

TEHRAN -- The number of coronavirus deaths in Iran has become single-digit after 54 days. Iranian health ministry figures on Wednesday showed seven patients had died of the virus in the past 24 hours.

"A total of 228 new patients infected with COVID-19 have been identified in the country based on confirmed diagnosis criteria during the past 24 hours," the Iranian Health Ministry's Public Relations Center said, adding that 99 patients had been hospitalized during the same time span.

TEHRAN-- Negotiations have not yet started with the U.S. on how it would pay compensation to the Islamic Republic following a ruling by the World Court that Washington had acted illegally by allowing courts to seize Iranian assets, Iran's Vice President for legal affairs Muhammad Dehqan said on Wednesday. "If we do not reach an agreement with the United States, we will refer the case to the Hague Court to determine the amount themselves," Dehqan said. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague ordered Washington in March to pay compensation to Iran after ruling that the seizure of Iranian assets in the United States breached a 1955 treaty between the two countries.

Viewpoint

Iranian, Syrian Presidents' Victory Lap in Damascus

Iran: Zionist Regime Weaker Than Spider's Web



Iran Defeat Kyrgyzstan at Ice Hockey Women's Asia Championship



Zionists Kill Palestinian in Airstrike, Demolish Houses



IRGC Seizes Oil Tanker in Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN -- Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) seized a Panamanian-flagged oil tanker in the strategic Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, the second-such capture by Tehran in under a week.

The confiscation of the oil tanker Niovi comes amid the disappearance of a crude oil tanker in southeast Asia believed to be carrying Iranian crude oil amid reports it may have been seized by the U.S.

The U.S. Navy published purportedly surveillance footage shot by an aerial drone of about dozen Guard vessels swarming the tanker around 6:20 a.m. The drone had been on a routine patrol in the area and saw the seizure, though the Navy did not receive a distress call from the Niovi itself, 5th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins said.

Those IRGC ships directed the oil tanker to reverse course and head toward Iranian territorial waters off the coast of Bandar Abbas, Iran, the Navy said.

Iran's Tasnim news agency reported the IRGC force had seized a "violation" tanker.

Shipping registries show the Niovi as managed by Smart Tankers of Piraeus, Greece. The Niovi had been coming from dry-dock repairs in Dubai, bound for Fujairah on the eastern coast of the United Arab Emirates, according to the data firm Refinitiv.

Maritime security firm Ambrey has said it believed the Advantage Sweet's seizure by the Iranian Navy to have been in response to a recent seizure via a court order by the United States of an oil cargo aboard the Marshall Islands tanker Suez Rajan.

According to the International Maritime Organization shipping database the Niovi's owner is Grand Financing Co, and the ship is managed by Greece-based Smart Tankers.

Last week, Iran seized an oil tanker carrying crude for Chevron Corp. of San Ramon, California.

Tehran's prosecutor announced the oil tanker was seized on a judicial order following a complaint by a plaintiff, the judiciary's Mizan news agency said. Iran has accused the Advantage Sweet of colliding with another vessel.

About a fifth of the world's crude oil and oil products passes through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow choke point between Iran and Oman, according to data from analytics firm Vortexa.

The taking of the two tankers in under a week comes amid the disappearance of the Marshall Island-flagged Suez Rajan, which had been in the South China Sea off Singapore for

over a year after a report alleged it to carrying Iranian crude oil. Tracking data for the Suez Rajan last showed it off East Africa, moving in a direction that could take it to the Americas.

The Financial Times, as well as the maritime intelligence firm Ambrey, both have reported the Suez Rajan was seized on order of American authorities.

Iran said Monday Iran will not hesitate to take all necessary measures to defend its national interests after the country's army confiscated the U.S. oil tanker in the Persian Gulf.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said Iran has proved that its hands are not tied up if its national interests are threatened.

U.S. authorities ordered a tanker of Iranian crude oil to redirect towards the U.S. in recent days, in a move that was the trigger for Iran's decision to capture the U.S.-bound tanker on Thursday, the Financial Times reported.

The paper said the U.S. had intervened to reroute a ship loaded with Iranian crude, originally destined for China.

The U.S. Department of Justice seized the tanker, the Suez Rajan, with cooperation from at least one company involved with the vessel, after it took on board a cargo of Iranian oil, it added.

"The previously unreported U.S. action towards the Suez Rajan shines a new light on Iran's decision to capture the Advantage Sweet, a U.S.-bound tanker of Kuwaiti crude that was chartered by Chevron," the FT said.

A U.S. official said Thursday's "seizure appears to be in retaliation for a prior U.S. seizure of Iranian oil".

In the past, Iran has retaliated against western countries' targeting of its crude oil shipments. In 2019, Iran seized two British-flagged tankers shortly after the UK had impounded an Iranian vessel that had stopped at Gibraltar en route to Syria.

Last year, Iran also took two Greek-flagged vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, after Greece had allowed the U.S. to drain the cargo of an Iranian tanker in Greek waters.

The Advantage Sweet Suez-max tanker that Iran seized was operating under a short-term charter for Chevron, one of the largest U.S. oil companies. Its crew, all Indian nationals, are now being held by Iran. It was taken in the Gulf of Oman east of the Hormuz strait, according to U.S. Central Command.

Vessels and crew seized by Iran in the past have eventually been released.

