

**Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **140,854** With **25** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**S. Korea Summoned Iranian Ambassador Saeed Badamchi Shabestari and Conveyed Concerns About a Published Contribution in the Kayhan Daily That at Iran Should Block Korean Ships in the Strait of Hormoz**

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## Enemy Fails in Driving Wedge Between Iran Foreign And Defense Policies

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An Iranian deputy foreign minister highlighted the enemy's failure to drive a wedge between the foreign policy and defensive policy of Iran, stressing that Tehran continues to make progress in both domains in a synergetic manner.

In comments in a gathering of Iranian military commanders on the occasion of the National Army Day, Foreign Ministry's Deputy for Political Affairs Ali Baqeri underlined that the enemy's plot to drive a wedge between Iran's foreign policy and defensive policy was foiled thanks to resistance learned from the prudence and vigilance of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

He said resistance does not merely mean a defensive mechanism in the face of aggression by invaders against a country's territorial integrity and the violation of a country's independence.

Baqeri said the discipline hailing from the discourse of resistance brings stability and security and is lasting, inclusive and dynamic, the Foreign Ministry's website reported.

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## No Communication Gap Between Iran, Pakistan Militaries

TEHRAN (IFP) - The head of Pakistan's Southern Command, Lieutenant General Sarfraz Ali, has said there is absolutely no communication gap between the armed forces of Iran and Pakistan, particularly between the border guards.

He told IRNA that the security situation of the border has improved considerably compared to the past.

Sarfraz Ali noted that no security incidents has been reported on the border areas recently thanks to stringent measures by both sides along the border.

The Pakistani army general said Iran and Pakistan have many commonalities, "We need to further improve our communication with the Iranian side".

The head of Pakistan's Southern Command stressed that Iran and Pakistan should always continue their cooperation and consultations and cross border movements should also continue through the border crossings.

The Pakistani general added that the improvement in the security situation has made it possible for both sides to boost mutual trade which also helps improve the lives of people living in border areas on both sides.

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## Army Day Marked With Warning to Israel; Unveiling New Achievements



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says Iran's armed forces are monitoring Israel, warning that they will target the regime's "center" if it makes the slightest move against the Iranian nation.

"The message to the Zionist regime is that if you seek to normalize relations with the countries of the region, you should know that your slightest move is not hidden from the eyes of our armed forces and our intelligence and security forces," the president said.

"Just know that if the slightest move on your part occurs against our nation, our armed forces will target the center of the Zionist regime, and the power of our armed forces will not leave you at rest," he added.

He issued the warning during a parade held in front of the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, the founding father of the Islamic Republic, outside Tehran to mark Iran's Army Day.

Army combat and armored units, airborne helicopters, air force fighters, air defense weapons, defense systems and naval equipment mounted on military trucks marched in front of a stand, from where top government and military officials observed the parade.

President Raisi said the armed forces of the Islamic Republic have many capabilities, the most central of which is their sincere and devout members who are ready to face danger for the sake of the country.

"Today, our military capabilities are well-known not only in the region but also in the world," the president said, stressing that the most important component of power in Iran is the country's revolutionary people.

"The Army is in the hearts of the people, and under the command of the Commander-in-Chief, it is ready to carry out missions, and this readiness is a great achievement for our country."

Raisi said the Army took advantage of the most draconian sanctions on Iran to empower itself.

"Today, our military industry is in the best condition, so we must use it in other industries of the country," he said.

"What the White House spokesman told the world was that they have suffered a disgraceful defeat in their sanctions and maximum pressure on Iran, and that this is the fate of those who want to fall out with the Islamic system," the president added.

Washington says its "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran has been an "abject failure."

Iran makes a show of military force on Iran Army Day with parades every April 18. The country often demonstrates new defense technologies on the day. Army veterans, active servicemen and reservists take part in the annually held parade.

"The message of the prowess, power, strength and endurance of the Iranian armed forces to all the deprived and oppressed of the world is that today our armed forces are their source of hope, because supporting the world's oppressed is one of the principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy," Raisi said.

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## Tehran, New Delhi Likely to Begin Talks to Resume Trade

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India and Iran may soon begin exploratory talks on resumption of bilateral trade in items such as crude oil and fertilizers that have faced U.S. sanctions since 2019 as Iran and the U.S. are trying to expedite talks on reviving the Iranian nuclear deal of 2015, a source has said.

A high-level team from Iran, comprising senior government officials and representatives of public sector companies, is scheduled to visit New Delhi soon for talks with officials led by Ministry of External Affairs. "There is a hope that Iran sanctions will be lifted as progress has been reported in talks between the US and Iran in Vienna on reviving the nuclear agreement. So, we have to position ourselves for that. An Iranian team of senior officials will visit India soon to discuss how to go about resuming trade in items such as oil and fertilizers," the source tracking developments in the area told BusinessLine.

India's purchase of oil and petroleum products from Iran came to a complete halt after the US, under former President Donald Trump, announced third country sanctions against those buying oil from the country in mid-2019. The US, in 2018, had withdrawn from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the 'Iran nuclear deal' reached between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council in 2015.

"After the U.S. withdrew from the nuclear deal, India and Iran used the rupee-rial payment mechanism to trade in oil and other goods to avoid banking sanctions. It worked well and Iran was India's third largest crude supplier in 2018-19 accounting for 23.9 million ton of crude in 2018-19. But once US banned oil trade with Iran, not only did India's oil imports from the country stop but overall bilateral trade was hit as the rupee balance in Iran's accounts in Indian banks ran low and Iran couldn't import much from India," the source explained.

India-Iran bilateral trade in 2021-22 fell to about \$ 2 billion compared to \$16 billion in 2018-19.

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## Iraq to Dispatch a Delegation to Tehran To Discuss Gas Supply

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iraqi delegation will travel to Iran to resolve gas supply issues amid efforts to prevent a shortage of electricity in the Arab country over the warm summer months.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi ordered the country's Electricity Ministry on Sunday to assign a delegation for the trip to Tehran, said reports in the local Iraqi media.

Khadhimi's office said in a Twitter post that trip will be aimed at finding a solution to problems hampering the supply of natural gas from Iran.

Iraq relies on Iranian gas for a significant part of its electricity generation needs in thermal power plants. The country also imports electricity from Iran to respond to a growing demand for power, especially during hot summers.

Iran decided to slash the flow of gas to Iraq in late 2020 after officials in the state-run NIGC said the Arab country was in more than \$5 billion worth of arrears on its energy imports bill. The supply was cut for a period last summer after Iraqi officials failed to pay the arrears.

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## Annual Exports to ASEAN Rise 33%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of Iran's exports to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries rose 33 percent in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) compared to the figure for the preceding year, the portal of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) reported.

According to Secretary of the TPO's ASEAN Trade Promotion Desk Mohsen Rezaei-Pour, the Islamic Republic's export to the mentioned union reached \$2.371 billion in the mentioned year. Indonesia was the top export destination for Iranian goods among the ASEAN member states in the previous year, importing \$1.101 billion worth of commodities, Reza-Pour noted.

As reported, exports to Indonesia rose 63 percent in terms of value compared to the same period last year.

During the period under review, Thailand was Iran's second-largest export destination in this union; the Islamic Republic exported 1.241 million tons of goods worth \$784 million to this country, according to the official.

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## Tehran, Baku to Continue To Build Power Plants Across Araz River

BAKU (Dispatches) - Iran and Azerbaijan have reached an agreement to continue the construction and operation of the Khudafarin and Giz Galasi hydro junctions and hydroelectric power plants over the Araz River, Trend has reported.

In this regard, the second meeting of the joint technical commission was held at the Giz Galasi dam in the East Azerbaijan Province.

The parties reached an agreement on the implementation of pre-agreed documents on Khudafarin and Giz Galasi hydro junctions and hydroelectric power plants, as well as, the continuation of work and the identification of investments and contractors.

Moreover, the agreement was reached to spend over \$22 million to complete the work and determine the contract for power plants in accordance with the database contract. It is projected that contractors will be identified and related work will begin in the next four months.

In 2016, Azerbaijan and Iran agreed to build the Khudafarin and Giz Galasi hydro junctions and hydroelectric power plants on the Araz River. They have a total capacity of over 1.6 billion cubic meters.

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## President Felicitates Zimbabwean Counterpart on National Day

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi congratulated the Zimbabwean counterpart Emmerson Mnangagwa, as well as that country's government and people on the occasion of the national day in the African counterpart.

President Ebrahim Raisi, on Monday in his message to Emmerson Mnangagwa, The President of Zimbabwe, congratulated him on that country's National Day.

