit covers several months after Italy dropped out of China's Belt and Road Initiative, a signature policy of Chinese leader Xi Jinping to build power and transportation infrastructure around the world to stimulate global trade while also deepening China's ties with other nations. Still, Italy remains keen to pursue an otherwise strong economic relationship with China. Stellantis, a major automaker that includes Italy's Fiat, announced in May that it had formed a joint venture with Leapmotor, a Chinese electric car startup, to begin selling EVs in Europe. Li, addressing Italian and Chinese business leaders after the meeting with Meloni, said that China's push to upgrade its economy will increase demand for high-quality

products, expanding opportunities for cooperation between companies from their two countries. He pledged to open Chinese markets further, ensure that foreign companies get the same treatment as Chinese ones and create a transparent and predictable business environment, responding to frequently heard complaints from businesses operating in the world's second-largest economy. "At the same time, we hope the Italian side will work with China to provide a more fair, just and non-discriminatory business environment for Chinese companies doing business in Italy," he said. Meloni told the business leaders that the two sides had signed an industrial collaboration memorandum that includes electric vehicles and renewable energy, which she described as "sectors where China has already been operating on the technological frontier for some time ... and is sharing the new frontiers of knowledge with partners." Electric vehicles have also become a symbol of growing China-EU trade tensions, with the European Union imposing provisional tariffs of up to 37.6% on Chinese-made electric vehicles in early July. The two sides are holding talks to try to resolve the issue by an early November deadline. Meanwhile, China launched an anti-dumping investigation into European pork exports, just days after the EU announced it would impose the tariffs on Chinese EVs.



Djokovic Survives Wobble to Ease Past Nadal



PARIS (Dispatches) - Serbia's top-seeded Novak Djokovic overcame a brief bout of nerves in the second set before beating 14-times French Open champion Rafael Nadal 6-1 6-4 at the Paris Olympics on Monday and moving into the third round.

His counterpart in the women's draw, world number one Iga Swiatek of Poland had an even easier morning, crushing France's Diane Parry 6-1 6-1 to book her own third round spot. While Djokovic remains in the hunt for his elusive Olympic gold, Spain's Nadal now has only the doubles competition left to add to his two Olympic gold medals, partnering Carlos Alcaraz. Djokovic led 6-1 4-0 before a Nadal comeback attempt that saw him briefly level 4-4. "I was just very proud to be part of this match and ... I wanted to do my job on the court and really execute the game plan as much as I possibly can," Djokovic said. "So almost a perfect match, the 6-1 4-0. Then things got complicated, I started to hesitate a little bit on my shot he stepped in, the crowd got involved and for all, it was really anybody's set, anybody's game. Just very glad to overcome this incredible challenge." Alcaraz was also in action in the singles but was never seriously pressured in his 6-1 7-6 victory over Dutch opponent Tallon Griekspoor. Eighth-seed Stefanos Tsitsipas punched his ticket for the next round, with the Greek finding even less resistance in his 6-1 6-2 victory over Britain's Daniel Evans. Sixth seed Casper Ruud of Norway was made to work harder in his three-set win over Italy's Andrea Vavassori. In the women's draw Swiatek was joined in the next round by Czech Barbora Krejčíková, the new Wimbledon champion, who advanced with a straight sets victory over China's Wang

Xinyu as did American Coco Gauff, beating Argentine Maria Lourdes Carle 6-1 6-1.

But all eyes were on the Nadal-Djokovic showdown with the crowd desperate to see the world's best claycourt player make one last one run in Paris even though his best playing days are long behind him. "I was not able to put him in difficult positions," Nadal said. "I was not able to have enough quality shots, enough quality of movements. Playing against Novak without creating damage to him and without having the legs of 20 years ago is almost impossible." At age 37, Djokovic, with 24 Grand Slam singles titles to Nadal's 22, has remained more competitive than his injury-plagued opponent. He left nothing to chance in a flawless display over a set and a half. The world number two stretched the 38-year-old with punishing groundstrokes and perfect drop shots, making him look his age and racing through the first set and a half. The crowd, ready for a mouth-watering epic on their record-extending 60th encounter, instead were being treated to what looked like a fast-track Djokovic win. Nadal, with his thigh strapped due to a recent injury, was spilling unforced errors across Court Philippe Chatrier, lacking precision and consistency. With the crowd sensing the end of an era was approaching, Nadal was desperate to avoid one of the most bruising defeats of his career on his favourite clay surface. A Djokovic double fault saw Nadal pull back to 4-2 and that was celebrated like a victory with almost the entire stadium jumping from their seats to cheer him on. The Spaniard was level a little later but it was nothing more than a brief reprieve as Djokovic sealed victory on his first match point with an ace.