Presidents Raisi, Assad Sign 14 Agreements

Long-Term Strategic Cooperation



This combination of picture shows President Raisi in Damascus and meetings with President Assad in Damascus on Wednesday.

DAMASCUS, Syria (Dispatches) — The presidents of Iran and Syria signed Wednesday a series of long-term cooperation agreements on oil and other sectors to bolster economic ties between the two allies.

Iran's Ebrahim Raisi, leading a large economic and political delegation, met with his Syrian counterpart, Bashar Assad, after landing in the war-torn country for a two-day visit — an Iranian president's first visit to Damascus

since 2010. Tehran has been a main backer of Syria since a full-blown war began on the country and has played an instrumental role in turning the tide of the conflict in the country's favor. Syrian government forces have regained control of large parts of the country in recent years.

Raisi hailed President Assad for overcoming sanctions and achieving "victory" in the coun-

try's 12-year-long war.

"Syria's government and people have gone through great difficulties, and today we can say that you have overcome all these problems and achieved victory despite the threats and sanctions imposed on you," Raisi told Assad.

Assad told Raisi that Syria-Iran ties "were stable and steady during difficult times despite heavy political and security storms that struck the Middle East", accord-

Russia Accuses Ukraine of Drone Attack to Kill Putin

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Russia accused Ukraine on Wednesday of attacking the Kremlin with drones overnight in a failed attempt to kill President Vladimir Putin.

A senior Ukrainian presidential official denied the accusation - the most serious that Moscow has leveled at Kyiv in more than 14 months of war - and said it indicated Moscow was preparing a major "terrorist provocation".

The Kremlin said Russia reserved the right to retaliate, and hardliners demanded swift retribution against Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

"Two unmanned aerial vehicles were aimed at the Kremlin. As a result of timely actions taken by the military and special services with the use of radar warfare systems, the devices were put out of action," the Kremlin said in a statement.

"We regard these actions as a planned terrorist act and an attempt on the president's life, carried out on the eve of Victory Day, the May 9 Parade, at which the presence of foreign guests is also planned ...

"The Russian side reserves the right to take retaliatory measures where and when it sees fit."

Baza, a Telegram channel with links to Russia's law enforcement agencies, posted a video showing a flying object approaching the dome of the Kremlin Senate building overlooking Red Square - site of the Victory Day parade - and exploding in an intense burst of light just before reaching it.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said in comments sent to Reuters: "Ukraine has nothing to do with drone attacks on the Kremlin. We do not attack the Kremlin because, first of all, it does not resolve any military tasks."

He added: "In my opinion, it is absolutely obvious that both 'reports about an attack on the Kremlin' and simultaneously the supposed detention of Ukrainian saboteurs in Crimea ... clearly indicate the preparation of a large-scale terrorist provocation by Russia in the coming days."

The powerful speaker of the lower house of Russia's parliament, (Continued on Page 7)

Clashes Continue as UN Official Arrives in Sudan

PORT SUDAN, Sudan (AP) — The UN's humanitarian chief arrived in Sudan's main seaport on Wednesday, as thousands of Sudanese and foreign nationals gathered there in hopes of fleeing the conflict-torn east African country.

Martin Griffiths, the under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator at the United Nations, tweeted that he came to the city of Port Sudan to affirm the UN's commitment to the Sudanese people.

His arrival in the Red Sea port came on the last day of a shaky truce, meant to expire at midnight, that has done little to quell the fighting.

It also comes amid increasing concern about the humanitarian situation for those trapped and displaced by the fighting, which is the result of a power struggle between the country's two top generals. But questions remain over how UN agencies can operate with limited staff and supplies amid the chaos.

More than a week after the bru-

ing to the statement.

Iran "did not hesitate to provide political and economic support (to Syria), and even offered blood," Assad added.

Assad and Raisi signed memoranda of understanding on "long-term strategic cooperation", covering fields including in oil, aviation, railways and agriculture and free trade zones, SANA said.

Press TV said the two presidents inked 14 documents in various areas, also including trade, housing, telecommunications, earthquake relief, and facilitation of pilgrimage to the holy sites for the people of the two Muslim nations.

Iran's state-owned railway company has long aspired to expand its network through neighboring Iraq and Syria, linking it to the Syrian port of Lattakia on the Mediterranean Sea to boost trade.

The deal are important also for Syria, whose economy has hit an all-time low over the past decade, with spiraling inflation, a currency plunge and rampant power cuts.

"Just as the Islamic republic stood by the Syrian government and nation in the fight against terrorism, it will also stand by its Syrian brothers in the field of development and progress," Raisi said, according to the presidency website.

In an interview with pan-Arab (Continued on Page 7)

tal fighting erupted in the country's capital on Khartoum on April 15, thousands of UN workers were evacuated from the city by way of a land convoy to Port Sudan. Some UN offices paused their services, such as the World Food Program, after two of its workers were killed in fighting in southern Sudan. The WFP has since said it will resume operations.

The battle for control of Sudan erupted after months of escalating tensions between the military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and a rival paramilitary group called the Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo.

At a news conference from Port Sudan, Griffiths said he is seeking guarantees from the warring sides for the safe passage of humanitarian aid. He addressed criticism that the UN had not been doing enough by saying it was "extremely difficult" for it to operate in Sudan.

Six trucks belonging to the World (Continued on Page 7)