

Municipalities of Tehran and Moscow Have Signed an MoU to Operationalize a Sisterhood Agreement Previously Signed Between the Municipal Officials of the Two Metropolises

IRAN NEWS

Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights and the Ambassador of India to the Islamic Republic Rudra Gaurav Shresth Have Emphasized the Need to Expand Legal and Judicial Cooperation Between the Two Countries

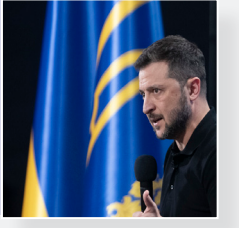
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Iran Looking for Ways to Get Illegal Sanctions Removed



TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian says his government is looking for ways to get illegal sanctions removed that have been imposed against the Islamic Republic.

Pezeshkian made the remarks on Tuesday while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony held at the Foreign Ministry premises to honor and introduce the new foreign minister.

"The actions of enemies against our country are cruel. We adhered to our commitments and they must stick to their commitments," Pezeshkian said.

He said that strengthening and developing relations with neighbors is one of the government's priorities.

"Connections and development of relations [with neighbors] make sanctions ineffective," the president added.

Pezeshkian said his government's priorities are based on the policies of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution which is establishing ties and doing other affairs with countries with honor, wisdom and in Iran's interest.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi also made brief remarks.

"The most important priorities of his ministry are opening the way and removing obstacles in the economic field, the honor and pride of Iran and Iranians in all fields, as well as securing national interests and helping the country's national security," he said.

Earlier in the day, the new president and other members of his cabinet met with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, where he said that maintaining national unity and keeping people happy with the government policies is the best way to defeat the oppressive US and EU sanctions.

"If unity is achieved inside the country and among the Islamic Ummah, the United States, Europe and other countries that cruelly support the crimes of the genocidal Zionist regime will fail," he said.

"The people's satisfaction with the officials depends on their behavior with the people," he added.

Meanwhile on the sidelines of the event, saying that Tehran has adhered to its commitments, Pezeshkian called on the enemies of the Islamic Republic to adhere to their commitments as well.

Iranian Students Rank 1st in 17th Int'l Olympiad on Astronomy, Astrophysics



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian students have won the first place in the 17th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA).

Iran dispatched a five-member team to the event, which was held this year in Vassouras, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from August 17 to 27.

More than 250 students from 57 countries contended in the competition.

The delegation comprised Hannaneh Khorramdashti, Mohammad-Mehdi Keshavarzi, Arya Fatch-Kerdari, and Ali Naderi-Lordjan.

The IOAA is an annual international astronomy competition for high school students and was first held in Thailand in 2007.

Last year, Iranian students won the third place in the competition which was held in Silesia, Poland over a 10-day period starting on August 10.

Amir-Mehdi Esmaeili Taheri, Mehdi Ostad-Mohammadi, and Arvin Rasoulzadeh bagged three gold medals for Iran, while Sarina Farzadnasab and Amir-Hossein Mousavifard won two silver medals.

At the end of the competitions, Britain won the event's first place with five gold medals and India ended in the second place with four golds and one silver.

The United States, Brazil, Bulgaria, Romania, Germany, and Canada followed Iran in the ranking.

Founded by five countries--Thailand, Indonesia, Iran, China, and Poland--IOAA aims to promote interest in astronomy and astrophysics among young people from participating countries, as well as to strengthen ties between different nations and improve the exchange of scientific and cultural knowledge and experiences.



Defense Industry Has Become Fully Indigenous Today

Tehran - IRNA - The Deputy Minister of Defense and Armed Forces Support stated that, the defense industry of the Islamic Republic of Iran, relying on domestic power and innovation through the design and construction of military equipment, has become a fully indigenous industry.

Brigadier General Seyed Hojjatollah Ghorishi, in a ceremony commemorating Defense Industry Day with the presence of military attaches from foreign countries residing in Iran, said August 25, has been designated as the National Defense Industry Day in the official calendar of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He added that this day, alongside the numerous and brilliant achievements arising from the Islamic Revolution for our country, such as independence, freedom, dignity, and self-reliance, today, progress and self-sufficiency in the defense industry, despite the imposition of the heaviest restrictions and illegal and unjust sanctions, has become one of the most important achievements of the Islamic Revolution.

He stated that before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran's armed forces were completely dependent on the West, both strategically and in terms of equipment. The negative impact of this dependence was experienced during the imposed war by Saddam's Ba'athist regime against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the strategic loneliness of our country during the war at the height of Cold War rivalries led the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the strategic conclusion that, to achieve independence and safeguard national interests and security, there was no other way but to pursue the difficult yet sweet path of independence in the defense industry. Thus, after four decades, this path, with effort, determination, and confidence in the capacities and talents of Iranian youth, has now led to the attainment of credibility, power, and defensive deterrence in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ghorishi emphasized that today, the defense industry of Iran, relying on domestic power and innovation through the design and construction of military equipment, timely response to the current and future needs of the armed forces, and transformation in the methods of weapons production, has become a fully indigenous industry.

He stated that achieving such capability has made Iran an active and decisive player in the region. He noted that the advancements of the Ministry of Defense of the Islamic Republic of Iran in missile, aerial, air defense, naval, space, electronic warfare, cyber, and cognitive

domains, and other fields, have not only led to self-sufficiency in providing the necessary equipment and weaponry for the country's armed forces but have also turned the Islamic Republic of Iran into one of the exporters of defense products and technology.

Referring to regional and international developments, he said that the world is undergoing the most complex military conditions and is on the brink of widespread and surprising threats and dangers. Regional conflicts and wars are on the rise, a shift in the global order is occurring, and efforts to form blocs and competitions in military-security areas have reached their highest level.

