

President Masoud Pezeshkian Appointed Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh, a Sunni Politician, as His Vice President for Rural Development, Noting the Appointment Was Due to Hosseinzadeh's Valuable Experience in the Field

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Embassy in London Criticized the UK Government for Adopting a Double Standard Approach Towards Developments in West Asia Region by Supporting a Ceasefire in the Gaza War While Turning a Blind eye to Increased Palestinian Deaths Due to Zionist Brutalities

VOL. XXIX, No. 8068 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 28, 2024 SHAHRIVAR 07, 1403

2

DOMESTIC



Iran-EAEU Trade Increases 2.5 Fold

> SEE PAGE 2

3

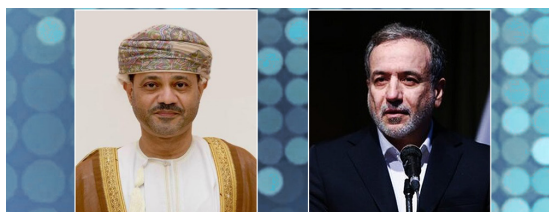
INTERNATIONAL

Top U.S. General Claims Risk of Broader War Eases

> SEE PAGE 3



Iran, Oman Voice Readiness to Further Expand Bilateral Relations



TEHRAN - The Iranian and Omani foreign ministers expressed their respective countries' readiness to work towards further expansion of the bilateral relations.

The remarks were exchanged during a telephone conversation between Abbas Araghchi and Badr Albusaidi on Monday.

Albusaidi relayed Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's special attention towards the issue of the mutual relations and the monarch's wish for further development of the ties.

He voiced his preparedness to work closely with his Iranian counterpart to ensure implementation of existing agreements between the two sides.

"Muscat welcomes continuation of political consultations between the countries," the Omani official also noted.

Albusaidi, meanwhile, congratulated Araghchi on his recent appointment as the Islamic Republic's top diplomat.

For his part, the Iranian foreign minister expressed his reciprocal readiness for close cooperation and interaction with the Omani official concerning issues of mutual interest in the bilateral, regional, and international areas.

"Fortunately Tehran-Muscat relations are expanding in all aspects," Araghchi said.

Pointing to the ongoing challenges that face the West Asia region, he said, "Continuation of consultations and cooperation between the countries in various areas, including the regional issues, would help resolve the existing problems in addition to meeting [the nations'] mutual interests."

Araghchi also expressed his gratitude towards the Omani official for felicitating him on the occasion of his appointment as the Islamic Republic's foreign minister.

Meanwhile later Araghchi in a telephone conversation with his Kuwaiti counterpart Abdullah Al Yahya said that Tehran welcomes the expansion of relations between the two countries in all dimensions.

The Kuwaiti foreign minister congratulated Araghchi on his appointment and wished him success in his new responsibility.

In this conversation, Kuwaiti foreign minister pointed out the will of his country to continue the process of development and expansion of relations between Tehran and Kuwait, and emphasized the importance of continuing political dialogues between the two countries.

U.S. Main Obstacle to Gaza Ceasefire Agreement



GAZA (Dispatches) - A high-ranking official of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement says the United States is the main obstacle to a Gaza ceasefire agreement as Washington exerts no pressure on the occupying Tel Aviv regime to accept a permanent truce in the territory.

"[Israeli prime minister Benjamin] Netanyahu does not want a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to be established. We checked with the fellow Hamas group whatever happened during the course of truce negotiations in Cairo. Our national position was the same as what Hamas declared in the Egyptian capital," Islamic Jihad Deputy Secretary General Muhammad al-Hindi said on Monday evening.

He added that Netanyahu's insistence on Israeli control and presence in the so-called Philadelphia Corridor - a narrow 14.5-kilometer-long (9-mile-long) stretch of land along Gaza's southern border with Egypt, is politically-motivated and has nothing to do with purported security concerns.

"Control of the Rafah border crossing is an internal Palestinian matter, and no party can dictate how it should be managed," the senior Islamic Jihad official noted.

Hindi described the United States as the main obstacle to a Gaza ceasefire agreement, stressing it would be in the White House's best electoral interests that a ceasefire deal is struck in Gaza.

He also reiterated the need for free movement of Palestinians between the northern and southern sectors of the Gaza Strip.

"The Zionist enemy is backtracking on what it had previously agreed upon for partisan and political goals. The regime's occupation of Gaza crossings enables its continued control over the movement and lives of Palestinians in the territory," Hindi pointed out.



Leader Says Solving Inflation Is the Urgent Priority of Gov't

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei in meeting with President Masoud Pezeshkian and his cabinet on the occasion of the Government Week said inflation is an important issue which should be solved by the government.

During this meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei stated: "The President consulted me on the selection of ministers. I approved some, emphasized certain others, and there were many I didn't know, so I had no opinion."

The Supreme Leader, referring to the qualities necessary for selecting government colleagues, said: "My recommendation is to use more colleagues who are young, faithful, revolutionary, committed, and highly motivated; they are the ones who can help you. We have used these young people in various scientific and research sectors, such as nuclear, nanotechnology, stem cells, and other areas that are significant scientific and research challenges globally, and we've made great advancements."

Ayatollah Khamenei added: "By employing young people in different managerial ranks, you will train a generation of highly motivated managers for the future. When you bring young people into your organization, they gain experience, and in the future, you'll have produced a distinguished, highly motivated managerial generation. I believe this is very valuable, and this was also discussed with the President."

He continued: "If, for example, he can prepare 100 young, motivated, revolutionary, and committed individuals and deliver these 100 young people to the country by the end of his term, I believe he would have accomplished a very significant task."

Ayatollah Khamenei added: "Relying on expert work is a sign of wise governance. Choose experts who do not pursue outdated foreign solutions."

Addressing the members of the government, he stated: "Make sure to go among the people and make provincial trips. Don't pay attention to those who might call you populist."

