

**Key Iranian Steel Producer
Khouzestan Steel Company
Has Been Targeted With a Cyber
Attack as the Company Confirmed
The attack But Reiterated that
Everything Is Now Under Control**

IRAN NEWS

**A UN Refugee Agency Official Praised
Iran for Bending Over Backwards to
Improve Living Conditions for
Millions of Refugees During the Past
Decades, Especially After the Taliban
Takeover in Afghanistan**

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7529 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

TUESDAY JUNE 28, 2022 - TIR 7, 1401

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Normalization of Relations Not to Bring Security to Zionist Regime

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says normalization of relations with a number of regional Arab countries will not bring security to the Zionist regime of Israel.

Raisi made the remarks in a joint presser with the visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi in Tehran on Sunday.

"During this meeting, we discussed trade and political and economic relations [between the two countries], and decided to boost economic ties. We discussed the rail connection between Shalamchah [in Iran] and [Iraq's] Basra [port], which can play a great role in facilitating trade between the two countries. We also discussed facilitation of monetary and banking relations between Iran and Iraq," he said.

Reflecting on the efforts made by the Zionist regime's official during past years to normalize relations with some Arab states in the region, Iran's chief executive said, "The efforts made by the Zionist regime to normalize relations with regional countries will by no means bring security to this regime."

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U.S. Urged to Convince Iran It Would Fully Fulfill Deal

TEHRAN (MNA) - Saying that Iran was committed to the deal and it was the U.S. that withdrew from the agreement, Marandi stressed that the Americans should convince Iran that they will fully implement the agreement.

Mohammad Marandi, an advisor to the Iranian negotiating team in Vienna, made the remarks in an interview with Al-Araby Al-Jadeed.

Criticizing the violation of the JCPOA by the US and the maximum pressure policy, Mohammad Marandi noted that Iran has to receive assurances to ensure that the United States can no longer easily repeat its past actions.

Asked if the resumption of talks means that the United States had made its decision on unresolved issues, Marandi said, "No, The Americans have not yet made the necessary decision."

Turning to the remaining unsolved issues in the talks and the fact that the UN chief Josep Borell called them political matters, Marandi stated, "Mr. Borrell tends to call the issue of guarantees and the lifting of sanctions political, but in our view, these are purely legal and technical issues."

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No Direct Talks With U.S. on Nuclear Deal



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Iran confirmed that the next round of paused negotiations to revive the ailing 2015 Iran deal will be hosted by a Persian Gulf country, following reports by Qatar's Al Jazeera network and Iran's Nour News that the involved parties may head to Doha to continue the talks.

Iran's outgoing Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told a news conference on Monday morning that the sides will decide on the next venue of the talks and the exact date within hours.

"Inshallah (God willing), one of the countries in the Persian Gulf will be the host, and the meeting will take place in the coming days of the current week," Khatibzadeh told reporters.

The talks were initially launched last April but have already hit two months-long pauses. All previous rounds have been held in Austria's capital, Vienna.

On the agenda is to restore to full force the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran deal, which the US abandoned in 2018 and has tried to kill since then.

Khatibzadeh also quoted Josep Borrell, the EU high representative for foreign affairs, as saying that the United States has pledged to abide by its obligations under the JCPOA and the UNSC resolution 2231 and guarantee Iran's economic interests.

The spokesman, however, stressed that "we have to wait and see" whether Washington would make good on its promises, given that it has once withdrawn from the deal.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Khatibzadeh asserted the negotiators will not discuss nuclear issues, but rather, they will focus on pending issues concerning the lifting of the sanctions imposed on Iran.

"The ball is in Washington's court. If they come up with an answer, an agreement would be reached," he said. The spokesman reiterated that Tehran will not hold any direct negotiations with the United States over the revival of the 2015 deal, emphasizing that "the talks would be indirect and would be facilitated by the European Union."

Referring to a recent visit paid by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to Tehran, Khatibzadeh praised Baghdad's role in Iran-Saudi Arabia talks.

He said the Iraqi premier told Iran that Riyadh is ready to proceed with the talks in Baghdad at the diplomatic level. Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian protesters, enraged by the Saudi execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, stormed its embassy in Tehran.

He also said that the U.S. is the biggest human rights violator.

He added that a new round of talks to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) would be held in the coming days and this week, with a time of talks as well as all its location being determined.

Elsewhere Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters that Iran's foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian will travel to Türkiye in a few hours and leave Türkiye for Ashgabat to attend a meeting of foreign ministers of the Caspian littoral states.

UAE-Operated Tanker Loots Over 400,000 Barrels of Yemeni Crude

SANAA (Dispatches) - A tanker operated by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has reportedly left a port in Yemen's southern province of Shabwah with 400,000 barrels of Yemeni crude oil, as Abu Dhabi and Riyadh continue to plunder the natural resources of the impoverished country.

A Yemeni official told the official Saba news agency that the Gulf Aetos tanker, laden with more than 400,000 barrels of crude oil, departed Rudum port on Sunday.

The official, who asked not to be named, added that the crude oil cargo is estimated to cost \$43.640 million according to international benchmark prices.

He noted that the development falls within the framework of systematic looting of Yemen's oil reserves and natural resources by the Saudi-led war coalition and its allied Takfiri militants, as well as tight measures aimed at preventing cash flow into the country.

The official went on to describe as "unacceptable" the sale or transfer of shares in any economic sphere of the country by the former Saudi-backed Yemeni government.

He called on the international community and all world bodies to perform their duties and stop the former Yemeni government from tampering with the national wealth of the war-hit country.

The latest looting of Yemeni crude oil comes two weeks after a supertanker left the port of Ash Shihr in Yemen's eastern province of Hadhramaut with more than two million barrels of looted crude oil worth over \$270 million.

Meanwhile, the Yemeni parliament has strongly condemned the recurring violations of a UN-brokered ceasefire by the Saudi-led coalition.

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ViewPoint By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Iran's Dominance Now in the Sky

The Islamic Republic of Iran on Sunday announced another achievement which signals the country's strong determination for progress especially for dominance in the space and space sciences through launching satellite carriers.

Iran reportedly tested its domestically-developed hybrid-propellant satellite carrier rocket called Zuljanah for "predetermined research purposes" for the second time. In remarks on Sunday, Ahmad Hosseini, a spokesman for Iran's Defense Ministry, explained that the three-phased Zuljanah is competitive with the world's top satellite carriers in technical aspects, noting that it has two solid propulsion phases and a single liquid propulsion phase.

The official added that the third development phase of the satellite carrier has started.

As it was expected, the U.S. and its allies reacted angrily to this test which is a proof for the success of Iran in this launch into the space. The White House on Sunday reacted to Iran's successful launch of Zuljanah satellite vehicle and expressed concern about it.

While criticizing the launch of Zuljanah satellite carrier, a White House spokesperson called it "useless and destabilizing". The White House also said it was committed to impose sanctions and use other measures to prevent Iran from further progressing its ballistic missile program.

Earlier this month, Hosseini said the performance of different stages of Zuljanah is examined and evaluated during each research launch.

Following the incorporation of required technology and successful operation, the Zuljanah satellite carrier will be capable of putting "payloads weighing up to 220 kilograms into the orbit at an altitude of 500 kilometers," he added.

Iran's Defense Ministry launched the Zuljanah satellite carrier into space for the first time in February 2021.

Zuljanah is named after the horse of Imam Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). The satellite carrier is 25.5 meters long and weighs about 52 tons. It utilizes a 1.5-meter diameter solid fuel engine with 74 tons of thrust.

In recent years Iran has achieved amazing success in the field of launching satellite or satellite-carrier but this launch was very important because Iranian scientists had used solid fuel in the rocket. So it made the U.S. angry because solid fuel is used for the intercontinental ballistic missile technology.

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Greece Releases Iranian-Flagged Oil Tanker

REHRAN (PressTV) - The Greek government has released an Iranian-flagged oil tanker, which was seized two months ago under U.S. pressure to tighten its sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

On Sunday, AFP quoted a source in the Greek port police as saying that the seizure of the PEGAS tanker has been lifted and that the oil tanker may set sail again.