In his message, the Iranian president expressed hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Zimbabwe will see the expansion of relations in all areas of interest.

## Army's Capabilities Prevented Enemies Attacks on Iran

**TEHRAN (MNA) - Commander-in-chief of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) stressed that enemies of the country fear to even dream of conducting any attacks against it due to the capabilities of the Iranian Army.**

Major General Hossein Salami made the remarks on Monday in a statement addressed to the Army Chief Commander Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi on the occasion of the country's Army Day (April 18).

"There is no doubt that the enemies' front, particularly the Zionist regime and the United States and its wicked regional and extra-regional allies, do not dare think or even dream of making any attacks against the Islamic Iran due to its Army's advanced and deterrent strength," said the IRGC commander.

He added that the Army's power was the result of a long history of sacrifices made during the past 44 years to protect the country's independence, territorial integrity and national interest, especially during the eight years of the Sacred Defense (a name to refer, in Iran, to



Iraq's eight years of imposed war under Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath regime from 1980-1988).

According to General Salami, the great braveries made by the Iranian Army forces during the Iraqi imposed war have been demonstrated in form of the Army's initiatives, technological and advanced defensive and military capabilities as well as its smart deterrence against any threats.

He further appreciated the existing unity and convergence between forces of the Iranian Army and IRGC which have led to the desperation of the enemies of the county.

Iran's Army displays its latest developments and new technologies during annual parades held in major cities, including the capital Tehran, on April 18 in the presence of senior military and executive officials.

## Sweden's Envoy Summoned

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Ministry has summoned the chargé d'affaires of Sweden to convey the Islamic Republic's vehement protest at the desecration of the Holy Qur'an by a Swedish far-right group during the fasting month of Ramadan.

The Swedish envoy was summoned on Sunday by Iranian Foreign Ministry's head of the Third Western Europe Bureau, who expressed Iran's strong protest at the sacrilege of Islam's holy book by the leader of a far-right group under the protection of Sweden's police and on the pretext of the freedom of expression.

Rasmus Paludan, the Danish leader of Sweden's far-right Stram Kurs (Hard Line) party tried to burn a copy of the Qur'an in a heavily-populated Muslim area on Saturday.

Paludan, accompanied by police, went to an open public space in the southern Swedish city of Linköping and reportedly placed the Muslim holy book down and tried to set it on fire while ignoring protests from onlookers.

During the Sunday summoning, the Iranian Foreign Ministry official strongly condemned the sacrilege of the Qur'an, reminding the Sweden's government of its responsibility in this regard.

He also called on Sweden to take an immediate and categorical step to end desecration of the Holy Qur'an and guarantee that such acts will not be repeated in the future.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry official added that insulting the sanctities of more than two billion Muslims of the world and hurting their feelings is the worst possible abuse of freedom of speech.

"This regrettable incident, which was carried out under protection of the Swedish police has marred the image of Sweden among Muslims of the world," the Iranian official said.

The Swedish diplomat, for his part, expressed regret over the incident, adding that he will inform his country's officials of Iran's protest as soon as possible.

## Velayati Hails Achievements of Palestinian Resistance Groups

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has lauded the recent achievements of Palestinian resistance groups, emphasizing Iran's support for the people of Palestine.

Ali Akbar Velayati made the remarks in a Sunday phone call with Ismail Haniyeh, who heads the political office of the Gaza-based Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas.

"We follow your great victories and achievements and what you do is a cause of honor for the [anti-Israel] resistance [front]," Velayati told Haniyeh.

He added, "You are a role model for the Muslim world."

Haniyeh, for his part, said Iran was a strategic support base for the people of Palestine and the resistance.

"Our people and resistance are in good shape and we will continue to defend al-Aqsa [Mosque]," Haniyeh said.

The phone call came amid the escalation of Israel's violent attacks against the Palestinian people and holy sites across the occupied territories, especially al-Aqsa Mosque in the East al-Quds.

Since the beginning of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, the occupied West Bank has witnessed an escalation of Israeli violence, with over two dozen Palestinians having been killed and many more injured at the hands of the regime's troops.

The uptick in the Israeli killing and repression of Palestinians has been green-lit by Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who granted full freedom of action to Israeli forces earlier this month to intensify their brutal raids against Palestinians.

In the latest act of provocation against the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied Old City of al-Quds, at least 19 Palestinians were injured in clashes on Sunday as Israeli settlers stormed the sacred site under the protection of Israeli military forces.

## Arrangements to Unfreeze Funds None of U.S.' Business

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson shrugged off the White House' meddling comments about Iran's access to its export incomes, stressing that the agreements reached about the release of Iran's assets frozen abroad are none of Washington's business.

Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday, Saeed Khatibzadeh underlined that the plans to release the funds and repatriate the money earned from the export of Iranian goods and services have nothing to do with any third country.

The fact that the U.S. regime is attempting to interfere in every single issue relating to Iran reveals how fake the Biden administration's claims are, he added.

"What we are doing is within the framework of the Iranian people's definite interests. We are trying to



repatriate the money from whatever we export, as we have done so far," Khatibzadeh stated.

The spokesman said a foreign delegation paid a visit to Iran recently and agreements were reached on the release of part of Iran's financial resources. "It is neither the U.S.' business, nor will we allow the US to interfere in its details."

His comments came after U.S. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said U.S. partners have not released any blocked funds to Iran, nor has Washington authorized or approved any

such funds to Iran.

In comments at a joint press conference with his visiting Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said an "initial agreement" has been reached to release Iran's funds held by a foreign bank.

## Iran Exports to S. Africa Hits 500% Growth Last Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said that Iran's export of non-oil products to South Africa in previous Iranian calendar year in 1400 (from March 21, 2021 to March 20, 2022) registered a dramatic 500% hike.

Alireza Peyman-Pak made the remarks on Monday and emphasized that country's exports to South Africa in previous year showed a considerable growth as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

He put the value of Iran's export of products to South Africa last year at \$48 billion while the country imported \$53 billion worth of products from South Africa.

Accordingly, Iran's trade with foreign countries exceeded \$100 billion in this period, Peyman-Pak added. Turning to the country's foreign trade growth last year, the TPOI chief added that the country registered considerable growth in the field of export of petrochemicals, food products, etc.

He then referred to Iran's export of products to neighboring states last year and stressed that Iran's export of products to Sultanate of Oman, Turkey and Indonesia recorded a 65, 140 and 70 percent hike respectively in the past year.

Iran's exports to Ghana increased in this period in a way that Iran's export of products to South Africa registered a 500 percent growth last year, he noted.

## European-Style Freedom Is Absolute Dictatorship

TEHRAN (IP) - Pointing at the recent desecration of the Quran in Sweden, the First Deputy Speaker of Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly described European-style freedom as an absolute dictatorship.

"The fact that insulting the Quran is considered freedom is a dictatorship, and no more is expected from the West and Europe regarding freedom," Ali Nikzad said.

Rasmus Paludan, leader of a right-wing and anti-Islamic Danish party, also known as the "Hard Line party," along with his supporters, has planned to set the Qur'an on fire in a mainly-Muslim area in the Swedish city of Linköping. They were forced to leave the place due to the protest of the Muslims and the intervention of the police.

Videos posted on social media show dozens of counter-protesters demonstrating against a far-right group's intention to burn the Qur'an.

Similar clashes erupted in the Swedish city of Malmö last summer, with anti-Islamic groups setting fire to a copy of the Quran, leading to street riots.

Rasmus Paludan, the leader of the "Hard Line" party, had previously set fire to the Quran in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark.

## Official Slams Misuse of Freedom of Expression in West

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Government Spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi stressed on Monday that the freedom of expression has become a tool for fueling extremism and racism in the West.

"Freedom of religion has been replaced by insults against religions and freedom of expression has become a tool for fueling extremism and racism in the West," Bahadori Jahromi wrote in his Twitter account on Monday morning.

"The shameful insulting against 2 billion Muslims during Ramadan, with Swedish police support, is an absolute hateful act," he added.

Earlier, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that Iran condemns desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and expects immediate reaction from the Swedish Government.

## Iran Exports to Iraq Grow by 20%

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's exports to Iraq at the end of the Iranian year increased by 20% to about \$ 9 billion compared to the previous year.

Iraq was the second-largest export destination for Iranian products last year, accounting for about 18.3% of Iran's total exports to Iraq.

In recent years, Iraq has always been one of the top five countries to which most goods have been exported from Iran.