He emphasized: "The important laws and decisions of the government need a justice attachment. A justice attachment is not ceremonial but a real necessity."

Ayatollah Khamenei expressed gratitude for the formation of the government, saying: "We thank God that, with the efforts of the honorable President and the valuable help of the Parliament, the government was formed. This is a great blessing. In previous governments, sometimes it took close to a month or more for the government to be formed, and not all ministers received the vote of confidence from the Parliament. This time, God granted this favor to you, to us, and to the country, that, fortunately, all the ministers received the Parliament's trust and were approved. Those who were effective in this election and in forming this government after that heavy and bitter incident are all rewarded by God Almighty."

The Supreme Leader said: "The President worked very hard and diligently in selecting the ministers who would work with him. He also consulted with me. Some of those I knew or whose qualifications were reliably conveyed to me, I approved. For others, I emphasized certain points. There were many I didn't know, so I had no opinion about them. Fortunately, he managed to make the selection and convince the Parliament, and this was a great success. We thank God for it."

He emphasized the need to prioritize important issues, stating: "Solving the issues of inflation and high prices should be an urgent priority."

Ayatollah Khamenei added: "Today, all of these esteemed ministers and you, dear brothers and sisters who have gained the trust of the President and Parliament, are all high-ranking officials of this country. It is the duty of all of us to support you, help you if you need assistance, and strive for your success in your tasks, God willing."

Addressing the government officials, he said: "You are in a position today where you can influence the country's progress and the administration of the country's affairs. The ministry has given you such a position. This is a divine blessing—the ability to serve the people is a great blessing."

Iran Not to Fall Into Enemy's Trap of Media Provocations, Games



TEHRAN - Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri has said that Iran will not fall into the enemy's trap of media provocations and games, confirming that Tehran will certainly avenge the Israeli assassination of the Hamas chief.

In remarks on Monday, Major General Bagheri said that Martyr Raisi had formed a government that was working round the clock for the country and the people, expressing hope that the national consensus government in the country to be able to continue this way.

Referring to the beginning of the 14th government amidst the complex circumstances following President Raisi's martyrdom, along with ongoing threats, plots, and sanctions from adversaries, he highlighted that such conditions in any society could create a significant crisis, but the Islamic Republic of Iran, thanks to the presence of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, and widespread public support, successfully conducted elections and formed a new government.

Pointing to the regional situation following Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, Major General Bagheri noted that the past 11 months have seen numerous significant events, such as Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, the attack on the Iranian Consulate in Damascus, Operation True Promise, the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, and Hezbollah's retaliatory actions as an initial response to the assassination of Fouad Shukur in West Asia.

He described the Israeli regime's cowardly assassination of Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran as an unforgettable issue, noting that revenge for the blood of martyr Haniyeh at the hands of the Resistance Axis and the Islamic Republic of Iran is definite.

Referring to Hezbollah's massive strikes against the Israeli regime's military targets, Major General Bagheri underscored, "The Islamic Republic of Iran decides for itself about the revenge, while the resistance axis will act separately and independently in this regard, as we saw yesterday."

Iran Making Headway in Radiopharmaceutical, Irradiation Fields



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says there has been a revolutionary development in the production of radiopharmaceuticals in the country in recent years.

In an interview on the occasion of Arbacen and commemorating the upcoming government week, Mohammad Eslami said on Monday that products from three new irradiation centers will be used in the coming days.

Irradiation of various products was in different areas and since irradiation is an urgent need that greatly contributes to the health of society, food security, national economy, we designed practical measures to develop the use of radiation, he underlined.

Before 224, three radiation centers were active in the country, and now we have seven and their number will increase to 10 in the near future, the AEOI chief revealed, saying "until the last three years, the use of radiation was only on paper and was limited to the plan, but now it has been implemented by relying on domestic power".

In response to a question, Eslami said that the Iranian nation must create empathy in the path of realizing the country's goals. "Each person has a special taste and approach, and what is important is belief, faith and belief, as well as the important and broad commonalities we all adhere to. Therefore, we should focus on the country's goals, commitments, and progress because the people expect us to elevate the country".

We have decided to clarify the relationship of the AEOI with the future, people, society and the world in order to determine where and what direction the nuclear industry is heading to, he said, adding that in this milieu, a comprehensive vision document is prepared and all stakeholders and active talents have been invited to contribute.

After the comprehensive vision document for the 20-year horizon was approved, we turned it into a charter for all colleagues in the industry, he explained further.

The Iranian nuclear chief stressed that the country must bring nuclear technology into the lives of people and society.

Tehran, Doha Prepared for Enhanced Cooperation in All Areas

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Masoud Pezeshkian and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani have stressed the readiness on both sides to give a boost to mutual cooperation in all areas.

During a meeting in Tehran on Monday, the two sides discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues.

The Iranian president hailed the political relations between the two neighbors as exemplary, urging the need for both sides to upgrade relations in other areas.

He expressed hope that the Islamic countries and other nations that adhere to the international norms and regulations, would stand together and convince the patrons of the Zionist regime to stop supporting for this regime and put an end to its crimes and genocide in the Gaza Strip.

The Qatari prime minister, for his part, conveyed the warm greetings of Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to President Pezeshkian, noting that the Emir attaches special significance to promotion of ties with Iran.

He stressed that Qatar, like Iran, believes that mutual cooperation between the two countries has yet to reach the expected levels and the two countries have to make further efforts to fulfil this goal.

Criticizing the contradictory positions of the international community and the so-called advocates of human rights towards the victim and criminal in Gaza, the Qatari official said that Doha will continue with its efforts to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza and counts on Iran's constructive role as a key player in this regard.

He appreciated President Pezeshkian's approach to regional and international issues, voicing his country's readiness to engage in more cooperation with Iran in different bilateral, regional and international areas.



Earlier Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani discussed the most important regional issues.