On April 19, Greek authorities impounded the 115,500-deadweight tonnage PEGAS, with 19 Russian crew members on board, on the southern coast of the island of Evia.

The tanker was reportedly carrying 115,000 tons of Iranian oil. Late in April, it was reported that the US Department of Justice had confiscated 700,000 barrels of the Iranian oil cargo.

The new development came after in mid-June, the Greek government overturned its recent decision to confiscate the Iranian oil tanker, dismissing Washington's pressures which were behind the seizure in the first place.

According to a statement issued by Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) at that time, the Greek government ordered the release of the ship and its cargo despite sustained US efforts to do otherwise.

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Iran, Pakistan Chiefs of Staff Meet in Tehran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of Pakistan General Nadeem Raza on Monday met with Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran Major General Mohammad Baqeri in here Tehran.

General Baqeri hosted his Pakistani counterpart at the headquarters of the General Staff of the Armed Forces in Tehran.

The meeting was aimed at expanding cooperation between Iran and Pakistan to establish sustainable security in the region and increase education and operational military collaborations.

President Criticizes Lack of Int'l Determination To Fight Drugs

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi said on Sunday that the international community's appreciation of Iran in the fight against narcotics is not a substitute for them not to fulfill their responsibilities in this field, saying, the message of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking must be how much all governments and international organizations have played a role in this regard.

Speaking at the ceremony of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, President Raisi praised the great status of martyrs in this field, saying that the dedication of 3,800 martyrs and 12,000 wounded veterans is a sign of the proof that exists for the fight against narcotics in Islamic Iran.

Emphasizing that the fight against narcotics is a serious and priority issue in the country, the President added that on the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, the path taken in the fight against narcotics should be pathological.

Referring to the good record of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the fight against narcotics at the national and global levels, the Iranian President thanked all those involved in the Anti-Narcotics Headquarters, the Ministry of Intelligence, the police, the border police, and the Basij.

Calling the fight against narcotics a complex and important task because of the work of the mafia organizations and while emphasizing the need to use creativity and initiative in this fight, he highlighted that they should try to transform the fight against narcotics.

Describing the problem of drugs and psychedelics as one of the serious crises for countries and human society, President Raisi added that no country can enter the fight against drug traffickers alone and all countries and international organizations must play their role properly.

He noted that his question to the United Nations is whether the share, amount, and position assigned to this organization in the fight against narcotics is proportionate to what is being done? Is a UN Office on Drugs sufficient for this purpose?

Raisi continued, "I believe" that countries and international organizations do not play their role to the extent of their claims and responsibilities. Is just appreciating the Islamic Republic of Iran enough to have an effective presence in the fight against drugs? The role of the United Nations is definitely higher than that.

The President emphasized that today, 113 years after the signing of the Shanghai Convention by various countries against drugs, "we see" that this product is more easily available on the Internet than many other goods, and traditional drugs have become industrial and are linked with other organized crimes like money laundering.



Raisi pointed out that it seems that there is a serious weakness in the formation of an international determination in the fight against drugs, and unless this weakness is compensated, the situation will not improve.

Referring to the US and NATO actions in Afghanistan that have led to the development of narcotics cultivation, the President noted that in the two decades of American and NATO domination in Afghanistan, narcotics have been produced and converted from traditional to industrial and distributed around the world.

Raisi reiterated that why is the international community not fulfilling its legal, moral, and human rights duty to hold the United States and NATO accountable in this regard?

The President continued by stating that the international community, in response to its duties in the field of counter-narcotics, wants to satisfy Iran only by appreciation and sending a plaque of appreciation, adding, the message of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking should be monitoring the role of governments and international organizations who claim to be advocates of human rights in this area, which I believe there is a serious weakness in this area.

Explaining the actions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the fight against narcotics, he noted that today, the sincerity and seriousness of the Islamic Republic in this field are clear to everyone and there is no need to argue because we have been seriously fighting narcotics for 43 years.

The President said that if during these years the international community had performed its duties as the Islamic Republic of Iran has done in the fight against drugs, the situation in the world today would have been different.

Stating that all valuable and effective measures of the Islamic Republic in the fight against drugs have been taken under the oppressive U.S. sanctions, Raisi said that many of the tools and technologies that "we must have" in the fight against drugs are out of reach due to sanctions.

Addressing the representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, he said that "we complain" to the United Nations why no action is taken, at least to lift the oppressive sanctions against the activists in the field of counter-narcotics?!

Tehran Ready to Help D-8 States Reach Joint Objectives

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy affairs said here on Sunday that multilateral economic organizations, like the D-8, are important in Iran's economic diplomacy and Tehran is ready to help the D-8 reach their joint objectives.

D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) Secretary-General Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, who is visiting Tehran, met and conferred with Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Affairs Mehdi Safari.

The D-8 secretary-general expressed delight for having the opportunity to visit Iran and presented the latest report on cooperation in that organization to the Iranian deputy foreign minister.

He referred to the agreements among member countries in such fields as commerce, industries, agriculture, technology, sciences, communications, and aviation, saying that the Islamic Republic of Iran can play a decisive role in implementing those objectives.



Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam meanwhile elaborated on some projects of the D-8 that are already being implemented in the commerce field, including the establishment of a payment system, and the D-8 Bartered Transactions Chamber.

He also proposed that the member countries will implement their joint regional projects in collaboration with Iran.

The deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy affairs, too, said in the meeting that the multilateral economic cooperation organizations are very important in the economic diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, announcing Tehran's readiness for assisting D-8 to implement its projects.

Safari referred to Iran's capabilities in various fields, such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, and other science-based products, agricultural products, technical and engineering services, and participation in implementing various projects in any of the D-8 countries.

Tehran, Managua Sign Cooperation Agreement on Supply of Medicine

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of Iran's Barkat Pharmaceutical Group has signed an important agreement during his recent visit to Nicaragua in order to facilitate cooperation between Tehran and Managua in the field of healthcare through exporting Iranian medicine and medical equipment to the Central American country.

During the ceremony, which was attended by Akbar Borrandegi and the executive manager of Nicaragua's Social Security Institute, Roberto Lopez, the managing director of Barkat Pharmaceutical Group said Iran has 41 years of experience in the medical field and is ready to transfer its knowledge to Nicaragua.

He added that Iran possesses 130 pharmaceutical companies, 75 plants producing raw material for medicine, and more than a hundred medical distribution companies.

Borrandegi added that the country also attaches great significance to manpower training in all medical and health-related areas. Lopez, for his part, lauded the achievements and experiences of Barkat Pharmaceutical Group.

He added that the cooperation between the two sides has led to signing of contracts with the aim of facilitating access to high-quality Iranian medicine and medical equipment.

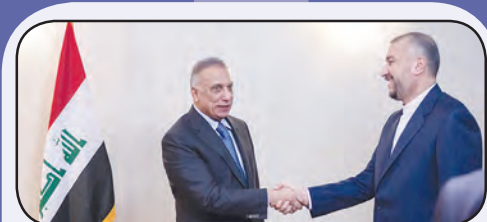
The Nicaraguan official added that his country is also ready to cooperate with Iran to build a pharmaceutical company in Nicaragua.

Meanwhile, the Nicaraguan president's advisor, Laureano Ortega Murillo, said during the ceremony that Iran and Nicaragua have shared goals. He emphasized the need for boosting strategic cooperation between the two countries, including in the field of healthcare.

Dr. Maria Riez, another participant in the ceremony, thanked Iran's Barkat Pharmaceutical Group, saying the priority for medicine production should be given to drugs that are of the highest use in Nicaragua and are necessary to promote family and social health.



Iran, Well-Wisher of The Regional Countries



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said in a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi that Iran is well-wisher of the regional countries, and supports Baghdad's constructive efforts to strengthen dialogue in regional equations.

During the meeting in the Iranian capital, Amirabdollahian and Al-Kadhimi discussed issues of mutual interest and regional developments.