Complete transportation of goods between Iran and Iraq, border unit command, professional exports, proper packaging, production planning based on target markets, production of more value-added goods, and meeting the country's needs through Iraq can lead to the development of trade between the two countries.

## Envoy Eyes Boosting Iran-Singapore Cultural Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's ambassador to Singapore discussed strengthening cultural interactions between Iran and Singapore with the Director of the National Museum of Iran.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Singapore, Behnam Blourian met with Jebrael Nokandeh, director of the National Museum of Iran.

Regarding the 50th anniversary of Iran-Singapore relations, the two sides focused on the expansion and development of cultural interactions between the two countries.

Introducing Iranian culture, art, and civilization at the international level is one of the great goals of this museum, Nokandeh said in this meeting.

He also expressed the readiness of the National Museum of Iran to have joint cultural cooperation with the museums of Singapore.

Holding joint exhibitions to showcase historical and cultural monuments of Iran and Singapore, will make the two nations know each other better and deepen the friendship between the two countries, he added.

## Navy to Open Maritime Security Center in Near Future

TEHRAN (MNA)- Commander of the Iranian Navy Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said the navy will open a maritime security center in the near future.

Speaking during an interview with Iranian national radio, Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said that the Persian Gulf region is controlled by the IRGC naval forces while the Iranian Army navy is in charge of the security of waters in the Sea of Oman and the north of the Indian Ocean region.

The Navy Commander stated that the Navy's strategy is to monitor and fully assess all those entering the Sea of Oman through the Strait of Hormuz, adding that "In this area, if we encounter a suspicious case, we will definitely deal with it."

Referring to the two types of naval and defense diplomacy in the Iranian army, Rear Admiral Irani stressed that "our focus is on establishing maritime relations with friendly and brotherly countries so that we can handle the bilateral and multilateral agreements, especially in the field of the sea."



# خانه شیوا

The First Lottery of 1401 Peugeot Pars Car of Shiva Hormozgan House (Bandar Abbas) Was Drawn:

## The First Winner of Peugeot Pars Car: Roya Hosseinzadeh

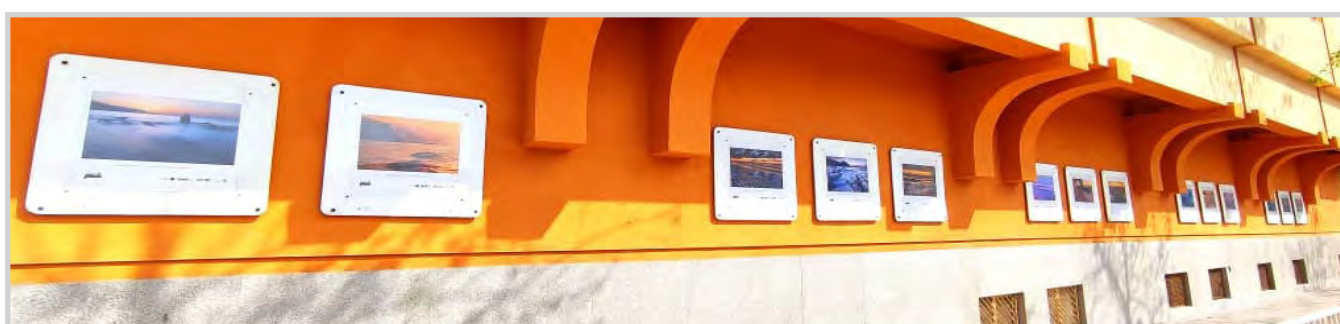


The lottery ceremony of a car, 10 carpets and ceremony for honoring Hormozgani medalists of Asian rowing championship was held by Shiva House of Bandar Abbas. In an interview with ISNA on the sidelines of the ceremony, the Hormozgani rower of national team and Asian medalist said: "Holding this ceremony by the management of Shiva House was an encouragement for us, athletes, to continue our journey with more motivation." The lottery ceremony of a car, 10 carpets and ceremony for honoring Hormozgani medalists of Asian rowing championship was held by Shiva House of Bandar Abbas. In an interview with ISNA on the sidelines of the ceremony, the Hormozgani rower of national team and Asian medalist said: "Holding this ceremony by the management of Shiva House was an encouragement for us, athletes, to continue our journey with more motivation." Hedyeh Kazemi added: "When we, athletes, know that we are supported by the people and provincial officials, we can definitely work in the international and national scenes with more peace of mind. I am very grateful to the management of Shiva House for the support provided."



She added: "We are facing the Asian Games ahead, which is considered as the largest competition in Asia for most sports. After that, we have the Olympics ahead of us which is definitely our biggest competition and goal and the first step to qualify for Olympics is to succeed in the Asian Games. I hope we can shine in these competitions and get ready for the Olympics." Then in interview with ISNA, Asian paracanoe champion said: "I am grateful to Shiva House Group for their support which has encouraged us to achieve more and higher successes in the upcoming competitions. The people, officials and the private sector need to be with the athletes to keep the Hormozgan flag high." Islam Jahedi stated: "This year, I have ahead the world championships in Canada and then the Para-Asian Championships in China. We, athletes in all fields, have sworn to work hard this year to raise Iran's ranking in Asia." Then CEO of Shiva House Collection said in the interview; "Shiva brand is one of the old brands of Hormozgan which has been operating for 41 years. In 1400 (last Iranian calendar year), we were chosen as the exemplary entrepreneur by creating jobs for 160 people in the province." Ayub Mahdavi-fard added: "We have in our outlook for this year inauguration of the second and third phases of Shiva House, and with the completion of the second phase of the project, a 6,000-meter

commercial unit will be added to this complex." He added: "With the completion of the second phase for about 40 people and with the completion of the third phase for about 15 people, jobs will be created. With the completion of phases two and three of Shiva houses, it will become the largest specialized collection of carpets, furniture and home appliances in the southern country, and in the next phases, we will enter the export issue. He continued: "Shiva brand in Hormozgan is very well known in the field of social responsibility. Last year, we had a wedding ceremony and dowry for a thousand couples in cooperation with the Alavi Flowers Foundation and the inauguration of home-based business booths to help the poor. In the field of philanthropic work, it has had fruitful collaborations with the Rouyesh Foundation which supports gifted and school-leaving children, as well as with the Relief Committee for protecting 150 orphans and the Persian Gulf Cancer Support Foundation." The director of Shiva House Complex added: "In the field of cultural activities, we also tried to fulfill the cultural responsibility that we feel by carrying out environmental activities such as setting up street galleries and also holding religious ceremonies."





## A Dozen Terrorists Killed in Central Mali

MOURA (Dispatches) - Mali's army said that it had killed "a dozen terrorists" including a French-Tunisian jihadist in air strikes in the center of the Sahel nation.

The armed forces carried out two strikes on Thursday "to neutralize a dozen terrorists in the forest of Ganguel" about 10 kilometres (six miles) from the village of Moura, the general staff said in a press release.

"These strikes made it possible to neutralise some cadres of the GSIM," (the Group to Support Islam and Muslims, the biggest jihadist alliance in the Sahel) it said, "including Samir Al-Burhan, a Franco-Tunisian terrorist cadre".



## Myanmar Junta to Free 1,600 Prisoners

YANGON (Dispatches) - Myanmar's junta said it will release more than 1,600 prisoners from jails across the country to mark the Buddhist new year, without specifying whether those being pardoned were protesters or common criminals.

The Southeast Asian country has been in turmoil since Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government was ousted last year in a military coup, which sparked huge protests and a deadly crackdown.

State television announced that 1,619 prisoners, including 42 foreigners had been "pardoned" and will be released to mark the new year.



## Ukrainian Soldiers Hold out in Mariupol



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian soldiers resisted a Russian ultimatum to lay down arms in the pulverised port of Mariupol, which Moscow said its forces had almost completely seized in what would be its biggest prize of the nearly two-month war.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said troops in Mariupol were still fighting despite a Russian demand to surrender by dawn.

"The city still has not fallen," he told ABC's "This Week" programme, adding that Ukrainian soldiers continue to control some parts of the city.

Russia said on Saturday it had control of urban parts of the city, with some Ukrainian fighters remaining in the Azovstal steelworks overlooking the Sea of Azov.

Capturing Mariupol, the main port in the southeastern region of Donbas, would be a strategic prize for Russia, connecting territory held by pro-Russian separatists in the east with the Crimea region that Moscow annexed in 2014.

After failing to overcome Ukrainian resistance in the north, the Russian military has refocused its ground offensive on Donbas while maintaining long-distance strikes elsewhere including the capital, Kyiv.