Ghorishi added that among the signs of change in the global security system are the decline of U.S. power, the shift of the political-economic power paradigm from Western hegemony to emerging and new independent political and economic powers, and the increase in extremism, separatism, geostrategic competitions among global powers, the expansion of proxy wars, and terrorism as tools of foreign policy for some countries.

He asserted that the United States, after World War II, and especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, has attempted to dictate its desired order to other countries as the world's dominant power. They have used various tools to achieve this goal, one of the most important being the creation of chaos and artificial crises in many non-aligned countries.

He stated that the U.S. and imperialist powers, by creating artificial crises and shaping proxy wars, seek to achieve their objectives at the expense of others, as we are witnessing today in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eastern Europe, and Asia.

Ghorishi emphasized that the result of the U.S. interventions and aggressions will certainly lead to the spread of the ideology of resistance, the expansion of its arenas, the creation of intercontinental alliances, and the formation of new power poles and anti-hegemonic blocs in the world, leading to greater independence regardless of religion, race, or geography.

He stressed the importance of cooperation among friendly countries and said that what is important in this context and necessary is the joint efforts of independent countries to create harmony and convergence against the current unjust system and to accelerate the movement toward a multipolar world, diversity, and the establishment of a just system based on multilateralism. As history has taught us, we believe that behavior based on force, hegemony, and domination will not endure.

At Least 11 Palestinians Killed in Israeli Raids



GAZA (Dispatches) - The Israeli military has carried out airstrikes against several towns across the occupied West Bank, leaving at least 11 Palestinians dead and 15 others wounded, the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) says.

Ahmed Jibril, spokesman of the PRCS said on Wednesday that two Palestinians were killed after Israeli forces launched a drone strike on the city of Jenin, adding that four others lost their lives in a drone assault on their vehicle in a nearby village.

Five others were also killed in an Israeli strike on the al-Fara refugee camp located south of the West Bank city of Tubas, he said.

Israeli tanks also besieged the camp, preventing medical teams from reaching the wounded.

Israel deployed hundreds of troops to the cities of Jenin, Tulkarm and Tubas to carry out large-scale military operations in those areas.

The raids were met with strong resistance from Palestinian fighters, who destroyed Israeli bulldozers.

Meanwhile, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa said the operation is part of a wide-scale military offensive launched by the Israeli occupation authorities in several areas of the West Bank.

Israeli forces were carrying out a "major offensive in the city of Tulkarm," besieging hospitals and preventing Palestinians from moving in and out of the city, according to Wafa.

The bloody attacks came two days after seven Palestinians were killed in an Israeli drone strike on a house in al-Manshiya neighborhood at the Nour Shams refugee camp near the city of Tulkarm in northwestern West Bank.

A number of others were also wounded during the raid on Monday, which saw the Israeli aircraft releasing several missiles against the targeted residence.

Israel has ramped up attacks on Palestinian towns and cities throughout the occupied territories since the beginning of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. More than 640 Palestinians have been killed in the assaults and in attacks by Israeli settlers, including more than 100 children.

Israel launched the barbaric campaign of death, destruction and genocide in Gaza on October 7, 2023 after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas waged the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity in response to the Israeli regime's decades-long campaign of bloodletting and devastation against Palestinians.

Israel has so far massacred 40,476 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

Final Victory Belongs to Palestinians



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has hailed Palestinians' eleven-month-long steadfastness in the face of the Israeli regime's genocidal war and atrocities, expressing confidence that "final victory" belongs to the Palestinian people.

The top diplomat made the remarks on Wednesday during a telephone conversation with Khalil al-Hayya, the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas's deputy Political Bureau chief.

"The current Iranian Administration will continue to robustly pursue its predecessors' policy of support for the oppressed Palestinian nation," Araqchi added, stressing that the Islamic Republic would stand with the Palestinians "until the end."

He also underlined that Tehran would lend its support to whatever agreement leading to a ceasefire and cessation of the underway war on the Gaza Strip that meets the approval of the Palestinian people and resistance.

For his part, al-Hayya said, "The Palestinian people are grateful for the Islamic Republic's permanent support for the Palestinian cause and their resistance in the face of Zionists' crimes."

He cited former Iranian foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian's efforts in support of the Palestinian resistance as a case in point.

The conversation came amid the Israeli regime's October-present war on Gaza that was launched in response to a retaliatory operation staged by the coastal sliver's resistance groups.

The brutal military onslaught has so far claimed the lives of at least 40,476 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and wounded another 93,647.

In July, Hamas agreed to a truce deal featuring withdrawal of the Israeli forces, return of the displaced people, an end to the siege that has been imposed by Tel Aviv on Gaza, and initiation of the territory's reconstruction process.

The regime, however, rejected the proposal before coming up with "new conditions," including its keeping its forces inside Gaza along the coastal sliver's border with Egypt.

Israeli Regime Seeks Judaization of al-Aqsa Mosque



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement has strongly condemned Israel's extensive aggression against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank as "an open and undeclared war."

Islamic Jihad said in a statement on Tuesday that Israel's wide-scale military campaign is part of the regime's plans to tighten control over the occupied al-Quds and the holy al-Aqsa Mosque.

"The criminal occupation is launching a comprehensive assault on the cities and camps of the northern occupied West Bank in an open and undeclared war, one we had previously warned about," it said.

"This aggression seeks to shift the focus of the conflict to the occupied West Bank in an attempt by the entity to impose new facts on the ground aimed at subjugating the occupied West Bank, annexing it, and asserting its control over our sanctities in an existential war against the Palestinian people," it added.

The Palestinian movement warned that the Israeli regime seeks "judaization of al-Aqsa," citing an earlier provocative proposal by Israeli security minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, to construct a synagogue in the holy site.