Amirabdollahian in his Sunday afternoon meeting with Al-Kadhimi who is visiting Iran reviewed the latest regional developments and exchanged views on bilateral ties and issues of mutual interest.

The top Iranian top diplomat while referring to the ongoing ceasefire in Yemen voiced Iran's support for its continuation and the end of the inhumane siege of the Yemeni nation.

Amirabdollahian said that the solution for the regional crises is to be sought inside the region.

He appreciated Iraq's constructive efforts aimed at strengthening the dialogue factor in regional equations, and particularly in the process of Iran-Saudi dialogues.

Amirabdollahian said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is the well-wisher of the entire regional nations, and supports the reopening of the two countries' embassies.

The foreign minister also referred to Iran's abundant commonalities with Egypt, arguing that strengthening Tehran-Cairo relations, too, is to the benefit of the region and the Islamic world.

The Iraqi prime minister, too, ensured the Iranian foreign minister that Baghdad will continue its efforts to strengthen regional dialogue and cooperation.

Mustafa Al-Kadhimi said that the role and status of the Islamic Republic of Iran in regional developments are quite close to Iraq's. He said that Baghdad attaches great importance to its relations with Tehran, and will continue its regional mediation role.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein and Iran's Ambassador to Iraq Mohammad Kazem Ale Sadeq were also present in the meeting.

Iran Reacts to "Violations of Human Rights" in U.S.

TEHRA (IRNA) - Iran's Deputy Judiciary Chief and Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi said on Sunday that nobody dares to question Washington for the egregious violations of human rights.

Gharibabadi said in his twitter account that "never held accountable, the U.S. police do not hesitate to press ahead with violence, excessive use of force & a heavy-handed crackdown against any voices of dissent".

"Nobody dares to question the so-called flag-bearer of human rights for the egregious violations of human rights!"

A video clip has recently gone viral in which the U.S. police violently deals with protesters, particularly a reporter who is taking photos and is beaten up by police.

Enemies Afraid of Iran-Iraq Convergence, Deep Relations

TEHRAN (MNA) - First Vice President stressed that enemies are afraid of the convergence and deep relations of the Iranian and Iraqi governments and nations.

Iranian officials and nations attach great importance to the independence, prosperity, stability, and security in Iraq, Mohammad Mokhber said in a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi in Tehran.

Referring to the deep relations between Tehran and Baghdad, he stressed that the enemies are afraid of the convergence of the two governments and nations of Iran and Iraq.

Iran and Iraq must be aware of the provocations of the ill-wishers who seek to divide the two nations, Mokhber said, adding that certainly, the historical and religious solidarity between Iranian and Iraqi nations has been always a great obstacle against the malicious conspiracies of the two nations.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he praised the efforts and measures of the Iraqi Prime Minister and the Government in terms of visas, stressing that visa-free trips can lead to the expansion of relations and increased travel between the people of the two countries. The Iraqi Prime Minister also referred to the many historical, religious, and cultural commonalities between Iran and Iraq.

There are great grounds for cooperation between the two countries, he also said, adding that the Iraqi government is determined to implement the agreements as soon as possible.

In this meeting, the two sides exchanged views on removing obstacles and accelerating the agreements previously agreed upon between the two countries.

Kanaani to Replace Khatibzadeh as New FM Spox

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of the Office for the Protection of the Interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Cairo Nasser Kanaani has been appointed as the new Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, media sources reported on Monday.

Kanaani has been appointed as the 13th spokesman for the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will be the successor of Saeed Khatibzadeh.

Speaking at his last weekly press conference on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters he would take office as an adviser to the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian.

Kanaani has been in charge of the Office for the Protection of the Interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Cairo, the capital of Egypt since June 2018.



Iran Alone in Anti-Narcotics Campaign

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi said that Iran is alone in anti-narcotics campaign, arguing that the Islamic Republic of Iran is quite serious in this campaign that needs to be a collective campaign.

Ahmad Vahidi who was speaking on the occasion of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, said that nomination of such as day shows that this is a global problem and every country should seriously and actively participate in it, but the leading factors to the emergence of this gravest problem for the mankind needs to be surveyed.

He said that it has now been over 100 years that mankind is entangled with the narcotics problem and this is a very sad story involving a mean culture, whose objective is global expansion of narcotics drugs addiction.

The interior minister said that the first culprit of this crime is the western countries today, while the countries that have suffered the gravest losses are other countries.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:07
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:05
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:51

14. Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, in this world and the Hereafter, a grievous penalty would have seized you in that ye rushed glibly into this affair.
15. Behold, ye received it on your tongues, and said out of your mouths things of which ye had no knowledge; and ye thought it to be a light matter, while it was most serious in the sight of Allah.

Surah 24. Light (14 - 15)

Iran's Membership at Board of Directors of ICA for First Time

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) hailed Iran being elected as a member of board of directors of International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) which happened during the recent general assembly meeting of the ICA.

Speaking in a press conference on the occasion of International Day of Cooperatives (July 11), Bahman Abdollahi hailed Iran's achievement during the general assembly of the ICA as the country for the first time was elected as the member of the board of directors of the ICA.

He said that the cooperative sector in the world has 1.2b people as this sector accounts for 12% of the occupation in the world. He added that the Brussels-based ICA has 112 members that Iran could become a member of board of directors for the first time in the history of the ICA and expressed hope that ICC can import knowledge of cooperative through this membership and the chamber can help development of the cooperative section in the country and boosting exports of this sector through interactions with the international organizations like FAO, ICAO and ILO.

Touching upon the food and grain crisis and role of the cooperatives in food provision, Abdollahi reiterated that major part of cooperatives in Iran belongs to the agro sector as 52% of cooperatives in the country are active in the agro and animal husbandry, adding that major fishery and livestock products happen in the cooperative sector.

He reiterated that according to the official statistics in the country, cooperative sector accounted for 9% of occupation last year while the share of this sector from the gross domestic product (GDP) is 6 to 7 percent, and the capacity of the



cooperative for creating jobs can reach 15% because job creation in the cooperative sector is at least 20 to 25 percent cheaper. Abdollahi then pointed to the share of the cooperatives in managing the justice shares.

On the role of the ICC in helping developing the exports, he said with the license issued by the Trade Promotion Organization, Iran is to launch trade centers in Russia, Iraq, Pakistan and Qatar and Oman and the chamber can help developing exports of Iranian products and involvement of the cooperative companies. He added that with this achievement almost markets of 112 countries were opened to Iranian products. He added that ICC is working to have active presence in Russian market and it has restored good cooperation with its Russian counterpart.

On the housing cooperatives, he said that since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, some 2.2m units of houses have been constructed and delivered by the cooperatives, admitting that there are still some problems but the services of the cooperatives should not be ignored.

He also criticized the Road and urban development ministry for its passiveness for construction of housing units for the workers and the ministry has not issued required licenses for the cooperatives for start of the project.

Necessity for Launch of Innovation System in MSC



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) believes it is necessary to launch an innovation system in the company for improvement of the performance.

Speaking in the development committee of the company, Mr. Mohammad Yaser Tayebnia said that the issue of innovation is an issue which has been raised for years in the MSC and it is still raised in the company but the issue that exists today and needs to be studied is how to create innovation system and institutionalize it as well as turn it to a dominant current in the organization.

Tayebnia added that the MSC approach is to maximum use of the existing capacities and this needs innovation, developing human capitals, quantitative, and qualitative and balanced development, adding that this innovation should be accompanied with modern technologies because none of those approaches will be materialized without innovation and technology.

He stated that green industry is one of the indicators which have been raised as a must and this will not be materialized without innovation. He added that preliminary measures have started but it needs them to enter the operational phase.

He noted that the company needs think-tanks with presence of interior and exterior experts in different fields to form the link. He reiterated that the company should identify domestic elites in the required fields and to consult with experts out of the organization.

Tayebnia reiterated that innovation should be promoted in all strategies and affairs of the company and even among its human capitals and innovation should turn into a culture and dominant current.

He added that using knowledge-based companies in the missions of the MSC is one of the innovation approach of the company which will be kept comprehensively.