About four million Ukrainians have fled the country, cities have been shattered and thousands have died since the start of the invasion on Feb. 24.

"The occupiers will be responsible for everything they did in Ukraine," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on his Telegram account, posting images of destruction he said were akin to the "terrible times" of World War Two.

Implicitly criticizing Russia, Pope Francis pleaded for an end to the bloodshed and lamented the "Easter of War" during his address in St. Peter's Square after Mass.

"May there be peace for war-torn Ukraine, so sorely tried by the violence and destruction of the cruel and senseless war into which it was dragged," he said.

Zelenskyy accused Russia on Saturday of "deliberately trying to destroy everyone" in Mariupol and said his government was in touch with the defenders.

The Azovstal steelworks, one of Europe's biggest metallurgical plants with a maze of rail tracks and blast furnaces, has become a last stand for the outnumbered defenders.

"All who lay down their arms are guaranteed that their lives will be spared," Russia's Defense Ministry said.

It was not known how many soldiers were in the steelworks. Satellite images have shown smoke and fire coming from the area, which is riddled with tunnels. Zelenskyy has said killing his troops would put paid to peace efforts.

## North Korea Tests New Weapons System

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Kim Jong Un supervised the test-firing of a new guided weapons system to improve North Korea's "tactical nukes", state media said Sunday, capping days of celebrations surrounding the birthday of the country's founding leader.

The launch was the latest in an unprecedented blitz of sanctions-busting weapons-tests this year, which included firing an intercontinental ballistic missile at full range for the first time since 2017.

It also came just ahead of U.S.-South Korea military training exercises - which have always infuriated Pyongyang - that were due to begin on Monday.

The "new-type tactical guided weapon... is of great significance in drastically improving the firepower of the frontline long-range artillery units and enhancing the efficiency in the operation of tactical nukes," the North's official KCNA news agency reported. It said the test was successful, but did not specify when or where it took place.



## Erdogan Condemns Israeli Intervention at Al-Aqsa Mosque

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said he had told his Palestinian counterpart Mahmoud Abbas that he condemned Israeli "intervention on worshippers" at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque and threats to its "status or spirit".

Erdogan's comments come amid efforts by Turkey and Israel in recent weeks to normalise their long-strained ties, as part of a regional charm offensive launched by Ankara in 2020.

On Friday, at least 152 Palestinians were wounded in clashes with Israeli riot police inside the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, the latest outbreak in an upsurge of violence that has raised fears of a slide back to wider conflict.

Most of the Palestinian injuries were incurred from rubber bullets, stun grenades and beatings with police batons, the Palestine Red Crescent said.

"During our call, I told Mr Abbas that I strongly condemned Israel's intervention on worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque and that we will stand against provocations and threats to its status or spirit," Erdogan said on Twitter.

"Turkey always stands with Palestine," he added.

Erdogan later said he had discussed developments at Al-Aqsa with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, adding he Israel's "interventions and provocations" had "unacceptable" results. They also discussed possible joint steps for regional peace, Erdogan added.

Turkey has in the past launched various initiatives within the United Nations and Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) against Israeli actions towards Palestinians and its policies regarding Jerusalem or its status.

The Al-Aqsa compound sits atop the Old City plateau of East Jerusalem, which was captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, and is known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif, or The Noble Sanctuary, and to Jews as Temple Mount.

Tensions this year have been heightened in part by the Muslim holy month of Ramadan coinciding with the Jewish celebration of Passover.

## Leftist Party Consultation Shows Majority To Abstain French Presidential Election

PARIS (Dispatches) - Most members of leftist candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon's party will abstain or leave their ballot papers blank in the presidential run-off between President Emmanuel Macron and his far-right challenger Marine Le Pen on April 24, an internal consultation showed.

Macron won the presidency in 2017 after easily beating Le Pen when voters rallied behind him in the run-off to keep her far-right party out of power.

Last Sunday's initial vote set up the same second-round battle, but Macron is facing a much tougher challenge with both sides desperate to court those who backed Mélenchon, who narrowly missed out on the run-off after winning about 22% of the vote.

Mélenchon has called on his supporters not to vote for Le Pen, repeating the injunction four times in a speech to supporters after the first round. But he has stopped short of advocating Macron and said his La France insoumise (France Unbound) party would hold a public consultation to help guide those who backed him.

According to results published on Sunday from about 215,000 people who took part, more than 66% said they would abstain, leave their ballot paper blank or spoil it. Just over 33% said they would vote for Macron. The option of voting for Le Pen was not given to respondents.

"The results are not an order to vote for anybody (...).

Voters will make their own choice and vote as they see fit," Mélenchon's campaign team wrote on its website.

For decades, a "republican front" of voters of all stripes rallying behind a mainstream candidate has helped to keep the far right out of power.

But Macron, whose sometimes abrasive style and policies that veered to the right have upset many voters, can no longer automatically count on that backing.

An IPSOS-Sopra-Steria poll on Saturday showed that some 33% of Mélenchon voters would back Macron with 16% supporting Le Pen on April 24. But more than 50% of people questioned declined to give their view.

With the electorate fragmented and undecided, the election will likely be won by the candidate who can reach beyond his or her camp to convince voters that the other option would be far worse.

Macron borrowed directly from Mélenchon's platform on Saturday by promising to put his next prime minister in charge of "planification écologique" (ecological planning) - a concept popularised by Mélenchon.

Addressing hundreds of supporters in central Marseille, Macron promised a "complete renewal" of his policies. He said he would also appoint a minister of "energy planning" with "a mission to make France the first leading nation to end oil, gas and coal consumption".



## Pakistan Says Cross-Border Attacks From Afghanistan Have Increased

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan said said incidents of its security forces being targeted in cross-border attacks from Afghanistan had risen significantly, and called on Taliban authorities to act against militants, a day after purported air strikes by Pakistan.

Taliban authorities on Saturday summoned Pakistan's ambassador in Kabul on Saturday to protest against the strikes. A local Taliban official and residents said the strikes were carried out by Pakistani aircraft inside Afghan airspace.

"In the last few days, incidents along Pak-Afghan border have significantly increased, wherein, Pakistani security forces are being targeted from across the border," Pakistan's foreign office said in a statement on Sunday.

It added the attacks were being carried out "with impunity" and that Islamabad had repeatedly asked Afghan authorities to act to stop them, but to no avail.

It said seven Pakistani soldiers were killed in the border area of North Waziristan on Thursday. North Waziristan borders the eastern Afghan province of Khost, where the strikes are said to have taken place on Friday.

Taliban authorities say they have controlled cross-border attacks since taking over the country in August last year.

Pakistan's foreign office did not confirm the strikes, nor addressed if they were carried out by aircraft, which would be the first time a military incursion is officially confirmed.

Pakistan's embassy in Kabul denied it carried out air strikes.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) expressed concern on the incident.

"UNAMA is deeply concerned by reports of civilian casualties, including women and children, as a result of airstrikes in Khost & Kunar provinces," the body said on Twitter, adding it was working to establish the facts and verify losses.

There was no confirmation of the death toll. A local Taliban official in Khost claimed at least 36 people, including civilians, had been killed.

The Taliban government spokesman released a strongly-worded statement warning Islamabad of "bad consequences" if there was a repeat.

"The defeat of the United States eight months ago was a good lesson to aggressors who want to disrespect Afghanistan's territory and freedom," Zabihullah Mujahid said.





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**Parsian**

**Elahieh Apt (\$2300)**  
230sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, Sauna  
J, balcony  
fireplace  
Fully Furn

**Mahmoodieh (\$10000) bldg**  
5storey bldg  
20bdrs, S/p  
green yard  
enough pkgs

**(\$1700)**  
**Gheitarieh Apt**  
2bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F

**Farmanieh (\$2000)**  
200sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, Sauna, J  
balcony, pkg  
Fully Furn

**(\$6000)**  
**Vali-e-Asr bldg**  
4storey, 15bdrs, pkgs

**Jordan Apt (\$1900)**  
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, Sauna, J  
balcony, & Nicely Furn

**Elahieh bldg (\$6000)**  
4storey, 13bdrs, yard  
enough pkgs, renovated

**3bdrs Apt**  
**Zaferanieh (\$2500)** 220sq.m, S/p, F.F  
**Mirdamad (\$1600)** 170sq.m, S/p, F.F

**Available Villas**  
**Niavaran (\$6000)** 2000sq.m, 6bdrs, yard, & S/p  
**Zaferanieh (\$5000)** 1000sq.m, 5bdrs, yard, & S/p

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## Russia Lifting Restrictions on Fruit, Vegetable Imports From Turkey

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia has announced that it is lifting restrictions on the import of a number of fruits and vegetables from Turkey, Russian state-owned news agency Ria Novosti reported.