The group further censured the international inaction in the face of Israeli crimes against the Palestinian nation and sanctities.

Elsewhere in its statement, Islamic Jihad urged the world community to hold the regime in Tel Aviv fully responsible for the repercussions of its aggressive policies against the Palestinians.

Israeli politicians have long violated the delicate arrangement and facilitated raids on the holy site and performed rituals.

During his recent provocative visit, Israeli extremist minister Ben-Gvir said that it was his "policy" to allow Jewish prayers on the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, Islam's third-holiest site where only Muslims are allowed to pray under a status quo arrangement originally reached more than a century ago.

This week Ben-Gvir revealed his intention to build a Jewish synagogue inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied East al-Quds as a dangerous declaration.

He said that if he could, he would build a synagogue on the al-Asqa Mosque complex.

Hamas called on Palestinian youth to mobilize at the al-Aqsa compound to maintain a presence in its courtyards and to confront the plans of the occupying regime.

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Iran Summons Austrian FM

TEHRAN (IRNA) – Foreign Ministry summoned the Austrian ambassador in Tehran.

Following the action of the Foreign Ministry of Austria in summoning the ambassador of our country, “Wolf Dietrich Haim”, the Austrian ambassador in Tehran, was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on August 27, 2024 by the Director General of the Iranian foreign ministry’s Western Europe Office.

Meantime earlier on Tuesday, Iranian Ambassador to Vienna Abbas Bagherpour posted a content supporting Hezbollah’s airstrikes on Israel last weekend

Afterwards, the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Iran’s ambassador after he posted a message in support of Lebanon’s Hezbollah online. The post included the flag of Hezbollah, a group banned in Austria, along with the statement “Hezbollah will win”.

16% Increase in Iran's Foreign Trade Value



TEHRAN - Iran's non-oil trade with 15 neighboring countries reached \$26.857 billion in the first five months of the current year, marking a 16% increase.

Customs data shows that the weight of Iran's non-oil trade with these neighboring countries totaled 43.579 million tons, reflecting a 10% increase compared to the same period last year.

The top five trade partners among these neighboring countries were the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Russian Federation.

During this period, Iran's non-oil trade with the UAE amounted to \$11 billion, with Turkey to \$6 billion, Iraq to \$4.8 billion, Pakistan to \$1.1 billion, and the Russian Federation to \$969 million.

Of the total non-oil trade with these 15 countries in the first five months of this year, 34.118 million tons worth \$13.402 billion were exported, while 9.461 million tons worth \$13.455 billion were imported.

Iran's non-oil exports to these neighboring countries saw an 11% increase in weight and a 19% increase in value during this period. Similarly, imports from these countries grew by 10% in weight and 13% in value.

The primary buyers of Iranian goods among these 15 countries were Iraq, the UAE, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

The highest volume of imported goods in the first five months of this year among the neighboring countries originated from the UAE, Turkey, the Russian Federation, Pakistan, and Oman.



HR Chief Rebukes Ex-UN HR Rapporteur Presence Alongside MKO Leader

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Kazem Gharibabadi, the Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, has vehemently criticized Javaid Rehman, the former UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, for appearing alongside the leader of the notorious terrorist group, the Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO).

In reaction to Rehman's attendance and remarks at a meeting of the MKO notorious terrorist group in Paris, which had severe damaging impacts on the credibility and standing of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, Gharibabadi penned a letter to the President of the Human Rights Council, Omar Zniber, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, criticizing the former Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran's participation in such events.

According to the announcement of this terrorist organization which is responsible for the deaths of 17,000 innocent Iranians and committing crimes that surpass both time and borders, the meeting coincided with the supposed final anti-Iran report of Javaid Rehman as the United Nations Special Rapporteur.

Gharibabadi emphasized that Rehman's report was an allegation full of lies and baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran to satisfy the demands of the MKO terrorist group and to pay tribute to their financial support at the end of his tenure as a special rapporteur.

He emphasized that the Human Rights Headquarters of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in its letter dated July 10, 2024, provided a comprehensive response to the accusation and cautioned that compiling such unlawful and mission-exceeding reports by a United Nations expert, purportedly to aid a terrorist organization, could undermine the credibility of international human rights bodies and the United Nations framework.



First VP Criticizes Quality of Domestic Cars

TEHRAN - The First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, while criticizing the quality of domestic cars and the conditions of car pre-sales, stated: “Unfortunately, the support provided to the automotive industry in past decades has been detrimental to the industry.”

Aref, during a ceremony honoring Abbas Ali Abadi, the former Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade, and introducing the new Minister, Seyed Mohammad Atabak, criticized the state of the automotive industry. He mentioned that while domestic cars consume a lot of fuel, discussing the liberalization of fuel prices is meaningless. He added, “Unfortunately, the support given to the automotive industry over the past decades has been a disservice to the industry. Automakers have repeatedly promised to improve the quality of cars, but the reality is that no improvement has occurred.”

The First Vice President further noted, “Automakers are misleading people with their promises and pre-sales, while it is our duty to provide good domestic or foreign cars according to regulations to meet the people’s needs.”

In this ceremony, Aref thanked Abbas Ali Abadi, the Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade in the thirteenth government, saying, “In every responsibility he has held, he has been a source of goodness and blessing, and we hope that by continuing his work in the Ministry of Energy, he will bring about serious changes in the areas of electricity and water, where our industry faces challenges in both sectors.”

The First Vice President continued, “In the past two days, I participated in the ceremonies honoring and introducing the Ministers of Agriculture Jihad and Industry, Mines, and Trade. The selection of these two ministries was not coincidental, and I believe that they are the most important ministries that can realize the slogan of the year, which is ‘Production Leap with People’s Participation.’ They are leading ministries in the creation of wealth.”