Tehran, Dushanbe Seeking Enhanced Energy Ties

TEHRAN (Shana) - Continuing the path of reviving Iran's energy diplomacy, the Deputy Petroleum Minister for International Affairs and Trade met with a delegation from Tajikistan headed by the Deputy Minister of Industry and New Technologies to emphasize the development of economic cooperation between the two countries.

Following Tajik President Emomali Rahmon's visit to Tehran in May and following up on the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Iranian Minister of Petroleum Javad Owji and Tajik Minister of Energy and Water Resources Daler Juma, today (Sunday, June 26), Deputy Petroleum Minister for International Affairs and Trade met with a delegation from Tajikistan led by Bakhtiar Sharifi, Deputy Minister of Industry and New Technologies of Tajikistan, accompanied by Sharifa Khodabakhsh, Deputy Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan, and Shayesta Moradzadeh, Deputy Minister of Transport of Tajikistan and other Tajik officials.

The Tajik delegation traveled to Tehran to pursue and implement the provisions of the memorandum and agreements, and met with the Deputy Petroleum Minister for International Affairs and Trade as Chairman of the Joint Energy Working Group to discuss various energy cooperation, including exploration and exploitation of the country's oil and gas fields and technical services, engineering and training cooperation.

Following the Tajik President's visit to Tehran on May 30, an agreement on energy cooperation was signed between the Iranian Minister of Petroleum Javad Owji and the Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan. This memorandum is the first document of cooperation between the two countries in the field of oil industry, which can start a new chapter in energy cooperation between the two countries.

Senior officials of Iran and Tajikistan met on May 30 in the presence of Seyed Ebrahim Raisi and Emomali Rahmon, 17 documents of cooperation were signed in the fields of politics, economy, trade, transportation, investment, new technologies, environment, sports, energy, judiciary, training, research and tourism.

Baku Welcomes Tehran Involvement In Reconstruction of Karabakh

TEHRAN – Azerbaijan Ambassador to Tehran Ali Alizadeh in meeting with Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce Gholam-Hossein Shafei announced readiness of his country for Iran's cooperation in reconstruction of Karabakh, adding that construction of schools and hospitals in Karabakh has been handed over to Iranians and there are good opportunities for bilateral cooperation.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



In the meeting, Alizadeh pointed to the good and amicable ties of Iran and Azerbaijan, noting that there is a close bond between the people of these two countries and Azerbaijan President has always attached great importance to the ties with Iran and has called for broadening it.

He added that economic and trade tie plays a pivotal role in strengthening the political cooperation between the two countries and Iran Chamber of Commerce is one of the most important chambers in Iran and he is interested in talking for reinforcing economic ties of the two states.

Alizadeh said that there are many commonalities between the two countries in the fields of energy and transportation, adding that last year Azerbaijan increased its trade balance by 30% and this figure has increased by 20% early this year.

He then pointed to some good agreements between the two countries in the field of gas transportation when he was in charge of Azerbaijan consulate in Tabriz. He added that Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have agreed to increase transportation among them, adding that another project that Azerbaijan is involved in it is the construction of Astara Bridge between borders of Iran and Azerbaijan.

On the resumption of direct flight between Tehran and Baku, he said that the pandemic is the main reason for the

delay. He reiterated that Baku seeks construction of two new bridges which connect Azerbaijan to Nakhijavan via Iran.

He reiterated that resolving all problems hinge on political will of leaders of the two countries and it can lead to rise in economic, trade and transit cooperation via lands of the two states.

Alizadeh went on to say that last year some part of

Azerbaijan land was liberated and it created new opportunities for activities of Azeri traders with Iran, adding that Baku calls on Iranian companies to help Azerbaijan in reconstruction of Karabakh, adding that construction of schools and hospitals has been handed over to Iranians.

He added that there are great opportunities for Iranian companies and this region is to turn into smart cities and villages, reiterating that in the fields of energy, transportation and trade there are good opportunities for cooperation and Baku is committed to cooperate.

Then Shafei, for his part, pointed to the commonalities between the two countries and there is less cultural difference between the nations of the two countries. He added that Azerbaijan has progressed considerably and then pointed to the grounds for cooperation between the two states.

He added that Iran and Azerbaijan should solve shortages and this can boost transit between Iran and Azerbaijan, adding that Tehran and Baku can have bilateral or trilateral cooperation in the field of energy.

Shafei also pointed to the issue of visas for Iranian traders and called for easing it. He added that Iran and Azerbaijan can cooperate in the field of tourism, adding that despite closeness of the two countries, traders are not aware of the economic capacities of the two countries.

Gov't Approves Plan to Set Up Separate Ministry for Trade

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian government has approved a plan to set up a separate ministry for foreign trade amid efforts to facilitate exports and imports and to help better regulate prices of consumer goods.

Iranian government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi said on Sunday that the Cabinet had agreed to the establishment of the trade ministry in its meeting earlier in the day.

Bahadori said in a Twitter post that the government's main objectives of setting up a trade ministry include having "a more effective control on prices, facilitating and boosting foreign trade and providing stronger support to consumers". Iran had a separate ministry for trade for 37 years until 2011 when the government merged it with the ministry of industries and mines. A former administrative government's push around three years ago to restore the trade ministry faced opposition from the parliament.

Political analysts say a renewed attempt to restore the ministry is likely to face less problems this time as the current parliament is generally supportive of the administrative government led by President Ebrahim Raisi.

Iran posted an annual trade figure of more than \$100 billion for the calendar year to late March with exports from the country reaching over \$48 billion.

That comes as a series of American sanctions targeting Iran's exports of crude oil since 2018 has led to increased activity in the non-oil sector of the economy, especially in the exports of agriculture goods and manufacturing products.

Iranians Weave World Largest Kilim

TEHRAN (MNA) - An official at the Department of Heritage, Culture, Tourism and Handicrafts of Qirokarzin city, announced the end of the weaving process of the largest hand-woven kilim in the world in this city.

According to the report of the General Directorate of Public Relations and Information, Mohammad Jafar Ebrahimi Ghiri stated, "This kilim with dimensions of 7 by 15 meters, equivalent to 105 square meters, was woven by seven main weavers and three auxiliary weavers in the village of Horz, which is part of the rural functions of Qirokarzin city in Fars Province." The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Qirokarzin County continued, "The weaving of this kilim was ordered by Qatar and carried out by the Glim and Gabbeh Ariafar Cooperative Company."

"In the texture of this kilim, 1890 weaves, equivalent to 66,105 meters, have been used," he said.

Iran, Cuba Stress Expanding Energy Ties



TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of the Pars Special Zone Organization and the Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to Iran emphasized expansion of cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector.

According to the Pars Special Zone Organization, Sakhvat Asadi, CEO of the Pars Special Zone Organization, in a meeting with Alberto Gonzalez Casals, Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to Iran, said: "South Pars region has 13 gas refineries with a production and sweetening capacity of roughly 700 million cubic meters of gas, alongside 22 petrochemical complexes."

Asadi added: "The Islamic Republic of Iran has invested \$150 billion in the South Pars region since 1997, and due to the appropriate infrastructure in the region, there are countless potentials ahead for private sector investors."

The Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to Iran also described the political relations between the two countries as excellent, and said: "We expect economic relations to develop in line with the political relations between the two countries and Iran's progress, especially in the oil industry, is a good opportunity for cooperation."

Norway Pays Tribute to Victims of Oslo Shooting

OSLO (Dispatches) - Norway paid tribute to the victims of a deadly shooting near a gay bar in the capital that shocked the normally peaceful country and led to the cancellation of a Pride march.

The altar of Oslo cathedral had vases with rainbow flags for a service to remember the victims of the attack, attended by Crown Princess Mette-Marit.

Investigators are probing the motives of the suspected gunman, who opened fire in the early hours of Saturday, killing two and wounding 21.

“Bullets cannot kill love,” the head of the Norwegian Protestant Church, Olav Fykse Tveit, said.