The country said it was set to lift restrictions on the import of peppers, pomegranates, grapes, oranges and grapefruits produced in Turkey, in a statement issued by

the Federal Service for Supervision of the Consumer Rights and Human Well-Being (Rospotrebnadzor).

The decision follows a "thorough study.... on the supply of high-quality and safe fruit and vegetable products to the Russian market," the institution said, which found "no excess of the maximum permissible levels of harmful substances."



## Iraq May Finalize Gas Deal With Halliburton Next Month

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq may finalize a gas deal with U.S. oil company Halliburton to drill wells in the western gasfield of Akkas next month as OPEC's second-biggest producer seeks to boost production.

Iraq's Cabinet may reactivate the agreement with the company to help the Oil Ministry obtain clear data on the output capacity of Akkas field, Iraq's Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul-Jabbar said in an interview with Al-Furat Network TV channel.

The agreement "will depend on the data we get from the exploration and well-drilling operations", Mr Abdul-Jabbar said.

Iraq is trying to increase its oil and gas output to capitalize on higher energy prices. The country relies heavily on the sale of hydrocarbons for revenue to fuel its economy and benefits from price increases to accelerate growth.

Oil prices, which rose 68 per cent last year amid a faster-than-expected economic rebound, have been extremely volatile this year, rocked by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Brent, the global benchmark for two thirds of the world's oil, is up more than 40 per cent since the start of this year after falling from a 14-year high when it nearly touched \$140 per barrel last month.

Brent settled 2.68 per cent higher at \$111.70 a barrel at the close of trading on Friday. West Texas Intermediate, the gauge that tracks US crude, closed 2.59 per cent higher at \$106.95 a barrel.

Iraq is aiming to sell its oil for an average of \$106 to \$107 per barrel this month if prices remain at current levels, Mr Abdul-Jabbar said.

The country exported \$11.07 billion worth of oil in March, the highest level in 50 years, as crude prices soared amid supply concerns due to Russia's military offensive in Ukraine, the oil ministry said.

Iraq is also keen to tie up with more international energy companies to invest in its energy sector after oil majors such as ExxonMobil and Lukoil considered leaving the country due to political instability and security concerns.

In September, Iraq signed an agreement worth \$27bn with France's TotalEnergies for four oil and gas projects.

TotalEnergies will make an initial investment of \$10bn, with engineering investment on projects to start "immediately", the company's chairman and chief executive Patrick Pouyanne said.

South Korea's state-run Korea Gas (Kogas) had signed a deal to develop the Akkas field in Al Anbar province in 2011, but the field was seized by ISIS and recaptured by Baghdad in late 2017. The field is believed to have reserves of 5.6 trillion cubic feet of gas.

## Mena Start-Up Funding More Than Doubled to \$864m in Q1 of 2022

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The total funding secured by start-ups in the Middle East and North Africa more than doubled to about \$864 million in the first quarter of the year as economies in the region continue to recover from the coronavirus pandemic and investors allocate more cash to promising start-ups.

Funding for Mena start-ups during the three months to March 31 increased by 161 per cent on an annual basis, while the number of deals was up by 16 per cent, according to a report from data platform Magnitt. First-quarter funding for Mena start-ups surpassed that of the previous quarter by 33.3 per cent. In the first three months of the year, start-ups in the Middle East, Africa, Pakistan and Turkey raised 48 per cent of all capital invested in 2021, according to Magnitt data.

"VC ecosystems in Mena ... seemed to catch the tailwind of last year's capital investment spree over the first quarter of 2022," it said in the report.

"The UAE ranked the top VC market in the first quarter, despite Saud Arabia closing the gap in number of transactions."

Start-ups in Mena registered record VC funding worth \$2.6 billion last year through 590 transactions, according to Magnitt. About 35 start-ups announced exits in 2021, indicating a maturity in the region's start-up landscape.

UAE start-ups accounted for 26 per cent of all deals closed across the region and 45 per cent of all funding raised in 2021, Magnitt said. Similarly, start-ups in the UAE accounted for 27.3 per cent of all deals closed across Mena and 34.4 per cent of all funding raised year to date in 2022.

Africa and Turkey were the only regions to cross the \$1bn mark in the first quarter of 2022, raising more than \$1.2bn and \$1.3bn respectively, the Magnitt report revealed.

Start-ups in the FinTech industry accounted for 41 per cent of total funding raised in the Mena region in the first quarter of 2022, the report found.

Although there was only one megadeal worth more than \$100m closed by cryptocurrency exchange Rain in Q1 of 2022, there was significant growth in Mena's average round size and proportion of larger-sized deals, Magnitt said.

Rain was founded in 2017 and was the first crypto-asset service provider to be licensed in the Middle East in 2019 by the Central Bank of Bahrain. It secured \$110 million in Series B funding earlier this year.

The average fund round size in the Mena region increased by 23 per cent, the data showed.



## Nepal Seeks Overseas Nationals Help to Build Up Forex Reserves

KATHMANDU (Dispatches) - Nepal is asking citizens living abroad to deposit funds in domestic banks as part of efforts to ensure the financial system has enough liquidity and to preserve foreign exchange reserves, finance minister Janardan Sharma said.

Speaking to Reuters, he denied Nepal was facing an economic crisis despite the impact of soaring commodity prices as the tourist industry, a key source of revenues, struggles to recover after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nepal, wedged between China and India, this month imposed curbs on luxury goods imports to rein in capital outflows. Foreign exchange reserves fell over 18% to \$9.6 billion as of mid-March from mid-July - enough for around six months imports.

By depositing their savings in Nepal, overseas Nepalis would continue to "maintain their link as well as benefit from 6 to 7% interest" offered by Nepali banks, Sharma said.

Sharma said the economy did not face a crisis and Nepal's situation could not be compared with Sri Lanka. That South Asian country is facing its worst economic crisis in decades and anti-government protests.

In Nepal, remittances by overseas workers, which constitute nearly a quarter of the economy and are crucial for external payments, fell 3.0% to \$5.3 billion between mid-July to mid-March, compared with a 5% increase in the same period a year earlier.

Earnings from tourism, which fell sharply after the start of the pandemic in 2020, are slowly picking up, but remain well below pre-COVID levels.

## India Races to Clinch Free Trade Deals With PGCC, EU, UK to Meet \$1 Trillion Export Goal

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Buoyed by the swift conclusion of free trade deals with the UAE and Australia this year, India has stepped up efforts to clinch similar free trade agreements (FTA) with five other PGCC countries, the European Union, Canada, the UK and Israel as the world's sixth largest economy doubles down on securing its ambitious export target of \$1 trillion by 2030.

Early this month, India, the fastest growing major global economy, marked a key milestone of surpassing \$1 trillion in its

global goods trade as exports grew at the fastest pace since 1989-90 to a record \$418 billion, while imports scaled the \$610-billion mark, also an all-time high.

India has started the scoping exercise of deciding the type of framework of FTA with GCC to provide jobs, growth and enhance the country's economic trade between the two sides, Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said during his recent visit to the UAE.

According to ministry officials, New Delhi is set to begin deeper engagements with the PGCC countries as early as May-June to finalize the FTAs. Goyal said he was very hopeful of concluding "a good, free trade, fair and equitable agreement" the rest of the PGCC states that will provide opportunities for jobs, growth and boost India's economic and trade ties with the region. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and the UAE, which will be operationalised on May 1, 2022, will open huge opportunities and businesses of both countries should look at taking the bilateral trade to \$250 billion by 2030, he said.

In fiscal 2021, India imported goods worth \$80.5 billion from PGCC countries, while exports amounted to \$40.5 billion. About half of this trade is with the UAE. India's exports to the bloc in April-January FY21 amounted to \$21.74 billion, of which the UAE accounted for \$12.9 billion with the main items being mineral fuels, apparel, gems and jewellery, and electrical machinery. During the same period, India's imports from the GCC were worth \$45.7 billion, of which those from the UAE were to the tune of \$19.65 billion.

The revival of PGCC-India trade talks comes after a long gap. A Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation between India and the PGCC was signed in 2004 that provided for both the parties to consider ways and means to extend and liberalize trade relations besides initiating discussions on the feasibility of an FTA. Two rounds of negotiations were held—in 2006 and 2008.

## Sri Lanka Declares Five-Day Share Trading Halt

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - The Colombo Stock Exchange today announced a five-day trading halt after crisis-hit Sri Lanka hiked interest rates and declared a default on its external debt during the traditional New Year holiday.