Referring to the good trade and economic potential of two countries, Araghchi expressed Iran's interest in cooperating with Qatar, particularly through the Joint Economic Commission, to witness a new leap and positive momentum in ties.

The top Iranian diplomat also thanked the Qatari government for its constructive efforts in addressing important regional issues, especially in

halting the war and establishing a ceasefire in Gaza.

Pointing to the Zionist approach to intensify tension and expand the circle of war and conflict in the region, he highlighted that the Islamic Republic of Iran thanks Qatar's efforts to immediately stopping the war and the crimes of the Zionists against the oppressed people of Palestine and welcomes the establishment of a ceasefire in the Gaza.

He highlighted Iran's support for any agreement accepted by the Palestinian resistance and Hamas.

Meanwhile, the Qatari diplomat congratulated Araghchi on his appointment and expressed determination to continue cooperation to achieve common goals and strengthen economic ties between the two countries.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani also provided an update on Qatar's diplomatic efforts to end the war and establish a ceasefire in Gaza, calling for continued consultations to promote stability and security in the region and help the Palestinian people.

IRAN NEWS



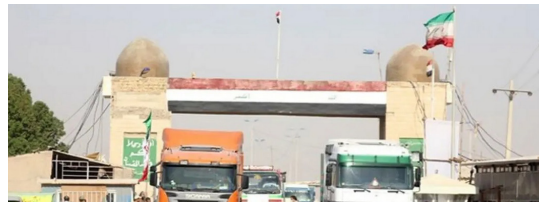
Iranian, Turkish Envoys to Baghdad Discuss Regional Issues

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - The Iranian and Turkish ambassadors to Iraq met in Baghdad and exchanged views on bilateral and regional issues, including the ongoing Israeli genocide of Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Mohammad-Kazem Ale-Sadegh met with Anil Bora Inan, Turkiye's new ambassador to Baghdad met in the Iranian Embassy on Monday evening. The two envoys agreed to the fact that the unrelenting support of the United States to the Zionist regime has made the regional situation complicated and unstable.

Both Mohammad-Kazem and Inan also warned against the escalation of tensions in the region with the continuous crimes of the Zionists and their leaders.

Rial-Based Transactions With Iraq Through Banks Are Not Possible



TEHRAN - Shaban Foroutan, a member of the board of directors of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, explained the latest status of trade between the two countries in an interview.

He stated that despite the usual challenges, Iran's exports to Iraq continue smoothly. For Iranian traders to maintain their presence in the Iraqi market, it is essential to uphold product quality. Iraq is not the only export destination for Iranian traders; competitors from Turkey, China, Jordan, and other countries are also striving to increase their share in this market.

Regarding the challenges arising from the dual exchange rate of the dollar for Iranian traders, Foroutan mentioned that most Iranian exporters are now conducting business with Iraq using the Iranian Rial. While the dollar is not completely eliminated, a significant portion of traders are managing their transactions without it. Not all goods require transactions in dollars. However, due to sanctions, Rial transactions cannot be processed through banks. Instead, traders receive the Rials from their sales in the Iraqi market through their connections with exchange offices in Iraq, Iran, or a third country like the UAE, as direct settlement is not possible.

Foroutan added that a significant issue currently affecting the presence of Iranian goods in the Iraqi market is the repeated price increases in Iran over the past year, whereas prices are generally expected to rise only once annually.

Discussing the export of technical and engineering services to Iraq, he noted that the registration of companies and the export of these services from Iran to Iraq require a partnership with an Iraqi citizen. It is not possible for an Iranian to independently register a company in Iraq.

Commenting on the idea of creating a roadmap for Iran-Iraq trade by the Trade Promotion Organization, Foroutan remarked that while such discussions are frequent, the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce has repeatedly emphasized the need for an economic task force comprising private and public sector representatives to address any issues that arise in the course of trade between the two countries.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



Iran-EAEU Trade Increases 2.5 Fold

TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade (IMT) and Head of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization announced that over 300 Iranian companies and representatives from the five member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) will participate in the "Grand Iran-Eurasian Economic Union Business Meeting" scheduled to take place from October 1st to 2nd in Yerevan, Armenia.

Mehdi Zeyghami emphasized the importance of this meeting, stating that it will be a valuable opportunity for Iranian economic actors to maximize their benefits from the upcoming Free Trade Agreement. He noted that this event serves as a significant commercial exchange within the framework of the annual Eurasia 2024 Economic Forum. Organized by the Eurasian Economic Commission in collaboration with the Eurasian Economic Union Business Council and relevant institutions from member countries, along with the Iran Trade Promotion Organization, the event will include various discussions aimed at strengthening and further developing bilateral trade and economic cooperation between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Zeyghami also highlighted the presence and speeches of high-ranking officials during the event's main sessions. The event will feature a key business dialogue session with representatives from government institutions, trade associations, and major companies from both the Eurasian Union and Iran. Additionally, four roundtable discussions will be held with representatives from specialized companies and institutions from both sides, focusing on topics such as increasing trade volume and mutual investments, logistics and transport connectivity in the North-South

corridor, industrial and agricultural cooperation, food security, mutual settlements, as well as B2B meetings, both in-person and online, between companies and private sector representatives.

Zeyghami further noted the expansion of economic and trade cooperation between Iran and the Union's member states following the signing of trade agreements. He mentioned that the implementation of a temporary agreement to establish a free trade zone between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union since 2019 has resulted in a more than 2.5-fold increase in mutual trade volume. Additionally, Iran's exports to the Union have grown by over 138% during this period.

The Deputy Minister of IMT highlighted that the temporary agreement marks the first stage of trade convergence between Iran and the Union, covering around 800 goods with preferential terms. After a year of this temporary agreement, negotiations began to conclude a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement covering nearly 90% of all goods, aiming for the complete elimination of customs tariffs. This agreement was ultimately signed in January 2024 and is now undergoing the legal approval process to become effective.