He added, “‘Production Leap’ means ‘Wealth Production,’ but the activities of our managers over the past four decades show that not only have we not succeeded much in wealth production, but we have also been pioneers in wealth consumption, and this consumption has relied on the limited resources we had. However, in the fourteenth government, by focusing on top-level documents and especially the Seventh Development Plan, we strive to achieve both wealth production and important indicators such as growth and unemployment reduction.”

The First Vice President emphasized, “Of course, all these advancements will not happen without people’s participation and only with a government-centered approach, while the general policies of Article 44 have removed narrow-minded excuses for the presence of the private sector and the people’s involvement.”

Aref further stated, “Today, we are in a situation where, in top-level documents and especially the Seventh Development Plan, we have no shortage of planning and progress, and we may even be facing a ‘law and document inflation.’ But why, in the past three decades, have we not achieved the transformation that should have occurred, and why have we not reached the first place in the region in 2025, which was supposed to belong to Iran?”

He pointed to Iran’s poor rankings in the Global Competitiveness Index, Industrial Competitiveness Index, Economic Freedom, Ease of Doing Business, Global Innovation Index, and more, saying, “In this government, we are trying to achieve the desired goals as quickly as possible by implementing the Seventh Development Plan, which coincides with the start of the government’s and parliament’s activities.”

Addressing the Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade, the First Vice President stated, “The average industrial growth over the past five years has been 2.9%, which must reach 8.5%. The average annual growth in mining has been 2.8%, which must reach 13%. In the trade sector, it has been 4%, which must reach 23%.”

Tehran-Islamabad Trade Surpasses \$928m

TEHRAN - Amanollah Kehrazai, a member of the Zahedan Chamber of Commerce, in an interview, reported a calm atmosphere in private sector trade between Iran and Pakistan, stating that the trade value between the two countries has exceeded \$928 million since the beginning of this year. Rice, cotton, and sesame remain the main imports from Pakistan to Iran.

He added that Iranian traders are interested in resuming the import of Pakistani mandarins due to their good quality, as well as live animals. Although live animals are imported from Pakistan, it is not accessible to all traders. From Iran, tiles, cement, and petrochemical products are the main exports to Pakistan.

Kehrazai explained the situation regarding Pakistani rice that was prevented from entering Iran due to a temporary import ban. This rice has been transferred to the Chabahar Free Zone, where it is stored until the ban is lifted, allowing it to enter Iran.

Regarding the potential establishment of a joint bank between Iran and Pakistan, he mentioned that this initiative remains merely a discussion. The Iran-Pakistan Joint Chamber has not witnessed any concrete steps toward its realization. The main issue is the powerful presence of the U.S. in Pakistan, as the U.S. finances Pakistan’s military. This influence affects all aspects of Iran-Pakistan governmental relations, including the establishment of a joint bank. This issue has even led to Pakistan being unable to settle payments for the electricity and oil it has purchased from Iran, resulting in these funds being blocked in Pakistan.

However, Kehrazai noted that private sector economic actors in Iran and Pakistan maintain good relations. The population of Pakistan’s Balochistan region consists of Iranians who have migrated there, and most residents of the area from Karachi Port to the Taftan border are Iranian

Baloch, who share many cultural and behavioral similarities with Iranians. This cultural and ethnic similarity has significantly impacted the development of private sector trade between the two countries.

In this interview, he also mentioned the tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan, stating that such tension is common. Pakistanis are not welcoming to Afghan migrants and often subject them to mistreatment.

Lal Mohammad Baloch Zehi, a board member of the Iran-Pakistan Joint Chamber, also spoke with ILNA about Pakistan’s continued strict measures against the entry of Iranian steel products. He explained that Pakistan imposes heavy tariffs on the import of rebar and other steel products from Iran to protect its steel industry, making Iranian steel exports to Pakistan economically unviable. Additionally, the Iranian government has imposed heavy tariffs on the export of scrap iron from Iran to Pakistan to prevent its exit from the country. However, Iranian bitumen and cement are currently easily exported to Pakistan.

Meanwhile a delegation of Iranian companies called on Chief Executive (CE) of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Zubair Motiwala.

The CE briefed the delegation, headed by CEO and Vice Chairman of Tamin Petroleum & Petrochemical Investment Co (TAPPICO) Babak Afghani, about the activities of TDAP and the role the organization plays in increasing trade. Motiwala highlighted the potential of trade between Pakistan and Iran and shown his keen interest to increase in the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries.

He called for starting barter trade between the two countries, adding that a mechanism may be devised for the same. The Iranian side was informed about economic free zones where joint ventures can be arranged and the products processed/made in Pakistan can be exported to the world.

Gov't's Priority Is Economic Growth Without Increasing Inflation



TEHRAN - Ali Tayebnia, the Senior Advisor to the President, spoke about the decisions made in the first meeting of the government’s economic council: “The main priority of the government is to achieve higher economic growth. This growth should be in a way that does not increase inflation. We are pursuing policies that can promote economic growth without causing inflation, thereby reducing unemployment and creating more jobs.”

He added, “Important decisions were made in this meeting. Among them, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance was tasked with preparing a comprehensive policy package that can facilitate the exit from the recession. This policy package should be designed in a way that strengthens economic growth without having inflationary effects.”

Tayebnia also emphasized, “The Planning and Budget Organization is currently working on the budget for the current year. The goal is to manage the budget in a way that achieves the best results with the least cost.”

In conclusion, Tayebnia urged all stakeholders to work with full seriousness and coordination in implementing these policies.

Handicraft Exports Last Year Were Only \$325 Million



TEHRAN - Handicrafts and traditional arts are considered one of the most important aspects of indigenous culture and national production in countries. In Iran, for instance, there are cities recognized globally for their handicrafts, with Isfahan, known as the “Creative City of Handicrafts,” producing around 60% of the country’s handicrafts.