The market was due to reopen on Monday after being shut all week for the occasion, but the CSE said it will remain closed from Monday to Friday due to the "present situation in the country".

The move came ahead of Sri Lanka's planned talks with the International Monetary Fund in Washington on Monday to negotiate a bailout as the country has run out of foreign exchange to finance even the most essential imports.

Brokers had been expecting shares to be hammered on Monday, after the central bank almost doubled its benchmark interest rate to 14.5 per cent following the close on April 8, the last trading day before the holiday.

Faced with an unprecedented forex crisis, the government on Tuesday declared it was suspending interest and capital payments on its huge foreign debt.

The CSE said that regulators believed it was in the best interest of "market participants if they are afforded an opportunity to have more clarity and understanding of the economic conditions".

The island nation is grappling with its worst economic downturn since independence in 1948, with regular blackouts and acute shortages of food and fuel in addition to record inflation.

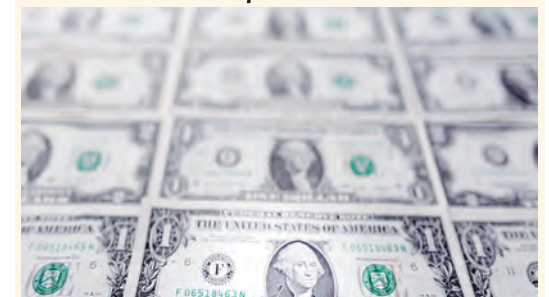
The CSE's All Share Index has shed over 38 per cent in the past three months, while the Sri Lankan rupee has fallen by more than 35 per cent against the US dollar in the past month.

The crisis has caused widespread misery for Sri Lanka's 22 million people and led to weeks of anti-government protests.

Thousands of people were camping outside President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office for the eighth straight day today, chanting "Go home Gota".

Sri Lanka had sought debt relief from India and China, but both countries instead offered more credit lines to buy commodities from them.

## U.S. Treasuries Show Foreign Inflows In February for 4th Month



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Net foreign inflows into Treasuries rose for a fourth straight month in February in the amount of \$75.3 billion, data from the U.S. Treasury department showed.

Of that, private overseas investors bought \$91.9 billion in Treasuries and foreign official institutions sold \$16.2 billion.

Foreigners have bought Treasuries in 10 of the last 12 months, including a record net monthly purchase of \$118 billion in March 2021.

Overall, Treasury International Capital (TIC) data showed a net inflow of \$162.6 billion, versus a \$287.4 billion inflow in January. Of this, net foreign private inflows were \$198.4 billion, and net foreign official flows were negative \$35.8 billion.

The overall foreign buying came as U.S. yields rose. U.S. benchmark 10-year Treasury yields peaked at 2.0650% in February, reaching the highest level since July 2019, and ended the month at 1.8216%, up about 4 basis points from the end of January.

The yield on the two-year note rose to 1.4363% in February from 1.1846% at the end of January, reaching a peak of 1.6430% that was last seen in December 2019, as markets anticipated that the Federal Reserve would imminently start hiking interest rates to slow price rises and stave off hotter inflation.

The Fed did raise its policy rate in March by 0.25 basis points, the first hike since 2018, and announced how it would reduce its \$8.5 trillion balance sheet, ballooned by pandemic-era bond purchases. Several more rate hikes are expected this year and next.

Foreign holdings of Treasury securities rose to \$7.714 trillion from \$7.661 trillion in January.

Japan's holdings of Treasury securities rose by more than \$3 billion to \$1.306 trillion. Japan remained the largest non-U.S. holder of Treasuries.

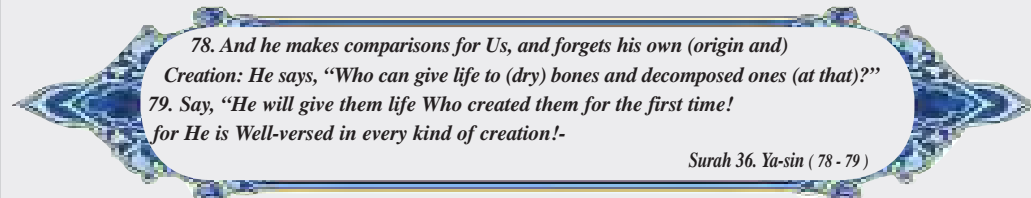
China, the second-largest holder of Treasuries, saw its holdings decline to \$1.054 trillion from \$1.060 trillion in January.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:03
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:59
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:55
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:25



## Soaring Costs Put Turkey's Energy Importer Under Pressure to Hike Prices

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Soaring world energy costs are piling pressure on Turkey's state energy importer BOTAS to further hike prices as it falls deeper into the red, even as manufacturers complain that recent price rises threaten their operations.

The pipeline operator and trading company needed a 100 billion lira (\$6.8 billion) payment from the Treasury last year to cover its shortfall and losses have accelerated since Russia's invasion of Ukraine drove energy prices higher, officials say.

That poses several challenges to authorities in Turkey, which imports nearly all its energy needs. BOTAS has bought billions of dollars from the Central Bank to cover its purchases, eroding the bank's already low foreign reserves, while Treasury payments to BOTAS widen the budget deficit.

At the same time any price increase imposed by BOTAS on Turkish industry could hurt the government's drive for export-driven economic growth, while also keeping upward pressure on inflation which has topped 60%.

Four industrialists that represent some of the most gas- and electricity-intensive sectors, such as steel, ceramics and cement, told Reuters that soaring costs would push up prices of their goods.

So far BOTAS has kept its gas prices to consumers and industry well below the \$830 per thousand cubic meters which it is paying in April. It said its latest price increases on April 1 still left households with an effective 70% subsidy.

"BOTAS has given significant support to households, power plants and industrial companies. Compared to continental Europe, before the price hike, industry and

power plants paid one eighth of the price and households paid one twentieth of the price," a senior government official said.

"Now BOTAS is still making serious losses, but this is government policy and the subsidies continue."

Since the end of 2020 BOTAS has hiked the price of natural gas for industry by 568% in lira terms, according to Reuters calculations. That reflects a 49% fall in Turkey's lira against the dollar in that period on top of rising world energy prices.

"Despite the hikes, BOTAS lost billions of dollars in the first quarter. If the current figures continue for the rest of the year, the loss is expected to grow exponentially," one source close to the matter said.

He said that BOTAS's balance sheet problems meant that, even with continued Treasury support worth 14.7 billion lira in February, it now faced difficulties borrowing from banks. Asked about those claims, a BOTAS official referred Reuters to the Energy Ministry, which did not immediately comment.

"The government's preference is not to make price rises that will push inflation higher as much as possible, but there is a serious cost linked to commodity prices," the source said.

The cost of Turkey's energy imports doubled in January and February compared to last year, to reach \$16.6 billion, helping to drive Ankara's trade deficit up 135%.

In February alone, BOTAS and other state entities bought a record \$5.37 billion in foreign currency from the Central Bank.

## ESCO, FCC on Course to More Synergy, Interaction



## IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Fooladshahr Civil Company (FCC) Mr. Hamid Reza Shirvani visited Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) and during his visit talked with the caretaker of ESCO Eng. Iraj Rokhsati.

In the meeting, Eng. Rokhsati hailed interaction and cooperation between FCC and ESCO and said that some issues between the two companies like ownership have not been settled yet and it seems it to be resolved soon due to the positive approach of the both sides.

He added that FCC has been launched by ESCO and it still serves this city which is in the range of the social responsibilities of the company.

Rokhsati then pointed to the company's having green space with an area over 16,000 hectares, adding that the existing knowhow and capability of the company in the field of green space can be used in Fooladshahr for developing the green space.

He said one of the main grounds for cooperation between the two companies is in the field of housing construction, adding that ESCO wants to provide houses for its staff and FCC can help it and ESCO can provide FCC with necessary construction structures.

Then Shirvani, for his part, emphasized the necessity for synergy between ESCO and FCC and said that the main core of FCC has been set by ESCO and in the past, the ownership of FCC was in hands of ESCO and many of the staff and retired staff of ESCO are still living at Fooladshahr.

He then announced readiness of Fooladshahr Civil Company for cooperation for implementing the project for housing construction for the staff of ESCO and expressed hope in the field of developing the green space, the company can take effective steps in cooperation with ESCO.

## PGSOC Materializing Its Achievement Through Leadership of Eng. Dadvar



## IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Representative of Velayat-e Faqih to Hormozgan Province and Friday Prayers Leader of Bandar Abbas says that achievement of current successes in Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) were not possible without endeavors of the staff and their families' patience who helped the CEO of the company Eng. Dadvar in this regard.