In conclusion, Zeyghami predicted that once the agreement is implemented, Iran's access to the vast 183-million-strong Eurasian market, which imports over \$300 billion from around the world, would lead to a significant surge in trade volume and exports. However, this would require groundwork, effective communication, and a deep understanding of the market by Iranian exporters and producers.

Saudi Arabia Eyes Iran's Agricultural Export Markets



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Seyed Reza Nourani, the head of the National Union of Agricultural Products of Iran, in an interview, dismissed the rumors about irrigating watermelons in Iran with sewage as utterly false. He expressed regret that some media outlets publish such news without verification, negatively affecting the psychological state of the agricultural products market in the country.

He also mentioned the strong demand for Iran's export watermelons in March, explaining: "Most of Iran's export watermelons are cultivated in southern regions such as Jiroft and Chabahar and are exported to Turkey, Europe, Russia, and the Persian Gulf countries in early March and spring. During this season, many countries do not produce or export watermelons, increasing the demand for Iranian watermelons."

Nourani then addressed the increase in agricultural production and exports in Saudi Arabia, stating: "Although Saudi Arabia has always been considered a dry and water-scarce region, it now plans to turn its territory into a green park, a project being pursued in cooperation with the Chinese. As a result, it is not surprising that Saudi Arabia is increasing its production and export of watermelons and other agricultural products, which could impact the markets in the Persian Gulf region. Just as Dutch agricultural products were once dominant in the Persian Gulf countries, when Iran entered this market with the advantage of proximity, the Netherlands had to leave this market, ceding it to Iran. Currently, countries like Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are also trying to strengthen their presence in the agricultural markets of the Persian Gulf countries, but Saudi Arabia's advantage over these countries is its larger size and population."

He added: "Saudi Arabia meets its agricultural water needs by desalinating seawater, and it's worth noting that while

Saudi Arabia has entered into cooperation with China, Iran has signed a 25-year agreement with China but has not been able to utilize the potential of this agreement for desertification control."

The head of the National Union of Agricultural Products emphasized that despite facing drought and water shortages, Iran, according to the FAO, has the capability not only to meet its own food needs but also to supply the food needs of the Persian Gulf countries. The FAO has stated that Iran's agriculture currently proceeds with 35% waste, and if this waste is reduced and modern technologies are employed, Iran's agricultural production could increase from 120 million tons to 200 million tons. This production boost could be achieved with the same amount of water currently available to us, making the increase in agricultural production particularly important given the government's plans to increase the country's population.

In response to whether agricultural exports should be reduced due to the water-intensive nature of agriculture, Nourani said: "The agricultural industry accounts for about 40% of Iran's employment, so it cannot be restricted with the argument that it is water-intensive. The solution is to manage water resources and upgrade agricultural technologies. These technologies include improving seeds and seedlings and using those that consume less water and have higher yields per unit area. Otherwise, banning the export of agricultural products due to their water-intensive nature would only result in lost employment opportunities and foreign exchange earnings."

Finally, he stated: "If the government defines associations as its arms and consults with them in decision-making, Iran's agricultural production could double its current volume."

Gov't Determined to Reform the Difficult Economic Conditions



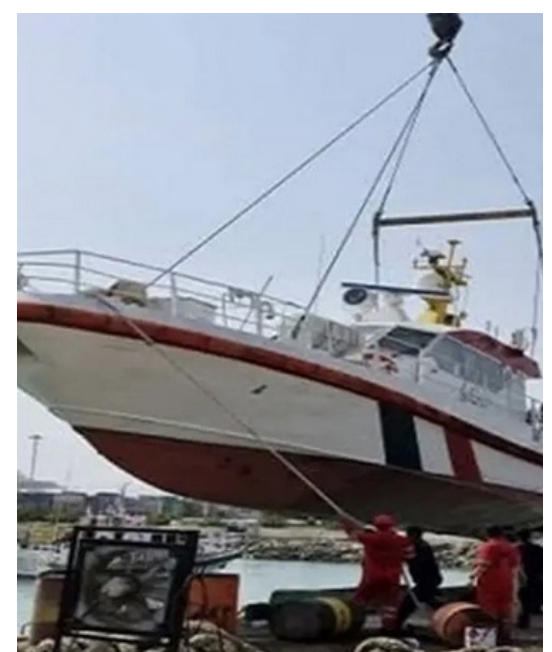
Abdolnasser Hemmati, during his inauguration ceremony as the Minister of Economy and the commendation of the previous Minister of Economy, which was held in the presence of the President, emphasized the need to strive to overcome the country's difficult economic conditions. He stated, "The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance plays a central role in the country's economy, and we must work to utilize this role to alleviate the economic hardships and problems of the people."

He added, "Many people asked why I accepted this responsibility given the difficult economic conditions and the budgetary and banking imbalances, some of which have reached a crisis level. Firstly, I have a special regard for Mr. Pezeshkian and wanted to assist him, and secondly, given my scientific findings and at least three decades of experience in economic management, it was necessary to offer these experiences during these difficult times to help solve the people's problems."

The Minister of Economy stated, "All efforts of the country's economic institutions must focus on four main pillars: first, economic stability and reducing inflation; second, high economic growth; third, reducing the unemployment rate; and fourth, equitable income distribution and poverty alleviation. Any efforts to address economic problems must yield results in these four areas, otherwise, they will be incomplete."

Hemmati expressed hope that the efforts of the fourteenth government's economic team in these four pillars would be fruitful, emphasizing that the first meeting of the government's economic council was held with this focus. They concluded that the economic conditions have reached a difficult and challenging state, and people's livelihoods have exceeded normal hardship levels, necessitating immediate action.

Load and Unload of 94m Tons of Goods in Ports



TEHRAN - According to the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development from the Ports and Maritime Organization, the amount of oil goods unloaded in proprietary and sovereign ports of the Ports and Maritime Organization during the first five months of 1403 was equivalent to 10,964,248 tons. Non-oil goods unloading amounted to 21,291,098 tons, with the total unloading of oil and non-oil goods reaching 32,255,346 tons.