Iran is one of the leading pioneers in the global handicrafts industry, having claimed 450 of the 600 works recognized and registered by the World Crafts Council (WCC), an affiliate of UNESCO.

Despite being among the top three countries globally in handicraft production, alongside China and India, Iran ranks 31st in exports, highlighting deficiencies in the commercialization and export process.

According to reports from the World Trade Organization (WTO), global handicraft exports reached \$718 billion in 2022. Developing countries have significantly benefited from this, capturing more than 65% of the market share.

Reports indicate that India, with \$115 billion, and China, with \$78 billion in handicraft exports, are among the leading exporters. Additionally, online infrastructure and e-commerce have revolutionized handicraft sales, with an annual growth rate of 35%, reflecting the increasing global demand for unique and culturally rich products.

According to official customs data, in 2023, Iran’s handicraft exports amounted to \$325 million. If individual and suitcase exports through the country’s exit points are considered, this figure slightly increases. However, even with the inclusion of \$309 million from domestic sales, the share of handicrafts in the national economy remains minimal. Comprehensive and extensive actions are needed to boost exports and secure Iran’s rightful place in the global market.

Iran’s non-oil exports primarily include agricultural products, copper, handicrafts, chemical products, and industrial goods. Given that handicrafts are produced by local artisans, using domestic raw materials, with no foreign currency expenditure for production, are environmentally friendly, and do not require significant capital investment for development, expanding non-oil exports in this area could increase foreign exchange earnings, improve the balance of payments, and significantly impact employment and the growth rate of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP).

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.



Mexico Freezes Relations With U.S., Canadian Embassies



MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - The Mexican government has paused its relationship with the U.S. and Canadian embassies in the country, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Tuesday, after their ambassadors criticized a proposed judicial reform that he backs.

"There is a pause," Lopez Obrador said in a press conference, clarifying that the freeze was with the embassies and not with the countries.

The president is pushing a reform to elect judges, including Supreme Court justices, by popular vote. A committee in the lower house of Mexico's Congress passed the proposal late on Monday, paving the way for it to be approved when the newly elected Congress takes office in September.

Proponents say the reform will boost democracy and help fix a system that they argue does not serve the public, while critics say it will skew power in favor of the executive, cut off judges' careers, and make the courts more susceptible to criminal influence.

U.S. Ambassador Ken Salazar last week labeled the reform a "major risk to the functioning of Mexico's democracy" and cautioned of a potential risk to the U.S.-Mexico trade relationship.

The U.S. and Mexico are each other's largest trade partners.

Canada's ambassador to Mexico, Graeme Clark, also warned of investment concerns.

Later on Tuesday after Lopez Obrador's comments, Salazar posted a diplomatic note from the embassy, dated Aug. 23.

"The United States supports the concept of judicial reform in Mexico, but we have significant concerns that the popular election of judges would neither address judicial corruption nor strengthen the judicial branch of the Government of Mexico," the note read.

Trump Faces New Charge for 2020 Loss in Polls

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Donald Trump faced a revised federal indictment on Tuesday accusing him of illegally trying to overturn his 2020 election loss, with prosecutors narrowing their approach after a US Supreme Court ruling that former presidents have broad immunity from criminal prosecution.

US Special Counsel Jack Smith's team obtained the superseding indictment in the Washington case, though it was highly unlikely to proceed to trial ahead of the November 5 election when the Republican Trump faces Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris.

The revised indictment lays out the same four charges prosecutors brought against the former president last year, but this one focuses on Trump's role as a political candidate seeking reelection, rather than as the president at the time.

The Supreme Court ruled on July 1 that Trump is at least presumptively immune from criminal prosecution for actions that were within his constitutional powers as president.

US District Judge Tanya Chutkan in Washington has been expected to decide in coming weeks which aspects of the case must be tossed out based on the Supreme Court's immunity decision.

Attorneys for Trump did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump in a statement on his Truth Social media platform said the Supreme Court's immunity ruling should lead to the entire case being thrown out, saying, "Smith rewrote the exact same case in an effort to circumvent the Supreme Court Decision."

Trump has pleaded not guilty to the initial charges, denouncing this case and the others he faces as politically motivated attempts to prevent him from returning to power. Opinion polls have shown Harris opening up a narrow national lead over Trump since Democratic President Joe Biden ended his reelection bid last month.

This indictment, like the initial one, accuses Trump of a multi-part conspiracy to block the certification of his election defeat to Biden.

It retains allegations Trump pressured then-Vice President Mike Pence to use his role presiding over the congressional certification of the election on January 6, 2021, to reject electoral votes from battleground states Trump lost.

Zelenskiy to Present Plan to Biden to End War With Russia

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Tuesday that the war with Russia would eventually end in dialogue, but that Kyiv had to be in a strong position and that he would present a plan to U.S. President Joe Biden and his two potential successors.

The Ukrainian leader, addressing a news conference, said Kyiv's three-week-old incursion into Russia's Kursk region was part of that plan, but that it also comprised other steps on the economic and diplomatic fronts.

"The main point of this plan is to force Russia to end the war. And I want that very much - (that it would be) fair for Ukraine," he told reporters in Kyiv of the war launched by Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

He did not elaborate further on the next steps, but said he would also discuss the plan with Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris and probably also with Republican Donald Trump, the two nominees for the U.S. presidential election.

Zelenskiy said he hoped to go to the United States in September to attend the U.N. General Assembly in New York and that he was preparing to meet Biden.

His remarks indicated that he sees the main potential forum for talks as a follow-up international summit on peace, at which Ukraine has said it wants Russia to have representatives.