Italy's Cecon Wins Dream Olympic Backstroke Gold

PARIS (Dispatches) - Thomas Cecon said he fulfilled a childhood "dream" by giving Italy their second swimming gold of the Paris Olympics with a thrilling victory in the men's 100m backstroke on Monday. Cecon won with a time of 52.00 seconds, with China's Xu Jiayu 0.32sec behind for silver and Ryan Murphy of the USA in bronze. The Italian, who was fourth in Tokyo, delivered Italy more joy following Nicolo Martinenghi's triumph in the 100m breaststroke on Sunday. The 23-year-old Cecon, who won the world championship in 100m in Budapest in 2022, picked up his second medal of the week after bronze in the 4x100m free relay. "Ever since I was a kid I knew I could win this medal and today is that day," a delighted Cecon told Italy's Rai television. "I can't be happier. As a kid, at 15, the coach asked me: 'What is your dream?' I answered: 'To win the Olympics', and he said: 'Calm down'. It's always been my dream," he said. "Winning here isn't like at the World Championships, it's a race that happens every four years. I went strong and tried to hold on until the end. And in the end I was exhausted," he added. For China's Xu it was a frustrating silver medal,

having also finished second in the same event in Rio in 2016. Murphy, the 29-year-old from Chicago who won three golds in Rio in 2016 including in the 100m backstroke, was hoping to restore his dominance in the event but had to settle for bronze. He also finished with bronze in the event in Tokyo and his latest medal was his seventh in total, spanning three Olympics. "I feel good about it. That's a really talented field. What I've improved on over the years is being able to frame things really quickly," he said. "Thomas and Xu, they're both really talented guys, they've been really good at this sport for a long time. They deal well with pressure. Being third behind them, I'm not disappointed," he added.



Japan Snatch Olympic Men's Gymnastics Gold



PARIS (Dispatches) - Daiki Hashimoto conjured up some late magic to propel Japan to Olympic men's team gymnastics gold on Monday as arch-rivals China stumbled with the title within their grasp. It was a record-extending eighth team title for Japan and made up for narrowly missing out to Russia for gold at the Tokyo Games. China took silver and the United States bronze, ahead of Britain. China were favourites after bossing the qualifying and, streets ahead, only had to hold their nerve in the last of the six rotations for victory. But China's Su Weide fell twice on the horizontal bars, leaving an unexpected opening for Japan to overhaul them on the line. And in a nail-biting denouement that had the crowd at the Bercy Arena on the edge of their seats, Hashimoto, the all-around and horizontal bar champion in Tokyo three years ago, finally hit form. After a quiet night including a slip-up on the pommel horse, the 22-year-old clicked into gear to produce a superb performance and get Japan home by just 0.532 points with an overall points tally of 259.594. They take the crown that was left vacant because of the absence of Russia due to the invasion of Ukraine. Hashimoto, whose nickname is "Mr Infinite Stamina", said: "I had