The amount of oil goods loaded in proprietary and sovereign ports of the Ports and Maritime Organization during the first five months of this year was equivalent to 32,132,166 tons. Non-oil goods loading amounted to 29,896,965 tons, with the total loading of oil and non-oil goods reaching 62,029,131 tons.

The total unloading and loading of oil goods during the first five months of 1403 was equivalent to 43,096,414 tons, and the total for non-oil goods was 51,188,062 tons. The combined total unloading and loading of oil and non-oil goods during this period was 94,284,476 tons.

The loading and unloading conducted in the container operations section during the first five months of this year was equivalent to 1,079,516 TEU, reflecting a 4% increase compared to the same period last year, which was 1,052,590 TEU.

Iran Non-Oil Trade with Neighboring Countries Reaches \$27b



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Customs Administration announced that Iran's non-oil trade with 15 neighboring countries reached \$26.857 billion in the first five months of this year, marking a 16% increase.

Mohammad Rezvani-Far stated that the weight of Iran's non-oil trade with these 15 neighboring countries totaled 43.579 million tons, showing a 10% increase compared to the same period last year.

He added that the top five trading partners among these neighbors during this period were the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Russian Federation.

According to the Deputy Minister of Economy, Iran's non-oil trade with the UAE was valued at \$11 billion, with Turkey at \$6 billion, Iraq at \$4.8 billion, Pakistan at \$1.1 billion, and the Russian Federation at \$969 million.

Rezvani-Far mentioned that out of the total non-oil trade with the 15 neighboring countries in these five months, Iran exported 34.118 million tons of goods worth \$13.402 billion and imported 9.461 million tons worth \$13.455 billion.

The head of customs noted that Iran's non-oil exports to these neighboring countries increased by 11% in weight and 19% in value during this period, while imports from neighboring countries grew by 10% in weight and 13% in value.

He also highlighted that the main buyers of Iranian goods among the 15 neighboring countries were Iraq, the UAE, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Rezvani-Far added that the highest volume of imported goods in the first five months of this year came from the UAE, Turkey, the Russian Federation, Pakistan, and Oman.

At Least 132 Killed in Sudan Flooding

PORT SUDAN (Dispatches) - At least 132 people have died in war-torn Sudan as a result of flooding and heavy rains this year, the health ministry said Monday. The country has experienced an intense rainy season since last month, with intermittent torrential flooding mainly in the country's north and east. "The total number of affected states is 10, while the number of affected families rose to 31,666 families and individuals to 129,650," it said in a statement. "The total number of deaths reached 132."

While flooding takes place annually in Sudan, the impact is expected to be worse this year after more than 16 months of fighting between rival generals which has pushed millions of displaced people into flood zones.

Some 12,420 homes have completely collapsed and 11,472 others partially collapsed due to the rains, according to the ministry, which said most of the damage is in Sudan's Northern and River Nile states.



Afghanistan Taliban Gov't Rejects Criticism of Morality Law as Arrogance



KABUL (Dispatches) - Afghanistan's Taliban authorities responded on Monday to criticism of recently codified morality rules, saying rejecting the legislation without understanding Islamic law showed "arrogance".

Women must cover completely and not raise their voices in public, among other rules restricting women's movements and behaviour, according to a 35-article law announced Wednesday by the justice ministry.

It imposes wide-ranging stipulations, including rules on men's clothing and attending prayers as well as bans on keeping photos of living beings, homosexuality, animal fighting, playing music in public and non-Muslim holidays.

The United Nations, rights groups and Afghans have expressed concern that the law would lead to increased enforcement of the rules on lifestyle and behaviour, many already informally in place since the Taliban authorities took power in 2021 and implemented a strict interpretation of Islamic law -- or sharia.

The law is "firmly rooted in Islamic teachings" that should be respected and understood, said chief government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid in a statement Monday night.

"To reject these laws without such understanding is, in our view, an expression of arrogance," he said, adding that for a Muslim to criticise the law "may even lead to the decline of their faith".

The European Union on Monday said it was "appalled" by the decree that "confirms and extends severe restrictions on the life of Afghans".

"This latest decision is another serious blow undermining the rights of Afghan women and girls, which we cannot tolerate," said a statement from EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

Biden, Modi Discuss Ukraine War

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed the Russia-Ukraine war following Modi's visit to Ukraine, along with the situation in Bangladesh where protests led to the ousting of former leader Sheikh Hasina earlier this month.

Modi posted online that he discussed the situation in Ukraine with Biden over the phone and "reiterated India's full support for early return of peace and stability." He also said the two leaders stressed "the need for early restoration of normalcy, and ensuring the safety and security of minorities, especially Hindus, in Bangladesh."

The White House issued a separate statement, saying Biden commended Modi's recent visit to Poland and Ukraine, and that both leaders expressed "support for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in accordance with international law, on the basis of the UN Charter."

Last week, Modi visited Ukraine in the first visit by an Indian prime minister in modern Ukrainian history. It came at a volatile juncture in the war launched by Russia in February 2022. Moscow is making slow gains in eastern Ukraine as Kyiv presses a cross-border incursion.

Modi urged President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to sit down for talks with Russia to end the war and offered to help bring peace.

Modi's Ukraine visit followed a visit he made to Russia in July where he embraced President Vladimir Putin on the same day that a deadly Russian missile strike hit a children's hospital. That visit angered Ukraine and the U.S. State Department said it raised concerns with India about ties with Russia.

Moscow has been a large weapons supplier to India since the Soviet Union days. Washington in recent years has looked to woo New Delhi, to counter China's influence.

Modi said the two leaders also discussed the situation in Bangladesh where about 300 people, many of them university and college students, were killed during protests that began in July with students agitating against quotas in government jobs before the events spiraled into demonstrations to oust long-serving former Prime Minister Hasina.