The first summit to advance Kyiv's vision of peace, held in Switzerland in June, pointedly excluded Russia, while attracting scores of delegations, but not from China, the world's second largest economy, despite Kyiv's push to win over the global south.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Aug. 19 that talks were out of the question after Ukraine launched a major cross-border incursion into Russia's Kursk region on Aug. 6.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was in Kyiv last week, spoke by phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday and told him he supported an early and peaceful resolution to the Ukraine conflict.

Zelenskiy has been adamant that Russia wants to dictate terms to Ukraine in any settlement of the war, something that Kyiv sees as unacceptable.

Putin has said any deal needs to start with Ukraine's acceptance of "realities on the ground", that would leave Russia with possession of

substantial chunks of four Ukrainian regions as well as Crimea. Now Ukraine says it controls more than 1,200 square km (463 sq miles) of Russia's Kursk region.

"There can be no compromises with Putin, dialogue today is in principle empty and meaningless because he does not want to end the war diplomatically," Zelenskiy said at the news conference.

He said the offensive into the Kursk region had reduced the number of governments around the world calling for Ukraine to make compromises with Russia to end the war and give up swathes of territory.

On the battlefield, Zelenskiy mocked Putin, who he said was prioritising the capture of Ukrainian land over the defence of Russia's own territory.

He pointed to Kursk region where Ukraine has claimed the capture of 100 settlements, while Russian forces continue to inch forward in the eastern Donetsk region.

The Ukrainian leader also said that Kyiv was continuing to make progress on its domestic weapons production and that it had conducted its first test of a domestically-produced ballistic missile.

Meanwhile Russia launched missile and drone attacks targeting scores of Ukrainian regions and killing at least six people, officials said on Tuesday, a day after Moscow's biggest air attack of the war on its neighbour.

Three people were killed when a hotel was "wiped out" by a missile in the central city of Kryvyi Rih, regional officials said. Five people were injured and one person was still missing after the strike, Serhiy Lysak, governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region that includes Kryvyi Rih, said on Telegram.

Separately, three people were killed in drone attacks on the southeastern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia.

Three people were also injured in the Zaporizhzhia region and four were hurt in a missile strike on the northeastern region of Kharkiv overnight, local authorities said.

Zuckerberg Says U.S. Pressure on Covid-19 Posts Was Wrong

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Republicans cried victory on Tuesday after Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg said he now believes US government pressure on his social media platforms to take down certain Covid-19 content in 2021 was "wrong," and would resist similar attempts in the future.

In a letter addressed to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan and released by Republicans on the committee on Monday, Zuckerberg addressed a number of controversies centered on content moderation on his platforms.

He also asserted that he did not plan on repeating funding efforts for US election infrastructure ahead of the country's presidential poll this year, donations that had drawn sharp criticism from Republicans and used to stoke conspiracy theories.

The letter was a submission to a committee led by the hard-charging Republican Jordan that over the past months has accused tech platforms of throttling conservative views and pushing a democratic agenda.

The submission comes just over two months out from a tightly contested US presidential election race, with the spotlight on widespread online misinformation about the candidates.

Regarding the pandemic, the Facebook founder said President Joe Biden's administration had in 2021 "repeatedly pressured our teams for months to censor certain COVID-19 content, including humor and satire."

"I believe the government pressure was wrong, and I regret that we were not more outspoken about it," Zuckerberg wrote.

"I feel strongly that we should not compromise our content standards due to pressure from any administration in either direction -- and we're ready to push back if something like this happens again."

Republicans took the letter as a victory, with the Republicans' House Judiciary Committee account on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, labeling it a "big win for free speech."

The White House defended its actions during the

pandemic, which killed more than a million people in the United States amid bitter political battles over vaccines and attempts to limit the spread of the virus.

"When confronted with a deadly pandemic, this administration encouraged responsible actions to protect public health and safety," a White House spokesman said Tuesday.

"We believe tech companies and other private actors should take into account the effects their actions have."

Zuckerberg also said he would not be repeating his Covid-era push to fund nonprofits working to support US electoral infrastructure due to such donations being seen by Republicans as being partisan.

"My goal is to be neutral and not play a role one way or another -- or to even appear to be playing a role," he wrote.

The donations have been seized upon by former President Donald Trump, who has falsely alleged that the donations helped throw the 2020 vote by helping fund the organization of elections in swing state counties.

Trump has even opposed a potential US ban on Chinese-owned TikTok under the premise that it would only help the tech tycoon.

Seeing Zuckerberg regret his non-partisan personal donations under the pressure of Congress is both ironic and "a little disturbing to see," author and misinformation expert Renee DiResta told AFP.

"Certain parts of the letter strike me as very much caving to right-wing pressure," she added.

Trump, who is seeking a return to power in November after losing his reelection fight to Biden in 2020, claimed that Zuckerberg's statement offered support for his conspiracy theory that the election was stolen.

"This is what everyone's been waiting for -- THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WAS RIGGED!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

The letter to Congress also touched on controversy regarding Facebook's handling of a story regarding US President Joe Biden's son Hunter that was published by the New York Post in 2020.



Maduro Shakes Up Cabinet After Re-Election



CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro on Tuesday made major changes to his cabinet, including leadership of the oil and finance ministries and state oil company PDVSA, after a contested election both the ruling party and the opposition claim to have won.

The changes, which include a return to the cabinet by ruling party leader and famed hard-liner Diosdado Cabello and a change in duties for Vice President Delcy Rodriguez, who will add the oil ministry to her brief, came as Maduro shifted his rhetoric away from the election dispute and toward promised changes.

The disagreement over the July 28 election has sparked international calls for the release of full vote tallies, deadly protests and moves by the country's prosecutor to investigate the opposition and arrest journalists, even as the opposition insists a change in government is still possible.