a lot of things on my mind, but when I got onto the stage, I just concentrated on my performance. "I felt the rest of the team was all behind me, they had my back. They pushed me on to the stage." "I was almost crying before the performance." Hashimoto was joined on the top of the podium by teammates Kazuma Kaya, Shinnosuke Oka, Wataru Tanigawa and Takaaki Sugino. Su and his Chinese team were distraught at their near miss. "I think today taught me a big lesson, it's of great regret," he said. "I feel sorry for my teammates. Because of my errors we didn't win the gold medal." A downcast Zhang Boheng added: "Regrettably in the last part we didn't perform well." "We are frustrated. Up to then we have done very well." Up to the final drama, China appeared to be in firm control over the world champions. After a sluggish start, the Zhang-led Chinese leapt into the lead at the midway stage after Zou Jingyuan, Zhang and Liu Yang showed some cast-iron crosses and assured handstand control on the rings. Japan were lagging in fifth. Ukraine emerged briefly as China's main challengers after the fourth rotation, courtesy of fine parallel bars routines from Illia Kovtun and Oleg Verniaiev. Zou had produced a huge score in qualifying on the parallel bars and the champion in Tokyo did not disappoint with 16.000 to push China over three points clear, ahead of the closing rotation. Japan were going to need a herculean effort from Hashimoto, the defending champion on the horizontal bar, if they were to usurp the Chinese.

Varane Signs for Italian Club Como



ROME (Dispatches) - French defender Raphael Varane has joined Como on a two-year deal with an option to extend the contract, the newly-promoted Serie A club said. The 31-year-old World Cup-winner, who had spent the last three years at Manchester United after a trophy-laden career with Real Madrid, arrives as a free agent. "Raphael is a special player and his signing is proof of the ambition we have for this club," new Como manager Cesc Fabregas said. Varane's arrival adds to the growing list of Premier League players joining the Italians ahead of the season, including former Liverpool keeper Pepe Reina and defender Alberto Moreno. Meanwhile Arsenal have signed Italian defender Riccardo Calafiori from Bologna on a long-term contract, the Premier League club said. The details of the 22-year-old's transfer were not disclosed, but according to Italian and British media, Arsenal will pay Bologna around 40 million euros (\$43.26 million) plus an additional five million in add-on fees. Calafiori excelled at Bologna under Thiago Motta last season, playing a pivotal role in their historic campaign where they finished fifth in the Serie A standings and qualified for the Champions League for the first time since 1964. The defender made 30 Serie A appearances for Bologna last season having joined from AS Roma. He made his international debut in June and played in three of the four matches in the European Championship. He is the second-youngest Italian to play in the Euros, behind Paolo Maldini. "We welcome Riccardo and his family to Arsenal. He is a great signing and gives us huge strength to reinforce our defence," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said in a statement. "Riccardo is a big personality and character, with specific skills which will make us stronger as we push to win major trophies..."

Sainz Signs Two-Year Deal to Race for Williams



LONDON (Dispatches) - Carlos Sainz announced Monday that he had signed a two-year deal to race for Williams starting from the 2025 season amid what he said was an "exceptionally complex" market for Formula One drivers. The 29-year-old Spaniard will leave Ferrari at the end of the 2024 campaign after seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton was announced as his replacement at the Italian giants earlier this year. Sainz has won three F1 races so far in his career, the most recent at the Australian Grand Prix in March. Having previously driven for Toro Rosso, Renault and McLaren, Sainz had been linked with several teams for the 2025 season including Alpine, Sauber and Mercedes. But on Monday it was confirmed he had agreed an initial two-year deal at Williams, with an option to extend. "I am very happy to announce that I will be joining Williams Racing from 2025 onwards," Sainz said in a team statement. "It is no secret that this year's driver market has been exceptionally complex for various reasons and that it has taken me some time to announce my decision." He added: "However, I am fully confident that Williams is the right place for me to continue my F1 journey and I am extremely proud of joining such a historic and successful team, where many of my childhood heroes drove in the past and made their mark on our sport." "The ultimate goal of bringing Williams back to where it belongs, at the front of the grid, is a challenge that I embrace with excitement and positivity." Sainz will replace Logan Sargeant at Williams, where he will partner Alex Albon. Founded in 1977 by the late Frank Williams, the team have won nine F1 Constructors' Championships and seven drivers' titles, with Alan Jones, Keke Rosberg, Nelson Piquet, Nigel Mansell, Alain Prost, Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve all crowned world champion while at Williams. But Williams have struggled in recent seasons and last took a podium finish in 2021, while their last race victory came via Pastor Maldonado's shock win back at the 2012 Spanish Grand Prix.