Several People Found Dead in South African Pub

CAPE TOWN (Dispatches) - At least 20 young people have died at a makeshift nightclub in a township in South Africa’s southern city of East London, but the cause of the deaths is still unclear.

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Senior officials from the provincial government rushed to the scene, where at least six mortuary vehicles were lined up the residential street waiting to collect the bodies, an AFP correspondent reported. Drinking is permitted in South African township pubs, commonly known as sheebens or taverns which are sometimes even located in family homes, where safety regulations are rarely enforced.



Russia Steps Up Missile Strikes on Ukraine



KYIV (Dispatches) - Russian missiles hit an apartment block and kindergarten in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on Sunday, in strikes U.S. President Joe Biden condemned as “barbarism” as world leaders gathered in Europe to discuss further sanctions against Moscow.

Up to four explosions shook central Kyiv in the early hours, in the first such attack on the city in weeks.

“The Russians hit Kyiv again. Missiles damaged an apartment building and a kindergarten,” said Andriy Yermak, head of the president’s administration.

A Reuters photographer saw a large blast crater by a playground in a kindergarten that had smashed windows. Deputy Mayor Mykola Povoroznyk said one person was killed and six wounded. He said explosions heard later in other parts if Kyiv were air defences destroying further incoming missiles.

Russia has stepped up air strikes on Ukraine this weekend, which has also seen the fall of a strategic eastern city to pro-Russian forces.

“It’s more of their barbarism,” said Biden, referring to the missile strikes on Kyiv, as leaders from the Group of Seven (G7) rich democracies gathered for a summit in Germany.

Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said G7 countries should respond to the latest missile strikes by imposing further sanctions on Russia and providing more heavy weapons to Ukraine.

As Europe’s biggest land conflict since World War Two entered its fifth month, the Western alliance supporting Kyiv was starting to show signs of strain as leaders fret about the growing economic cost.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the West needed to maintain a united front against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“The price of backing down, the price of allowing Putin to succeed, to hack off huge parts of Ukraine, to continue with his program of conquest, that price will be far, far higher,” he told reporters. Life had been returning to normal in Kyiv after fierce resistance held off Russian advances in the early phase of the war, although air raid sirens regularly sound across the city.

There had been no major strikes on Kyiv since early June. The city’s mayor, Vitali Klitschko, said on the Telegram messaging app that some people were trapped in the rubble of a nine-storey apartment block after Sunday’s strike.

“They have pulled out a seven-year-old girl,” Klitschko said. “She is alive. Now they’re trying to rescue her mother.”

A Ukrainian air force spokesperson said the strike was carried out with 4-6 long-range missiles fired from Russian bombers more than 1,000 kilometres away in the southern Russian region of Astrakhan.

Russian missiles also struck the central city of Cherkasy, which until now had been largely untouched by bombardment, according to regional authorities, who said one person had been killed and five others wounded.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said the attack also hit a strategic bridge linking western Ukraine and the eastern battlefields. “They are trying to limit the transfer of our reserves and Western weapons to the east,” he said in a message to Reuters.

Russia’s defence ministry said it had used high-precision weapons to strike Ukrainian army training centres in the regions of Chernihiv, Zhytomyr and Lviv, an apparent reference to strikes reported by Ukraine on Saturday. There was no immediate comment about Sunday’s strikes on Kyiv or Cherkasy.

Russia denies targeting civilians, but Ukraine and the West accuse Russian forces of war crimes in a war that has killed thousands, sent millions fleeing Ukraine and destroyed cities.

Afghan Official Warns of Disease Outbreak Among Earthquake Survivors

KABUL (Dispatches) - Thousands affected by a deadly earthquake in eastern Afghanistan are in need of clean water and food and are at risk of disease, an Afghan health ministry official said on Sunday, days after a U.N. agency warned of a cholera outbreak in the region.

At least 1,000 people were killed, 2,000 injured and 10,000 homes destroyed in Wednesday’s earthquake, after which the U.N. humanitarian office (OCHA) warned that cholera outbreaks in the aftermath are of particular and serious concern.

“The people are extremely needy for food and clean water,” Afghanistan’s health ministry spokesperson Sharafat Zaman told Reuters, adding officials had managed medicines for now but handling those who had lost their homes would be a challenge.

“We ask the international community, humanitarian organisations to help us for food and medicine, the survivor might catch diseases because they don’t have proper houses and shelters for living,” he said.



Thousands Protest in Madrid Against NATO Summit

MADRID (Dispatches) - Carrying the hammer and sickle flags of the former Soviet Union, thousands protested in Madrid on Sunday against a NATO summit which will take place in the Spanish capital next week.

Amid tight security, leaders of the member countries will meet in Madrid between 29-30 June as the organization faces the unprecedented challenge of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

NATO is expected to consider the bid, opposed by alliance-member Turkey, for Finland and Sweden to join.

The Nordic nations applied in the wake of the Russian assault on Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin calls the war a special military operation he says in part responds to the accession to NATO of other countries near post-Soviet Russia’s borders since the 1990s.

“Tanks yes, but of beer with tapas,” sang demonstrators, who claimed an increase in defense spending in Europe urged by NATO was a threat to peace.

“I am fed up (with) this business of arms and killing people. The solution they propose is more arms and wars and we always pay for it. So, no NATO, no (army) bases, let the Americans go and leave us alone without wars and weapons,” said Concha Hoyos, a retired Madrid resident, told Reuters.

Another protester, Jaled, 29, said NATO was not the solution to the war in Ukraine. Organizers claimed 5,000 people joined the march, but authorities in Madrid put the number at 2,200.

Spain’s Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said in a newspaper interview published on Sunday that the summit would also focus on the threat from Europe’s southern flank in Africa, in which he said Russia posed a threat to Europe.

“The foreign ministers’ dinner on the 29th will be centered on the southern flank,” he told El Pais newspaper.



Ecuador Lifts Emergency; Begins Talks With Protesters

QUITO (Dispatches) - Ecuador’s President Guillermo Lasso has lifted a state of emergency imposed in six provinces amid mass protests by Indigenous groups as legislators began hearing an opposition motion to remove him from office.

Lasso’s decision followed the first official talks between government officials and Ecuador’s largest Indigenous organization, which began the protests two weeks ago to demand gasoline prices be cut, price controls be imposed on agricultural products and a larger budget be set for education.

The meeting was held in the Basilica church in the colonial centre of Quito and was attended by Minister of Government Francisco Jimenez, foreign minister Juan Carlos Holguin, president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) Leonidas Iza, and other social leaders.

After the talks, Lasso eased the security measures, as requested by the Indigenous leaders.

“The national government ratifies the willingness to guarantee the creation of spaces for peace, in which Ecuadorians can gradually resume their activities,” his office said.

Iza said Indigenous groups would partially open roads blocked during protests to allow food into the

capital, where residents have complained of low supplies, but would remain in Quito until they get a satisfactory answer from Lasso.

“Instead of making us more afraid, they have raised our rebellion, dignity,” he said.

Virgilio Saquicela, president of Ecuador’s National Assembly, told reporters that a commission would be formed to facilitate dialogue to end the protests.

“There has been no commitment, but simply a decision by the [Indigenous confederation] ... to consult its bases on the designation of a commission to start this dialogue,” Saquicela said, adding that “the government has made the corresponding opening”.

The protests, which began on June 13, have led to at least six civilian deaths and have worsened Lasso’s adversarial relationship with the National Assembly, where legislators have blocked his major economic proposals as he has struggled to contain rising violence that he blames on drug gangs.

In a virtual session on Saturday evening, the assembly heard a request by the opposition Union for Hope party, linked to former President Rafael Correa, to remove Lasso. The request was based on the state of emergency declared over “grave internal commotions”, which now has been lifted.



Johnson Seeks to Stay in Power Until Mid-2030s

KIGALI (Dispatches) - British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he aims to remain in power until the middle of the next decade, despite calls for him to quit, which would make him the country’s longest continuously serving leader in 200 years.

Earlier this month, Johnson survived a vote of confidence by Conservative lawmakers in which 41% of his parliamentary colleagues voted to oust him, and he is under investigation for intentionally misleading parliament.