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The near-term risk of a broader war in the Middle East has eased somewhat after Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah exchanged fire without further escalation but Iran still poses a significant danger as it weighs a strike on Israel, America's top general said on Monday.

Air Force General C.Q. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke to Reuters after emerging from a three-day trip to the Middle East that saw him fly into Israel just hours after Hezbollah launched hundreds of rockets and drones at Israel, and Israel's military struck Lebanon to thwart a larger attack. It was one of the biggest clashes in more than 10 months of border warfare, but it also ended with limited damage in Israel and without immediate threats of more retaliation from either side.

Brown noted Hezbollah's strike was just one of two major threatened attacks against Israel that emerged in recent weeks. Iran is also threatening an attack over the killing of a Hamas leader in Tehran last month.

Asked if the immediate risk of a regional war had declined, Brown said: "Somewhat, yes."

"You had two things you knew were going to happen. One's already happened. Now it depends on how the second is going to play out," Brown said while flying out of Israel.

"How Iran responds will dictate how Israel responds, which will dictate whether there is going to be a broader conflict or not."

Brown also cautioned that there was also the risk posed by Iran's militant allies in places such as Iraq, Syria and Jordan who have attacked U.S. troops as well as Yemen's Houthis, who have targeted Red Sea shipping and even fired drones at Israel.

"And do these others actually go off and do things on their own because they're not satisfied - the Houthis in particular," Brown said, calling the Shia group the "wild card."

Iran has vowed a severe response to the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, which took place as he visited Tehran late last month and which it blamed on Israel. Israel has neither confirmed or denied its involvement.

Brown said the U.S. military was better positioned to aid in the defense of Israel, and its own forces in the Middle East, than it was on April 13, when Iran launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, unleashing hundreds of drones, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles.

Still, Israel, the U.S. and other allies managed to destroy almost all of the weapons before they reached their targets. "We're better postured," Brown said. He noted Sunday's decision to maintain two aircraft carrier strike groups in the Middle East, as well as extra squadrons of F-22 fighter jets.

"We try to improve upon what we did in April."

Brown said whatever plans Iran's military might have, it would be up to Iran's political leaders to make a decision.

"They want to do something that sends a message but they also, I think ... don't want to do something that's going to create a broader conflict."

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration has been seeking to limit the fallout from the war in Gaza between Hamas and Israel, now in its 11th month. The conflict has leveled huge swathes of Gaza, triggered border clashes between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement and drawn in Yemen's Houthis.

Brown traveled on Monday to the Israeli military's Northern Command, where he was briefed on the threats along Israel's borders with Lebanon and Syria. In Tel Aviv, he met Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and its Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi.

Asked about Lebanese Hezbollah's military might, particularly after the strikes by Israel, Brown cautioned "they still have capability."

Russia Pounds Ukraine With Missiles, Drones

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia launched several waves of missile and drone attacks overnight targeting Kyiv and other regions, Ukraine's military said early on Tuesday, a day after Moscow's biggest such attack of the war.

At least one person was killed when a civilian object was "wiped out" in the central Ukraine city of Kryvyi Rih, regional officials said.

Kyiv region's air defence systems were deployed several times overnight to repel missiles and drones targeting the Ukrainian capital, the region's military administration said on Telegram.

Reuters' witnesses reported at least three rounds of explosions overnight in Kyiv.

On Monday, Russia launched more than 200 missiles and drones, killing at least seven and damaging energy infrastructure in an attack condemned by U.S. President Joe Biden as "outrageous."

The size of the Tuesday attacks was not immediately known, but Ukraine's air force said it recorded the launch of several groups of drones and the take-off from Russian airfields of strategic Tu-85 strategic bombers and MiG-31 supersonic interceptor aircraft.

Reuters could not independently verify the reports. There was no immediate comment from Russia.

The Kremlin denies targeting civilians in the war that President Vladimir Putin launched against Russia's smaller neighbour with a full-scale invasion in February 2022.

The Russian defence ministry said that its strikes on Monday hit "all designated targets" in Ukraine's critical energy infrastructure.

Kryvyi Rih, Kyiv and central and eastern regions of Ukraine were under air raid alerts for most of the night, starting at around 2000 GMT on Monday.

Five civilians may be still under the rubble and four were injured as a result of the Russian attack, Oleksandr Vilkul, head of Kryvyi Rih's military administration, said on Telegram.

"The news is bad," Vilkul said.



China Spent \$15.3b on Pacific Exercises in 2023

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - China spent about \$15 billion, or 7% of its defence budget, on exercises in the Western Pacific in 2023, according to a previously unpublished Taiwanese estimate, showing Beijing's investment in military activity around Taiwan and its neighbours.

The internal research by Taiwan's armed forces, reviewed by Reuters, offers a rare look into a slice of China's defence spending as Beijing has ramped up its military presence amid rising tensions in the region.

China claims Taiwan as its own and has never renounced the use of force to bring the democratically governed island under its control despite Taiwan's strong objections. It is also locked in disputes with several countries over sovereignty of large parts of the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

"This reveals the logic of allocation of their resources," said a senior Taiwan official briefed on the research. "They are spending a huge amount of resources trying to gain control of the west of the First Island Chain." The official, and two other people briefed on the research, declined to be identified for this story because of the sensitivity of the matter.

The First Island Chain is a collection of archipelagos running roughly from Indonesia in an arc northeast to Japan, encompassing

the South China Sea and East China Sea.

In a statement to Reuters, Taiwan's defence ministry declined to comment on the figures.

"But the Chinese Communist Party's enormous military investment in recent years indeed has a negative impact to the peace and stability in the region, which is not conducive to global prosperity and development," it added.

China's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Zhang Youxia, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission and China's second-highest-ranking military official, said in April the sea should not be an arena where countries can flex their "gunboat muscles".

Carrying out "maritime containment, encirclement and island blockades will only plunge the world into a vortex of division and turbulence," he added, in an apparent reference to the U.S. and its allies.