According to the public relations of the company, Hojjatoleslam Ebadizadeh, during his presence in the Iftar reception held by the company, felicitated the holy month of Ramadhan and the auspicious birthday anniversary of Imam Hassan (AS). He then hailed efforts of Eng. Dadvar for his endeavors in the company and said Mr. Dadvar has two important characteristics: first he is a very modest person and has found his place in the hearts of the personnel of the company and the second one is that he is pragmatic. He noted that Dadvar during his presence in the PGSOC has developed the company which is sign of his pragmatism.

Ebadizadeh added that the Supreme Leader in his remarks has hailed Dadvar's actions and has mentioned his actions and performance of the company as a successful model especially in the oil industry.

He reiterated that the current achievements were impossible without efforts of the staff and their cooperation with Eng. Dadvar. He expressed hope that the company would witness more achievements in the future.

## No Communication Gap...

## FROM PAGE 1

He said Pakistan will not tolerate any terrorist acts against Iran from Pakistani soil.

"I believe that Iran is our brother and we will immediately take action if they report illegal activity from our side against them and we expect Iran to also take action if we have any problems that emanate from their side", he added.

The border between Iran and Pakistan is more than 800 kilometers long.

## Iraq to Dispatch...

## FROM PAGE 1

That comes as the Iraqi Electricity Ministry has vowed it would do its utmost to prevent power cuts over the upcoming summer.

Iraqi authorities have repeatedly stated that it would take years for the country to wean itself off the Iranian energy imports.

Iraq has used sanction waivers issued by the United States to be able to import Iranian energy in recent years.

## Army Day...

## FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile in the ceremony, the latest equipment and achievements of the Army were unveiled and put on display.

During the ceremony, parades of specialized units of different forces of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran were held in the presence of President Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Army Commander Major General Seyyed Abdolrahim Mousavi, Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani and other Army and IRGC top commanders.

In the ceremony, the latest equipment and achievements of the army were unveiled. Most of the equipment has been designed and produced by the specialists of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran based on the latest defense technologies.

The Army Ground Forces demonstrated its new equipment and achievements in the field of ground combat, including artillery, armor, electronic warfare, helicopters and UAVs.

"Kaman-22", a long-range and strategic multi-functional drone of the Army Air Force, was shown to the public for the first time during the Army Day parade. It is the first combat drone of the army, which is capable of carrying all types of cargo with a flight duration of more than 24 hours. This drone has an operating range of more than three thousand kilometers and is capable of flying up to an altitude of eight thousand meters.

The drone is capable of carrying a variety of ammunition and laser and smart missiles and has the ability to detect, monitor and collect information and shoot long-range targets.

## Enemy Fails in...

## FROM PAGE 1

Lasting regional security is contingent upon explicit, transparent and unconditional rejection of aggression and occupation, he noted.

Baqeri added that the Western powers sent blood-thirsty terrorists with the logic of weapon to war on the human culture and civilization and unleashed al-Qaeda and Daesh on regional nations, but the resistance proved its superiority with the weapon of logic and by moving toward developing an identity for human beings and creating civilizations for nations in order to realize the goal of progress in light of security.

He also referred to some efforts to portray the resistance as a current that acts against order and causes chaos, saying it has been proved in practice that the inclusive doctrine of resistance is meant to efficiently run the society and help free humans achieve excellence and give identity to independent nations.

During the imposed war, some powers also tried to depict Iran as the party causing tension and chaos and

portray Saddam as the axis of stability and peace but history proved that aggression and occupation do not bring order and stability, the deputy minister stated.

"Therefore, we today believe that the nature of the Zionists' aggression and occupation is not only destabilizing and causes tension but creating tension and chaos is also a major component of the nature of Zionists," Baqeri stated.

He then likened some regional countries' interaction with the Zionist regime to taking refuge in the frightening lair of a wolf to escape the blissful spring rain.

The deputy foreign minister underlined, "We will never forget Imam Khomeini's advice to the leaders of regional countries during the imposed war when he cautioned them against supporting Saddam and said 'If Saddam gets the opportunity, he will come after you', and we all saw what Saddam did to them after being defeated in his confrontation with Iran."

"For this reason, friendship with the Zionists will exactly lead to the same result", Baqeri concluded.

## Annual Exports...

## FROM PAGE 1

The exports to Thailand increased by 59 percent in terms of value compared to the preceding year.

The top exported items to Thailand include steel ingots, steel sections, zinc, chicken viscera, bitumen, and vaseline, Rezaei-Pour said.

Rezaei-Pour put the country's trade with the ASEAN union in the Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20, 2021) at \$3 billion, saying that the increase in exports is an indication that the level of trade with the union is expected to follow an upward trend in the current year.

He pointed out that Iran's top imported items from this union include sugarcane, palm oil, soybeans, food products, rice, home appliances, medium-density fiber, and mobile phones. ASEAN is an economic union comprising 10 member states in Southeast Asia, which promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and sociocultural integration among its members and other countries in Asia.

## Tehran, Baku...

## FROM PAGE 1

It will have the capacity to generate 716 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year.

These hydro junctions and hydroelectric power plants will allow both sides to share the Araz River's water and energy resources. After liberating its lands from Armenian occupation in the 44-day war in 2020, Azerbaijan regained control of a 132-kilometer stretch of the Azerbaijan-Iran border. The re-establishment of control over the state border opened up new prospects for deeper cooperation between the two countries.

It should be noted that Azerbaijan and Iran's trade turnover in 2021 totaled \$440.8 million.

## Tehran, New Delhi...

## FROM PAGE 1

"With the Biden regime resuming talks on reviving the Iran nuclear deal, there are now indications that some sanctions may be lifted to begin with. The Iranian team is eager to come to India to discuss possible mechanisms and deals so that trade can resume immediately after certain sanctions are gone," the source said.

Recently Iranian Ambassador to India Ali Chegeni offered to restart oil trade with India by relaunching rupee-rial trade. "It is too early to talk about the details of the possibilities with Iran. These are initial talks. Much depends on what happens in Vienna between U.S. and Iran," the source added.

## MSC's Smart Using From Golden Opportunity of Production



## IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Manage of steelmaking and continuous casting of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC), referring to the smart using of the company from the golden opportunity of production, said that MSC is strongly determined for materialization of the slogan of the year in the early days of the new century and it tries to increase its production to an acceptable level comparing to the same capacities in the past months and years.

Mr. Khoshdel pointed to the achievements resulted by the energy restrictions for the steel industries in the beginning of the year and stipulated that in such condition MSC succeeded in using its maximum capability for production and set several records due to regular plans and using its experts.

He said that for example in the ironmaking unit of MSC they have witnessed 3 new records during the New Year holidays and in the steelmaking and continuous casting the company they have witnessed 3 consecutive records in three days and this indicates high productivity and capacity of this group as well as its production capability which is higher than its nominal production capacity.

Khoshdel went on to say that in different months of the year the company faces energy restriction like electricity and gas and the company varies its strategies in production based on these changes, and the company during the restriction era tries to repair and overhaul its equipment and installations in order to improve its production when the restrictions are removed.

He then pointed to the environmental actions of MSC and said that this company has defined mega environmental projects, expressing hope that they would be completed this year in order that the company can turn into a green industry model in the country, in other words it can produce green and clean steel.



## Kim Hyo-joo Wins LPGA Lotte Championship

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - South Korea's Kim Hyo-joo held off Hinako Shibuno to win the LPGA Lotte Championship by two strokes.

Kim teed off with a three-shot lead and was four up after birdies at the fifth and eighth holes at Hoakalei Country Club in Hawaii.

But Japan's Shibuno, with birdies at the fourth and 11th, was within one stroke after Kim bogeyed the ninth and 17th.

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## Thompson-Herah Posts Fastest 100m of 2022

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - , April 17 — Jamaica's two-time Olympic gold medallist Elaine Thompson-Herah clocked the fastest 100m in the world this year at 10.89sec at the Golden Games at Walnut, California.

Thompson-Herah, running her first outdoor 100m of the season, won her semi-final heat in the meeting east of Los Angeles with a favorable wind of 1.6 meters per second.

# Warriors Rout Nuggets In Curry's Return

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jordan Poole exploded for 30 points as the Golden State Warriors rolled to an easy 123-107 victory over the Denver Nuggets in the opening contest of their Western Conference first-round series at San Francisco.