On Friday Conservative candidates lost two parliamentary by-elections held to replace former Conservative incumbents who had to step down, one after being convicted of sexual assault and the other for watching pornography in the House of Commons.

The by-election defeats suggest the broad voter appeal which helped Johnson win a large parliamentary majority in December 2019 may be fracturing after a scandal over illegal parties held at Downing Street during coronavirus lockdowns.

Under Conservative party rules, its lawmakers cannot formally challenge Johnson for another year, but overwhelming dissatisfaction or resignations by a series of senior ministers could make his position untenable.

Britain is also in the midst of its deepest cost-of-living crisis in decades, with inflation at a 40-year high.

Former party leader Michael Howard said on Friday it was now time for Johnson to go, and Conservative party chairman Oliver Dowden quit after the by-election losses.

However, Johnson said he wanted to serve a third term in office and remain as prime minister until the mid-2030s to give him time to reduce regional economic disparities and make changes to Britain’s legal and immigration systems.

“At the moment I am thinking actively about the third term and, you know, what could happen then. But I will review it when I get to it,” Johnson told reporters in Rwanda on the final day of a visit for a Commonwealth summit.

Asked what he meant, Johnson said: “About the third term ... this is the mid-2030s.” Johnson must call Britain’s next national election by December 2024, and would need a third election victory by 2029.



Rome Slams Brakes On Electric Scooters

ROME (AFP) – Had Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck hopped on an electric scooter rather than a Vespa in the classic film “Roman Holiday”, their spin around the Eternal City might have ended in tears.

The number of crashes and near-misses involving the two-wheelers has prompted Rome authorities to impose some order on a booming rental market that began two years ago.

The havoc came to a head earlier this month when two US tourists attempted a night-time drive down the Spanish Steps, causing over 25,000 euros (\$26,300) worth of damage to the 18th century monument.

Caught on security footage, the couple in their late 20s were fined 400 euros each.

For now, it's remarkably easy -- requiring just a cell phone app -- to hire one of the 14,500 scooters currently available in Rome, provided by seven licensed companies.

They're cheap too, costing just one euro to unlock the scooters and between 15 to 25 cents a minute after that.

And in the city known for its traffic jams and limited public transport, they appeal to everyone from commuters to tourists and teenagers, who often squeeze two at a time onto the narrow deck.

But there are challenges to navigating the cobbled streets of Rome's cramped historic centre -- where bike paths are virtually non-existent -- leading some scooter drivers to weave dangerously around cars.

“They cut you off. They pass on the right, on the left, they get stuck in front of us and risk being crushed,” said Paolo Facioni, a 59-year-old bus driver.

Residents also complain they are dumped haphazardly on narrow sidewalks, blocking access for prams and wheelchair users.

Rented electric scooters have become a fixture in major cities around the world, from London to Paris and New York, part of a global move to diversify transport away from vehicles.

But Rome taxi driver Gianni Ranucci, 56, called them “a real disaster”.

Tourists freewheeling around the bustling streets seem to “think they are in a video game!” he told AFP.

Figures on the number of scooter-related deaths and injuries show it is no such thing.

Seventeen people have been killed in Italy in the past two years in incidents involving electric scooters, according to consumer protection association Codacons.

Its chief Carlo Rienzi described Rome last month as “a Wild West, with scooters going where they shouldn't, often with two people on board, breaking the speed limit”.

Rome police record an average of 15 accidents a month.

In light of the dangers, city hall is readying to tighten the rules, restricting use of the scooters to adults who must provide formal ID.

The number of operators will be limited to three and there will be restrictions on parking -- a move anticipated by one US company, Bird, which recently announced its scooters in the city centre could only be left in designated areas.

Under new draft regulations seen by AFP, intended to come into force in January 2023, the speed limit will also be reduced from 25 kilometres an hour (15 miles) to 20 kilometres an hour on roads and six kilometres in pedestrian areas without cars.

Not all are happy with the proposed changes, however.

Twenty kilometres an hour “is too slow, we'll be run over” by other vehicles, said 60-year old Mariano Giorgi, who uses a scooter every day to get to work -- and is one of the few people to be spotted wearing a safety helmet while riding.



“Mount Everest” of Bacteria Discovered In Caribbean Swamps

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The largest-known bacterium - a vermicelli-shaped organism that was discovered in shallow mangrove swamps in the Caribbean and is big enough to be seen with the naked eye - is redefining what is possible for bacteria, Earth's most ancient life form.

Scientists said on Thursday the bacterium, called *Thiomargarita magnifica*, is noteworthy not merely for its size - colossal for a single-celled organism at up to about eight-tenths of an inch (2 cm) long - but also because its internal architecture is unlike other bacteria.

The DNA, an organism's blueprint, is not free-floating inside the cell like in most bacteria but contained within numerous small membrane-bound sacs. Membrane-bound structures in cells are called organelles.

“It is thousands of times larger than regular-sized bacteria. Discovering this bacterium is like encountering a human being as tall as Mount Everest,” said marine biologist Jean-Marie Volland of the U.S. Department of Energy's Joint Genome Institute and the Laboratory for Research in Complex Systems in California, a co-leader of the study published in the journal *Science*.

The bacterium has been found in several locations in Guadeloupe, a French archipelago in the Caribbean. It was first spotted in the sulfur-rich seawater of a Guadeloupe swamp by Université des Antilles microbiologist and study co-leader Olivier Gros. “In 2009, I found long white filaments attached to a sunken leaf of a mangrove tree. I found such filaments intriguing. I brought them back to the lab to analyze them,” Gros said. “Big surprise for me to have so huge a bacterium living in the mangroves of Guadeloupe.”

A normal bacterial species measures 1-5 micrometers long. This species averages 10,000 micrometers (four-tenths of an inch/1 cm) long, with some *Thiomargarita magnifica* twice that length.

“It is orders of magnitude bigger than what we thought was the maximum possible size for a single bacterium,” Volland said. “They are about the same size and shape of an eyelash.”

The largest-known bacterium until now had a maximum length around 750 micrometers.

Bacteria are single-celled organisms that reside nearly everywhere on the planet, vital to its ecosystems and most living things. Bacteria are thought to have been the first organisms to inhabit Earth and remain quite simple in structure billions of years later. The bodies of people are teeming with bacteria, only a relatively small number of which cause disease.

Thiomargarita magnifica is not the largest-known single-celled organism. That honor goes to the aquatic alga *Caulerpa taxifolia*, reaching 6-12 inches (15-30 cm) long.

Caribbean mangrove swamps are packed with organic matter, with microbes in the sediment degrading this matter and producing high concentrations of sulfur. The sulfur-rich environment offers an energy source for bacteria like *Thiomargarita magnifica*.

The researchers named its DNA-bearing organelles “pepins” after a French word for small seeds inside fruits.

“Aside from two exceptions, there were no other bacteria known to keep their DNA inside a membrane-bound organelle. That is, in fact, a characteristic of more complex cells which have a membrane-bound nucleus, such as human cells, or animal and plant cells,” Volland said.

Mapping its genome showed that *Thiomargarita magnifica* has lost some genes essential for cell division and has more than the usual number of copies of genes responsible for cell elongation.

“This may explain, in part, why the cell grows into such an elongated filament. The genome is also very big and contains three times the average number of genes that are usually found in bacteria. Half of those genes, we have no idea what are they for,” Volland said.