Taiwan's defence ministry compiled the reports in May based on Taiwanese surveillance and intelligence on Chinese military activity in the Bohai Sea off northeast China, the East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, and the western Pacific Ocean.





Fritz Into U.S. Open Second Round

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Taylor Fritz leaned on his dominant forehand to beat Argentine Camilo Ugo Carabelli 7-5 6-1 6-2 and reach the second round of the U.S. Open.

World number 12 Fritz, the highest ranked of 17 American men in the main draw, won 79% of points on his first serve and converted seven of 11 break-point chances to secure victory on Louis Armstrong Stadium.

In the first meeting between the two players, Fritz needed a bit of time to find his rhythm and was made to come back from an early break down before securing the opening set when he broke Ugo Carabelli for a third time.

The second set was all one-way traffic as Fritz faced just one break point while building a 5-0 lead before Ugo Carabelli finally held serve only for the American to close out the frame on his serve.

With victory in sight and the home crowd firmly on his side, Fritz broke at love to go 3-2 up in the third set and broke again before serving out the match with a love hold that was capped with a pair of aces.

Up next for Fritz, looking to become the first American man to win a Grand Slam title since Andy Roddick at the 2003 U.S. Open, will be a clash with Italy's Matteo Berrettini.

Meanwhile Frances Tiafoe held off fellow American Aleksandar Kovacevic to come away with a 6-4 6-3 4-6 7-5 win in the first round of the U.S. Open.

Tiafoe, seeded 20th, remained composed, even as the pressure ramped up, to advance as he looks to make good on his promise to win his home Grand Slam after his scintillating run to the semi-finals two years ago put him firmly on the map.

Kovacevic, a New York native making his U.S. Open debut, looked a little nervy serving in the 10th game of the opener and Tiafoe took full advantage, leaping high in the air to pound an overhead and grab the first set.

Tiafoe smoked a service return for a 4-2 lead in the second and took a 2-0 lead when Kovacevic's one-handed backhand sailed long.

Kovacevic came to life in the third, hitting a sensational around-the-net forehand winner in the fourth game to peel off some of the support from the pro-Tiafoe crowd and breaking serve for a second time to force a fourth set.

But Tiafoe would not be denied, breaking for a 6-5 lead in the fourth and converting his fifth match point to seal the win.

In women's event, Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen overcame early serving woes to move into the second round of the U.S. Open with a hard-fought 4-6 6-4 6-2 victory over American wildcard Amanda Anisimova.

Seventh seed Zheng, a quarter-finalist in New York last year, won 73% of her first-serve points and converted six of her 11 break-point chances during a two hour 20-minute match at Louis Armstrong Stadium where she was broken four times.

"At the beginning I didn't have my first serve but the more the match goes I started to find my rhythm on the hard court," Zheng said during her on-court interview.

"In the second set I really believed all my shots helped a lot and I started to be more consistent ... and little by little I started to get more into the rhythm."

Anisimova raced out to a 5-1 double break lead in the first set but then had to dig deep as Zheng broke back at love, turned aside three set points on her next serve and then broke again to get the match back on serve.

But Anisimova, having twice failed to serve out the set, found another way as she broke a misfiring Zheng for a third time to grab the first frame.

Vlahovic Double Helps Juventus to 3-0 Win at Verona



VERONA (Dispatches) - Juventus continued their flying start under new manager Thiago Motta with a comfortable 3-0 victory at Hellas Verona in Serie A on Monday as a Dusan Vlahovic double and a goal by Nicolo Savona sent them to the top of the table.

Juventus, who kick-started their campaign with a 3-0 win over promoted Como last week, are the only side who kept their points tally at a maximum over the opening two match days of the Italian top flight and lead the standings with six points.

They were winless in their previous eight away games in Serie A.

Vlahovic put Juve in front in the 28th minute with a low shot from around the penalty spot for his first league goal since April 19.

Manuel Locatelli won the ball on the left flank before Kenan Yildiz teed up Vlahovic with a low pass into the box and the Serbian striker struck past Verona keeper Lorenzo Montipo into a bottom corner.

Defender Savona doubled the lead for the visitors before the break, scoring with a header inside a far post.

Samuel Mbangula set up Savona with a brilliant lofted pass across the face of the goal and the 21-year-old, coming from Juventus' reserves team, scored on his first start for the first team.

Vlahovic then made it 3-0 from the spot following halftime, after Juve were awarded a penalty for Jackson Tchatchoua's foul on winger Samuel Mbangula.

Former England Coach Eriksson Dies at 76

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Swedish football manager Sven-Goran Eriksson, who became the first foreigner to lead the England national team, died on Monday at the age of 76.

Eriksson, a charismatic coach who guided Swedish, Portuguese and Italian clubs to major trophies in the 1980s and 1990s before taking on the England job in 2001, announced in January that he was terminally ill with pancreatic cancer.

Eriksson's long-time agent Bo Gustavsson said Eriksson had lost his battle with cancer early on Monday, surrounded by his family.

"We knew it was going to end bad, it all went really fast in the last few weeks," Gustavsson told Reuters.

"He has always been so positive and has had time for others and never thought of himself, and he was that until the very end," the agent added.

His two children, Lina and Johan Eriksson, thanked all those people who had supported their father.

"I get to hear it while I'm alive and I'm incredibly grateful for that. The heart beats twice and the tears come," they quoted Eriksson as saying in a statement.

"I have had the best job in the world and I was happy every day for long periods. It's been fantastic."

Eriksson led England to the 2002 and 2006 World Cup quarter-

finals, and to the 2004 European Championship, managing a golden generation of players, including David Beckham, Paul Scholes, Frank Lampard, Wayne Rooney and Steven Gerrard.

"On behalf of my colleagues at the FA, past and present, our thoughts are with his friends and family today. He will be much missed, and we will pay tribute to him when we play Finland at



Wembley next month." English FA CEO Mark Bullingham wrote on X.