The cabinet changes are "a profound renovation of the national government and we are putting together a new team which will help us transition everything for this era, open new paths... speed the changes the people need," Maduro said during an event broadcast live.

Cabello, a close ally of Maduro's predecessor, the late Hugo Chavez, will be the new interior, justice and peace minister, after being second in command of ruling party PSUV and the host of a colorful weekly show on state television, where he inveighs against the opposition and Venezuela's international critics.

"Today I think Venezuela is on the path of definitive peace, a peace with justice, a peace where the people feel that those who have acted against the constitution and

the law have justice applied to them on time," said Cabello, a former vice president and lawmaker who also served as interior and justice minister in the early 2000s.

Vice President Delcy Rodriguez will remain in her post, but add the oil ministry to her brief, Maduro added, while Anabel Pereira will replace Rodriguez as finance minister.

Rodriguez has built close relationships with business people as finance minister, connections that may help shore up PDVSA sales even despite US sanctions, as the government grapples with high inflation and other economic woes.

Hector Obregon is the new president of PDVSA, replacing Pedro Tellechea, who will move to head the Industry Ministry, Maduro said on state television.

Yvan Gil and Vladimir Padrino will remain in their respective posts as foreign minister and defense minister, Maduro said.

Reuters reported earlier, citing three sources, that Maduro would name Obregon to PDVSA and designate a new oil minister.

Obregon is a lawyer who was added to PDVSA's executive board last year as part of his government responsibilities, which also include positions at the finance ministry and Venezuela's development bank.

Tellechea, appointed to both PDVSA and the oil ministry in 2023, promised to target endemic corruption at the financially troubled company while hoping to win over its thousands of workers, a move critical to securing much-needed cash for the country.



Alcaraz Takes Tu to Reach US Open Second Round

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz roared home for a 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 victory over 186th-ranked Australian Li Tu on Tuesday to launch his bid to add the US Open to the Roland Garros and Wimbledon titles he claimed this year.

The 21-year-old Spaniard pushed his Grand Slam winning streak to 15 matches as he tries to join Rod Laver and Rafael Nadal as the only men in the modern era to win the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open in the same year.

He got off to a hot start, seizing a 4-0 lead on the way to pocketing the first set.

But Tu, who came through qualifying, got to grips with the imposing Arthur Ashe Stadium and Alcaraz's serve to take the second set.

He tried to keep the pressure on in the third, but Alcaraz's break for a 4-3 lead opened the floodgates, the Spaniard winning the eight straight games to take the third set and build a 5-0 lead in the fourth.

But Tu wouldn't go quietly, saving a pair of match points before Alcaraz closed it out with a love service game.

"I'm really happy to get through and get a chance to be better the next round," Alcaraz said. "Obviously, I felt well on court. I think I hit the ball well. I moved well."

"A few things that I have to improve if I want to, you know, keep going in the draw, but obviously I have to give credit to him as well that he played really good tennis and today surprised me a little bit in the second set."

Alcaraz had 50 winners and 30 unforced errors. Eighteen of those errors came in the second set, when he lost three straight games.

The third-seeded Spaniard, who won the first of his four Grand Slam titles in New York in 2022, will face

2021 quarter-finalist Botic van de Zandschulp in the second round, headed toward a possible semi-final showdown with top-ranked Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner.

Meanwhile in women's event, China's Zhang Shuai slumped to a 23rd consecutive defeat on Tuesday when she was knocked out of the US Open, leaving the two-time Grand Slam quarter-finalist without a win on tour since January 2023.

Zhang, a former top 25 player, was defeated 0-6, 6-1, 7-5 by Ashlyn Krueger of the United States in the opening round at Flushing Meadows.

The 35-year-old Zhang made the last-eight of the Australian Open in 2016 and Wimbledon three years later. She has also won two Grand Slam doubles titles.

However, she has been plagued by injuries in recent times and is now winless since she defeated Madison Brengle in the first round at Lyon in January last year.

Krueger, meanwhile, was able to register her first win at a Grand Slam after six successive losses.

World number one Iga Swiatek launched her bid for a second Grand Slam title of 2024 with a 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) victory over determined lucky loser Kamilla Rakhimova.

Broken as she served for the match, Swiatek trailed 6-3 in the second-set tiebreaker, saving three set points as she won the last five to close out the match against her 104th-ranked opponent.

"Well, I'm happy that I'm through to the second round, because, you know, first rounds are never easy," Swiatek said. "But for sure I want to improve some things and adjust a little bit so I'll make less mistakes."

Swiatek, the 2022 US Open champion, candidly revealed she carried "too much baggage" in her New York title defence last year.

She looked anything but weighed down, however, as she raced to a 4-0 lead.

Olmo Clinches Barca Comeback Win at Rayo on Debut



MADRID (Dispatches) - Dani Olmo celebrated his delayed Barcelona debut with a goal to seal a 2-1 comeback victory at Rayo Vallecano in La Liga on Tuesday.

The Spain playmaker's 82nd-minute strike helped Barcelona claim their third win from three matches under new coach Hansi Flick at the start of the season.

Barca were unable to register Olmo with La Liga after signing him from RB Leipzig until earlier in the day and he made an instant impact after being brought on at Rayo's Vallecas stadium.

Unai Lopez sent Rayo ahead against a flat Barca in the first half but Olmo came on at the break and energised the Catalans, who levelled through Pedri before the new arrival struck the winner.

"(I've been waiting to play) since I arrived, looking forward to the first game, the debut, and what better way (to mark it)," Olmo told DAZN.

"I was really looking forward to it, I felt physically ready to play, and it finally happened today."

"I am very happy to have made my debut and helped the team."

In the final stages 17-year-old defensive midfielder Marc Bernal was taken off after appearing to twist his knee and Flick was worried about the youngster, who has impressed at the start of the season.