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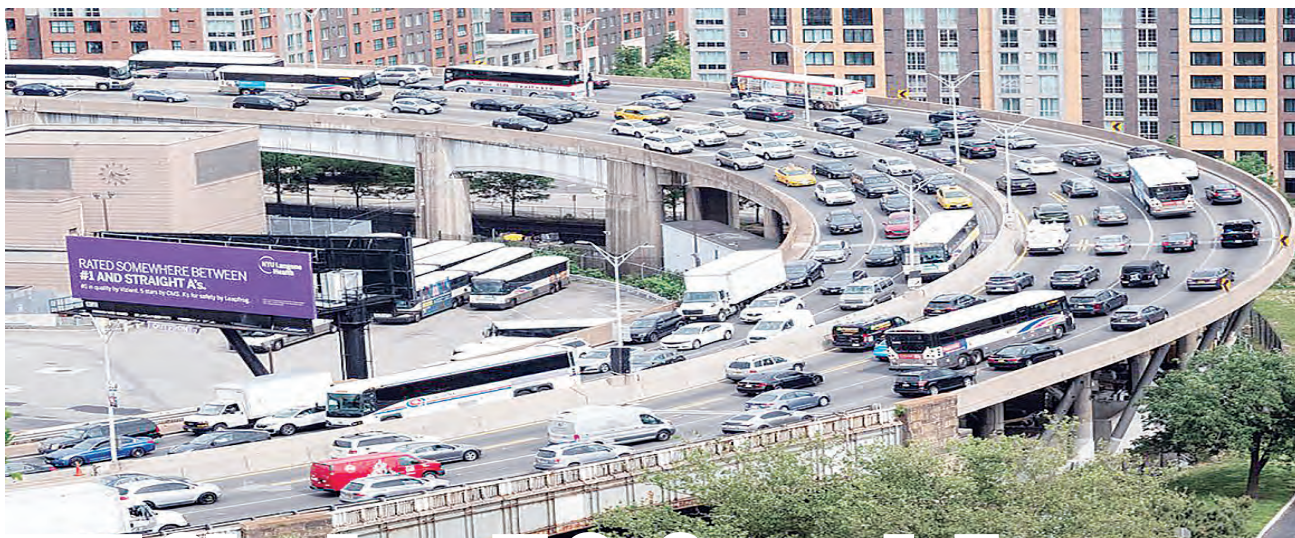
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Mexico Oil Refinery Cost Could Reach \$12b

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - A new oil refinery under construction on Mexico's southern Gulf coast will probably cost between \$11-12 billion, rather than the \$8 billion originally estimated, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said. Lopez Obrador told a news conference that the flagship project in the port of Dos Bocas owned and operated by state-run oil company Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex) will be ready to start producing gasoline in 2023. The president said recent reports putting the cost at double the initial price tag or more were an "exaggeration." But he conceded it would end up costing an additional 20-30%, giving a figure of between \$11-12 billion, pointing to increased outlays.



IMF Slashes U.S. Growth Forecast

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund slashed its U.S. economic growth forecast as aggressive Federal Reserve interest rate hikes cool demand but predicted that the United States would "narrowly" avoid a recession.

In an annual assessment of U.S. economic policies, the IMF said it now expects U.S. Gross Domestic Product to grow 2.9% in 2022, less than its most recent forecast of 3.7% in April.

For 2023, the IMF cut its U.S. growth forecast to 1.7% from 2.3% and it now expects growth to trough at 0.8% in 2024.

Last October, the IMF predicted 5.2% U.S. growth this year, but since then, new COVID-19 variants and stubborn supply chain disruptions have slowed recovery, while a sharp spike in fuel and food prices prompted by Russia's war in Ukraine further stoked inflation to 40-year highs.

"We are conscious that there is a narrowing path to avoiding a recession in the U.S.," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva told a news conference, noting that the outlook had a high degree of uncertainty.

"The economy continues to recover from the pandemic and important shocks are buffeting the economy from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and from lockdowns in China," she said. "Further negative shocks would inevitably make the situation more difficult."

If large enough, a shock could push the United States into a recession, but it would likely be short and shallow with a modest rise in unemployment, akin to the U.S. recession in 2001, said IMF Deputy Western Hemisphere Director Nigel Chalk. Strong U.S. savings would help support demand, he added.

Georgieva said price stability was important to protect U.S. incomes and sustain growth, but there may be "some pain" for consumers in achieving it.

She said her discussions with U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Fed Chair Jerome Powell "left no doubt as to their commitment to bring inflation back down."

U.S. inflation by the Fed's preferred measure is running at more than three times the U.S. central bank's 2% target.

Georgieva said the responsibility to restore low and stable inflation rests with the Fed, and that the fund views the U.S. central bank's desire to quickly bring its benchmark overnight interest rate up to the 3.5%-4% level as "the correct policy to bring down inflation." The Fed's current policy rate ranges from 1.50% to 1.75%.

"We believe this policy path should create an upfront tightening of financial conditions which will quickly bring inflation back to target. We also support the Fed's decision to reduce its balance sheet," she said.

While Congress' failure to pass Biden's climate and spending proposals was a "missed opportunity," Georgieva signaled that the IMF would support a scaled down version.

"We think the administration should continue making the case for changes to tax, spending, and immigration policy that would help create jobs, increase supply and support the poor," she said.

Bangladesh PM Opens Longest Bridge Over River Padma

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has inaugurated a landmark bridge over the turbulent Padma River after years of delay due to allegations of corruption that forced the World Bank to walk away from the nearly \$4bn mega project, which will connect Bangladesh's capital Dhaka to the underdeveloped southwestern region of the country.

The opening on Saturday of the eponymous Padma Bridge - Bangladesh's longest bridge to date which has been dubbed a "symbol of national pride" - marks a momentous occasion in the South Asian nation's history.

The construction of the 6.15km (3.82 miles) bridge began in November 2015 to connect 21 districts of the country's southwest with Dhaka via road and rail, thereby cutting travel time considerably.

It usually takes 15 to 22 hours to cover a distance of 180-300km (111-186 miles) between the southwest districts and Dhaka.

The double-layer steel truss bridge incorporates a four-lane highway on an upper level along with a single-track railway on the lower level.

With a construction cost of \$3.87bn, this is one of the largest mega projects Bangladesh has ever undertaken and the entire amount is financed by the Bangladesh government.

In 2012, the World Bank withdrew from a \$1.2bn loan agreement for the project following allegations of corruption. Following suit, other donors, including Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), also pulled out of the project.

Hasina, who spearheaded efforts to build the bridge, famously declared that her government would self-fund the project.

Her decision faced a battery of scepticism from the country's economists as well as political opponents since Bangladesh did not have any experience in building such mega infrastructure without financial support from multilateral donors.

"Some people said we would always be beholden to others, but our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman taught us the importance of self-respect," Hasina said, addressing a sea of people on Saturday.

Sheikh Rahman was Bangladesh's founding father who led the movement to secede from Pakistan in 1971. "This Padma Bridge is not a pile of brick and cement, but a symbol of Bangladesh's pride, honour and ability," she said.



Drought Hits Italy's Hydroelectric Plants

ROME (Dispatches) - Hydroelectric power in Italy has plunged this year due to a drought that has also sparked water restrictions and fears for agriculture and industry sources.

Hydropower facilities, mostly located in the mountains in the country's north, provide almost one-fifth of Italy's energy demands.

But the lack of rain is causing problems, at a time when Rome is desperately trying to wean itself off its dependence on Russian gas due to the war in Ukraine.

"From January to May 2022, hydro production fell by about 40% compared to the corresponding period in 2021," a spokesperson for Utilitalia, a federation of water companies, told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

"Hydro production has been steadily decreasing since July 2021," he said, blaming "the severe shortage of water even at high levels."

An industry source told AFP that while the situation was constantly changing, estimates for the first six months of 2022 suggest nationwide hydroelectric generation will be almost half the equivalent period of 2021.

One small plant near Piacenza, southeast of Milan, was shut indefinitely on June 21 due to low levels on the River Po that feeds it, the Enel energy company said.

"Considering the current drought situation, other hydro plants are not operating at full capacity," a spokesperson added, without giving further details.

The Po River is Italy's largest reservoir of fresh water. Much of it used by farmers, but is suffering its worst drought for 70 years.

Italy's largest agricultural association, Coldiretti, said the drought is putting over 30% of national agricultural production and half of livestock farming in the Po Valley at risk.

On Friday, the northern region of Lombardy called a state of emergency due to the drought, that recommends, among other measures, less water use by consumers and directs mayors to curtail nonessential water use, such as street washing and watering parks and sports grounds.