Eriksson first gained international recognition by guiding Swedish club IFK Gothenburg to the UEFA Cup title in 1982, and enjoyed successful spells as coach of Portugal's Benfica and Italian clubs AS Roma, Fiorentina, Lazio and Sampdoria.

Politicians, former clubs and players praised Eriksson.

"We laughed, we cried & we knew we were saying goodbye," Beckham, who was England captain under the Swede, wrote on Instagram.

"Sven, thank you for always being the person you have always been, passionate, caring, calm & a true gentleman...I will be forever grateful for you making me your captain," Beckham said.

Former England striker Rooney wrote on X: "A special man. Thanks for the memories and all your help and advice."

Alessandro Nesta, who was captain of Italy's Lazio under Eriksson and is now coach of Serie A team Monza, said on X: "Rest in peace great Coach and extraordinary person. I will always carry you in my heart."

Italy's soccer federation said matches in the country's top two divisions would be preceded by a minute's silence in Eriksson's honour.

Titans Upend Saints on Late TD

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Malik Willis threw two fourth-quarter touchdown passes to Bryce Oliver, the second on a late fourth down, to lift the Tennessee Titans past the host New Orleans Saints 30-27 in the preseason finale for both teams.

Competing for the backup job behind Derek Carr, Saints rookie Spencer Rattler threw a TD pass and led four scoring drives totaling 24 points. Rattler was 7-of-13 passing for 105 yards, including a 21-yard score to Equanimeous St. Brown, capping a 70-yard drive in the second quarter.

No. 1 QB Will Levis started for the Titans (3-0) and finished 7-of-8 passing for 118 yards as he led a pair of scoring drives. Tony Pollard (five carries, 17 yards) scored on an early 1-yard run before Tennessee rested its starters.

In the fourth, Rattler led a pair of scoring drives that ended with a pair of TD runs by undrafted rookie Jacob Kibodi, who led the Saints (1-2) with 12 carries and 59 rushing yards.

Oliver, who caught a 34-yard TD earlier in the fourth before his 5-yard scoring reception with 1:25 left, finished with a team-high 52 receiving yards on three catches for the Titans.

Zach Wilson threw a pair of touchdowns and ran for another, leading host Denver Broncos 38-12 over Arizona Cardinals both teams wrapped up their preseason slate.



Wilson, who will back up rookie starter Bo Nix, completed 16 of 25 passes for 251 yards, including a 46-yard TD toss to Brandon Johnson and a 1-yard scoring pass to Nate Adkins. Wilson scored on a 1-yard scamper to put Denver (3-0) comfortably ahead 24-6 late in the third quarter.

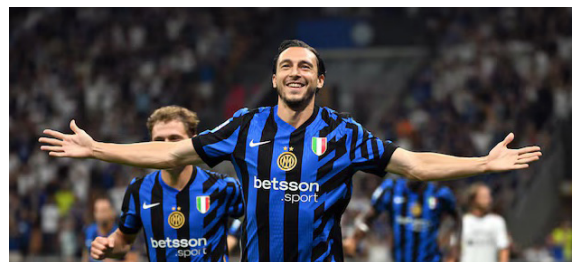
Clayton Tune, competing with Desmond Ridder to back up starter Kyler Murray for Arizona (0-3), was 12-for-18 passing for 119 yards. Ridder completed 10 of 16 throws for 111 yards. Hassan Hall rushed for 59 yards on 19 carries, including a 3-yard TD run.

Washington Commanders scored all its points in the final 26 minutes of the game to race past New England Patriots 20-10 in Landover, Md.

Drake Maye got the Patriots (1-2) off to a good start by finding Kevin Harris for an 18-yard touchdown with 40 seconds left in the first quarter, but New England would only get a 38-yard field goal from Chad Ryland the rest of the way. Maye took over after veteran signal-caller Jacoby Brissett suffered a shoulder injury just over 2 1/2 minutes into the game.

Michael Wiley rushed for a 9-yard TD and Martavis Bryant caught a 4-yard score for the Commanders (1-2). Washington's Trace McSorley completed 12 of 21 passes for 125 yards and the touchdown to Bryant.

Barcelona Should Always Aim for LaLiga Title



MADRID (Dispatches) -Barcelona have started the LaLiga season well with two consecutive win despite missing several key players, raising expectations around the prospects of new manager Hansi Flick.

Top of LaLiga alongside Celta Vigo on six points, Barcelona travel to Madrid to face Rayo Vallecano on Tuesday, who are unbeaten after shocking Real Sociedad 2-1 and holding Getafe to a hard-fought goalless draw on Saturday.

"The goal in Barcelona should always be to win the league," Flick told a press conference on Monday.

"Sure, it's a long road, but we have started well, although everything can change quickly. Now we are happy about our start and we are confident. We are not looking ahead to May, our focus is to keep momentum in the next game.

"We are very satisfied with what the team is doing on the pitch. The quality of the training sessions is good, the players are very focused, the intensity is good... and you can see that in the matches."

Rayo will rely on their raucous Vallecas Stadium to help stopping in-form Barcelona who beat convincingly beat tough opponents in Valencia and Athletic Bilbao to ease the pressure surrounding a club in turmoil on and off the pitch.

Following a trophyless last campaign which ended with the controversial firing of manager Xavi Hernandez, Barcelona signed former Bayern Munich and Germany coach Flick to help them regain the LaLiga title from Real Madrid.

Flick took over a club with deepening financial issues, desperately trying to reduce their first-team wage bill so they can comply with LaLiga's financial controls so they are allowed to register new signings like Spain international Dani Olmo.

They let German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan leave as a free agent after only one season since signing him from Manchester City and on Monday announced the departure of French defender Clement Lenglet -- to Atletico Madrid -- and Brazilian forward Vitor Roque -- to Real Betis -- both on season-long loans with no transfer fees just to clear their salaries.