"It's a sad victory because Marc Bernal is injured and it looks not so good," said the German coach.

"We have to wait until tomorrow to wait and see how heavy it is."

Draw Marks Start of Champions League's New Era

MONACO (Dispatches) - A new era in European club football begins on Thursday when the draw takes place in Monaco for an expanded UEFA Champions League featuring a radically changed format.

European football's governing body is selling what it describes as "a thrilling new future" for the game on the continent with more teams playing more matches, and more prize money on offer.

UEFA needs to generate hype around the new format, because there is a risk -- in the beginning at least -- that fans will find it confusing compared to the old model.

For the last 21 years, the Champions League had consisted of a group stage in which 32 clubs were split into eight groups of four, each playing six games. The top two in each group qualified for the knockout phase.

The new version will feature 36 clubs with everyone playing eight matches, but all teams pooled together into one giant league rather than in groups.

Clubs will still be split into four seeded pots of nine teams, with every participant given two opponents from each pot.

The top eight in the final ranking go through to the last 16, while the next 16 sides advance to an intermediate play-off round and the remainder go out.

The new format was introduced against the backdrop of the threat by Europe's biggest clubs to break away and form their own Super League.

But UEFA are also hoping the format can be a solution to the



problem of competitive imbalance in the sport which was making the group stage more predictable.

"The new format will introduce a better competitive balance between all the teams, with the possibility for each team to play opponents of a similar competitive level throughout the league phase," UEFA say.

What the changes will certainly not address are concerns about too much football being played and damaging the quality as a result.

The increasing demands on players, and the lack of rest as a result, were cited as reasons why many matches at Euro 2024 proved disappointing.

The new Champions League, in a season which is also set to finish with the first expanded version of FIFA's Club World Cup, will feature a total of 144 games in the group stage, up from 96 before.

The financial rewards are greater, however, with UEFA's total prize pot for the Champions League rising by about 25 percent to almost 2.5 billion euros (\$2.79 billion).

The winners of the competition can pocket over 86 million euros just in prize money, not including bonuses of 700,000 euros for every point gained in the league phase or income from television.

Kane Receives European Golden Shoe in Munich

MUNICH (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich and England striker Harry Kane received the Golden Shoe award as the highest goalscorer in a European football league at a ceremony in the Bavarian capital on Tuesday.

Kane scored 36 goals during the previous Bundesliga season, more than any other player in Europe.

Despite being the top Premier League scorer three times, Kane had never won the award.

"It's a fantastic feeling," Kane said.

"The award is for everyone. Without you, I wouldn't be standing here today."

"I feel good and am looking forward to the new season. I feel a new energy."

"I'm very proud to receive this award."

The prize was the latest won by the striker in a long list of personal awards, but Kane is still yet to win a team title in his career.

Kane went trophyless in his debut year in Munich, the first time Bayern finished a season without silverware since 2012.

He told reporters "I want to continue on as I started last season, but it is important to win titles. We want to achieve success as a team."

Kane's tally of 36 goals in 32 Bayern appearances is just five shy of the single-season record held by former Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski of 41.



The forward said Lewandowski's record was too far off to consider now.

"Once we get to April and we're a little bit closer, maybe it's something we can talk about, but for now it's just taking it game by game, trying to help the team by scoring goals."

"But also if we're winning and I'm not scoring goals I'm not going to worry."

This season's Champions League final will be held in Munich and Kane told reporters "we have to be there".

The England captain was handed the award by Bayern CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen, who praised Kane's character since making the move to Munich one season ago.

Created in the 1967-68 season, the Golden Shoe was formerly awarded to the top scorer in any European league, but in 1997 was changed to use a ranking system which favours players in higher-ranked leagues.

With six wins, Lionel Messi has received the award more than anyone else. Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Erling Haaland have previously won the award.

"It is something special that I am now mentioned in the same breath as these names," Kane said.

Cancelo Leaves Man City for Saudi club Al-Hilal



MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Portugal full-back Joao Cancelo has signed for Saudi club Al-Hilal from Premier League champions Manchester City, the two clubs announced on Tuesday.

The 30-year-old, who spent last season on loan at Barcelona, has penned a three-year deal with the Saudi Pro League title-holders.

Cancelo joined Man City in 2019 from Juventus and was a key player in his first three seasons at the club.

But he reportedly fell out with manager Pep Guardiola over his lack of playing time midway through the 2022-23 campaign and spent the rest of that season on loan at Bayern Munich.

Cancelo won three Premier League titles, the FA Cup and League Cup at the Etihad Stadium.

He also played six times in City's first victorious Champions League campaign in 2022-23.

Cancelo is Al-Hilal's first high-profile signing of the transfer window and joins Brazilian star Neymar and former Premier League players Kalidou Koulibaly, Ruben Neves and Aleksandar Mitrovic in Jorge Jesus' squad.

He has not played since Portugal's penalty shoot-out loss to France in the Euro 2024 quarter-finals last month.

Meanwhile Liverpool announced the signing of goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili from Valencia on Tuesday but the Georgia international will not arrive at Anfield until next season.

Mamardashvili shone during his nation's first ever major tournament at Euro 2024 as Georgia reached the last 16 before bowing out to eventual winners Spain.

"Liverpool have reached an agreement for the transfer of Giorgi Mamardashvili, subject to a work permit and international clearance -- with the Valencia goalkeeper set to move to Anfield ahead of the 2025-26 season," Liverpool said in a statement.

"The Reds have secured a deal for the 23-year-old that will see him stay in Spain for the remainder of the current campaign with Los Che before switching to Merseyside next summer."

Liverpool will reportedly pay 30 million euros (£25 million, \$34 million) plus a further five million euros in add-ons for their first signing of the transfer window.