Stephen Curry added 16 points in 22 minutes off the bench after missing the previous 12 games with a left foot injury. Curry's timing was off as he finished 5-of-13 shooting in his first action since March 16. Klay Thompson scored 19 points.

Nikola Jokic registered 25 points, 10 rebounds and six assists for Denver. Will Barton added 24 points for the Nuggets, who didn't play like the squad that won three of four regular-season outings against the Warriors.

Poole was 9-of-13 shooting -- including 5 of 7 from 3-point range -- as his point total tied Hall of Famer Mitch Richmond (1989) for the second-highest scoring playoff debut in Warriors' history. Hall of Famer Wilt Chamberlain holds the record of 35 in 1960 for the Philadelphia Warriors.

Andrew Wiggins contributed 16 points and nine rebounds, and Draymond Green had 12 points, nine assists, six rebounds and three blocked shots for Golden State, which shot 52.4 percent from the field and was 16 of 35 from 3-point range.

### Jazz 99, Mavericks 93

Donovan Mitchell scored 32 points after a rough start and Bojan Bogdanovic had 26 as Utah took advantage of Luka Doncic's absence to defeat host Dallas in the opening game of its Western Conference first-round series.

Rudy Gobert grabbed 17 rebounds and blocked three shots to lead the defensive effort for the Jazz, who took both a 1-0 lead and home-court advantage with the road win. Mitchell had a rough overall game from the field, shooting 10-for-29, and only scored two points in the first half before exploding for 30 in the second half.

Dallas played without its superstar Doncic, who was ruled out of Game 1 Saturday morning. He suffered a left calf strain in the regular-season finale Sunday against San Antonio. It's uncertain whether he'll be back for Game 2 on Monday. Jalen Brunson scored 24 and Spencer Dinwiddie tossed in 22 for the Mavericks.

### Timberwolves 130, Grizzlies 117

Patrick Beverley and Jaden McDaniels hit late 3-pointers, capping a dominant



performance by Minnesota from beyond the arc, as the seventh-seeded visitors stunned Memphis in Game 1 of their Western Conference first-round playoff series.

Anthony Edwards outscored Memphis star Ja Morant 36 to 32 and Karl-Anthony Towns chipped in with 29 of his own as the Timberwolves, who needed a play-in win over the Los Angeles Clippers just to make the playoffs, stole the home-court advantage in the best-of-seven matchup. Morant led the Grizzlies in scoring and assists with eight, but missed his only two 3-point attempts as second-seeded Memphis was outscored 48-21 on 3-pointers.

Already having demonstrated they could play with a 56-win club by splitting the four-game season series, the Timberwolves exploded out of the postseason gate for 41 points in the first quarter to go up by as many as 13. Edwards had 13 of his 36 points and Towns 12 of his 29 in the opening 12 minutes.

### 76ers 131, Raptors 111

Tyrese Maxey poured in a postseason career-high 38 points and Philadelphia earned its first home win over Toronto this season in a romp in the opener of their Eastern Conference first-round playoff series.

Joel Embiid snatched a game-high 15 rebounds to complement 19 points, while James Harden dished off a game-high 14 assists while scoring 22 for the Sixers.

The fourth-seeded 76ers overpowered the Raptors, who had beaten them three times during the regular season, including twice in Philadelphia. Pascal Siakam paced Toronto with 24 points.

## Van Baarle Comes of Age With Victory

ROUBAIX (Dispatches) - Dutch rider Dylan van Baarle of Ineos Grenadiers won the 257km Paris-Roubaix cycling classic on Sunday, emerging in the bright sunshine from the 30 cobbled sections of dusty old mining roads for a solo triumph.

Van Baarle held his head in his hands crossing the line before leaping off his bike and hoisting it in the air as he screamed with joy and relief.

Belgian Wout van Aert of Jumbo was second and Swiss Stefan Kung of FDJ was third after Van Baarle entered the Roubaix velodrome on his own.

His win is doubly special as Paris-Roubaix, known as "The Queen of the Classics", because of its extreme length and difficulty, is rarely taken by a solo winner.

The 29-year-old Van Baarle had been threatening to win such a race after finishing a narrow second at the recent Tour of Flanders and at the 2021 world championships.

The winner dropped his last companion in style, on the toughest cobbled section of the closing stages, when Slovenia's Matej Mohoric could no longer hold on.

It is also the first time Ineos Grenadiers have won this race. The British team recently also won the Amstel Gold with Poland's Michał Kwiatkowski while American Magnus Sheffield claimed the Brabantse Pijl.

On Sunday, Van Baarle took 5hrs 37mins to finish the 257km course in bone-dry weather which made the 2022 course extremely fast at an average speed of over 45kmh with riders avoiding the bumpy cobbles by racing in the dirt tracks alongside them.

### Frankfurt Fans Made Barca

### Feel Robbed in Its Own Home

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Xavi Hernandez said Barcelona felt like they had been "robbed in their own home" after the Camp Nou was packed with Eintracht Frankfurt supporters in their Europa League defeat by the German side on Thursday.

More than 20,000 Frankfurt fans managed to get tickets for the second leg, with a sea of white shirts in the stands creating a hostile atmosphere for the Barca players.



## Guardiola Defends Steffen After Mistake in FA Cup Game



"It was an accident, but we need him to try because that's how we play our football," Guardiola told reporters after the game.

MANCHESTER (dispatches) - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola defended back-up goalkeeper Zack Steffen, saying he should keep his place despite an error that led to Saturday's 3-2 defeat by Liverpool in the FA Cup semi-final.

After Ibrahima Konate's header put Liverpool in the lead, the mistake from United States international Steffen gave the Reds a second goal in the 17th minute.

"He deserves to play and after that he had a good game," Guardiola said. "He made good saves and is an exceptional keeper."

Steffen took too long when receiving a back pass from City defender John Stones. Liverpool forward Sadio Mane slid in to tackle the keeper and the ball flew into the net.

"We use our keeper to move our opponents into different situations. I'm pretty sure Zack didn't want to do it," Guardiola said. "Sometimes the strikers miss in front of the keeper, other times the keeper makes a mistake."

Steffen was one of the seven changes Guardiola made from the team that started in their Champions League game in midweek, with the City boss opting to rest several of the team starters including first choice keeper Ederson.

City are top of the Premier League on 74 points, one point ahead of Liverpool, with seven matches left. They host Brighton & Hove Albion in the league on Wednesday.

## Chelsea Sink Palace to Reach FA Cup Final

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea will face quadruple chasers Liverpool in the FA Cup final after second-half goals from Ruben Loftus-Cheek and Mason Mount sealed a 2-0 win against Crystal Palace on Sunday.

Thomas Tuchel's side had to work hard to break Palace's stubborn resistance in the semi-final at Wembley, but Loftus-Cheek's ferocious strike put them on course for a third successive FA Cup final appearance.

Mount put the result beyond doubt with a fine finish of his own, ensuring Chelsea of a date with Liverpool in the final at Wembley on May 14.

It will be Chelsea's fifth FA Cup final in the last six years as they look to make amends for losing in the showpiece against Arsenal and Leicester in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

In their 16th FA Cup final, Chelsea will aim to win the competition for the ninth time and first since 2018. It was a welcome tonic after Tuesday's painful Champions League quarter-final exit at Real Madrid, where the Blues scored three times to overturn a 3-1 first-leg deficit only to go out after extra time.

Tuchel has won the Champions League, Club World Cup and UEFA Super Cup in his reign, but he is yet to lead Chelsea to a domestic trophy.



## Tsitsipas Downs Davidovich Fokina for Monte Carlo Crown

MONTE CARLO (Dispatches) - Stefanos Tsitsipas successfully defended his Monte Carlo Masters title with a 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) victory over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in Sunday's final.

Third seed Tsitsipas hammered 21 winners and made only 11 unforced errors in the Monaco sunshine to win in an hour and 36 minutes.

It was the 23-year-old Greek's eighth ATP title and first in 11 months as he made the perfect start to the clay-court season.

"I'm very proud of the amount of belief I had in my game," Tsitsipas said.

"He fought in moments I didn't really expect him to fight and hit some incredible winners. I believe that's a great result against him."

He joins an illustrious list of players to win back-to-back Monte Carlo Masters, including Rafael Nadal, Juan Carlos Ferrero, Thomas Muster and Bjorn Borg.

Tsitsipas, who beat Andrey Rublev in the Monte Carlo final 12 months ago, has now won four clay tournaments in his career.

He is gearing up for another tilt at the French Open title after losing last year's final at Roland Garros to Novak Djokovic despite leading by two sets.