Further to the west in Piedmont, water is being rationed in more than 200 municipalities, according to the ANSA news agency.

The Maggiore and Garda lakes are both far lower than usual for this time of year, while further south, the level of the River Tiber that runs through Rome has also dropped.

\$2.3b Chinese Loan Credited To State Bank of Pakistan



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistani Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said on Friday that a loan of \$2.3 billion from a Chinese consortium of banks had been credited to the central bank's account.

Taking to Twitter, Ismail wrote, "I am pleased to announce that Chinese consortium loan of RMB 15bn (roughly \$2.3 bn) has been credited into State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) account, increasing our foreign exchange reserves."

To cope up with country's dwindling cash reserves, Ismail earlier said that a loan of \$2.3 billion from a Chinese consortium of banks to Pakistan was expected within a "couple of days".

Notably, a Chinese consortium of banks and Pakistan had signed a \$2.3 billion loan facility agreement earlier. In an update on the agreement, on Wednesday, Pakistan's finance minister Miftah Ismail said that cash inflow under the loan agreement is expected within days.

Taking to Twitter, Ismail had written, "The Chinese consortium of banks has today signed the RMB 15 billion (\$2.3 billion) loan facility agreement after it was signed by the Pakistani side yesterday. Inflow is expected within a couple of days. We thank the Chinese government for facilitating this transaction."

Foreign Minister of Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto Zardari wrote on social media, "Grateful to President Xi Jinping, Foreign Minister Wang Yi and the people of China. Chinese consortium of banks has today signed the RMB 15 billion loan facility agreement, the people of Pakistan are grateful for the continued support of our all-weather friends."

Pakistan is in a deep financial crisis and this development comes after reports emerged of Pakistan reaching an understanding with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as per the media outlet. Ismail said that after a visit by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and follow-up discussions by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with Prime Minister Li Keqiang, the Chinese side had not only agreed to roll over the amount but also done so at a cheaper interest rate of 1.5pc plus Shanghai Interbank Offered Rate (Shibor) instead of earlier 2.5pc plus Shibor.

Inflation in France to Stabilize by Autumn

PARIS (Dispatches) - Following a steady growth during the summer, the year-on-year inflation in France is expected to stabilize between 6.5 and 7 percent in the autumn, the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) said.

At the same time, the annual inflation should be around 5.5 percent in 2022, up from 1.6 percent in 2021, it said. According to the INSEE, the yearly consumer price index (CPI) reached 5.2 percent in May, a peak not seen since 1985. This can be put down to household consumption, the weight of energy in prices and the recent measures to limit inflation, the institute said.

Capping regulated gas and electricity prices helped to reduce inflation by about two percentage points in May, the INSEE said.

Provided that the "tariff shield" is upheld until the end of the year, inflation fueled by high energy prices is expected to decrease progressively until the end of the year.

Nevertheless, due to an increase in production costs, the price of food and manufactured goods will increase, the institute said.

The INSEE expects that growing inflation will trigger an automatic revaluation of the guaranteed minimum growth wage this summer or the beginning of autumn.

On the positive side, the INSEE foresees a possible improvement in purchasing power in the second semester due to the additional income support measures.

West African States Gabon and Togo Join Commonwealth

KIGALI (Dispatches) - Gabon and Togo joined the Commonwealth, becoming the latest nations with no historic ties to Britain to enter the English-speaking club headed by Queen Elizabeth II.

The 54-nation group of mostly former British colonies accepted Togo and Gabon's application for membership on the final day of its leadership summit in Rwanda.

"We have admitted Gabon and Togo as new members, and we all welcome them to the

Commonwealth family," Rwandan President Paul Kagame said at the closing press conference.

The French-speaking West African states are the first new members to join the Commonwealth since Rwanda in 2009.

Togo's Foreign Minister Robert Dussey said membership opened the door to 2.5 billion consumers in the Commonwealth realm, offered new education opportunities, and tapped a "craze" for English among his countrymen.

"Togo's membership is motivated by the desire to expand its diplomatic, political, and economic network... as well as to get closer to the English-speaking world," he told AFP.

It also allowed the small and developing nation of 8.5 million to redefine bilateral relations with the UK outside the European Union in the aftermath of Brexit, he added.

Francophone states have also sought Commonwealth membership in recent years to pivot away from France, analysts said.

Togolese political scientist Mohamed Madi Djabakate said the move would prove popular as French influence in Togo was often blamed for its economic woes.

"Togo joining the Commonwealth is better for many people than sharing the French language and culture, which at the end of the day has not promoted development," he told AFP.

Rwanda's own membership came at a time of immense strain between Kigali and Paris, and the east African state has forged close ties with the UK in the years after its admission, including a controversial migrant deal agreed this year.

Gabonese President Ali Bongo said his country was "making history" by joining the group.

"Sixty-two years after its Independence, our country is getting ready to breakthrough with a new chapter," Bongo said in a statement on Twitter.

"It's a world of opportunities for Gabon on the economic, diplomatic & cultural levels."

Their admission is a boon for the Commonwealth at a time of renewed discussion over its relevance and purpose.

Iran to Participate at JATA Tourism Expo Japan 2022

TEHRAN (IP) - The pavilion of the Islamic Republic of Iran will be set up at JATA Tourism Expo Japan 2022, which is scheduled to be held from September 22 to 25, 2022, in Tokyo, Japan.

JATA is growing to promote local, foreign and domestic tourism as a leading international event in the tourism sector.

Attracting more than 150,000 visitors annually (from travel agencies to tour operators and embassies) is essential for all professionals in this field.

Held over four days in Japan, the event offers excellent business opportunities through seminars and trade fairs with exhibitors from more than 150 countries and regions. The first two days of the fair are dedicated to industry professionals and the last two days to the general public.



Spain Calls Deadly Migrant Rush an Attack' on Its Territory

MADRID (Dispatches) - The Spanish prime minister on Saturday described a deadly migrant rush on the enclave of Melilla from Morocco as an attack on Spain's "territorial integrity", as human rights activists demanded an investigation.

The Spanish prime minister on Saturday described a deadly migrant rush on the enclave of Melilla from Morocco as an attack on Spain's "territorial integrity", as human rights activists demanded an investigation.

At least 18 African migrants died in the latest drama on the doors of the European Union, when around 2,000 mostly sub-Saharan African migrants approached the Moroccan border with the tiny territory at dawn on Friday.

More than 500 managed to enter a border control area after cutting a fence with shears, Melilla authorities said in a statement.

Moroccan officials said late Friday that 13 migrants had died of injuries sustained in the incursion, in addition to five confirmed dead earlier in the day.

"Some fell from the top of the barrier" separating the two sides, a Moroccan official said.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told journalists in Madrid that "if anyone is responsible for everything that happened at the border, it is the mafias that traffic in human beings."

But Morocco's AMDH human rights group said it was "a true catastrophe that shows the consequences of the latest Moroccan-Spanish entente", just weeks after the two sides resolved a year-long diplomatic rift.

On Saturday, calm returned to the border area, with Moroccan security forces lightly deployed along the frontier.

In a forested area where migrants have been camping out for years, none were to be seen.

Mohamed Amine Abidar of the AMDH said migrants, who are often rounded up by authorities and taken to cities further south, had "probably moved away for fear of being displaced".

Images on Spanish media on Friday showed exhausted migrants lying on the pavement in Melilla, some with bloodied hands and torn clothes.

The AMDH demanded a "comprehensive, quick and serious enquiry to determine responsibilities and shortcomings", and warned against burying the migrants' bodies until their deaths had been properly investigated.

Residents of the Barrio Chino neighborhood on the Moroccan side of the barrier said they were in shock.

"This is the most violent attempt to cross into Melilla that I've ever seen," said Rachid Nejari, a waiter in a cafe near the heavily fortified border fence.

"I saw migrants armed with sticks and iron bars... I was afraid of being attacked."

Melilla and Ceuta, Spain's other North African enclave, have the European Union's only land borders on the African continent, making them a magnet for migrants.

Friday's was the first such mass incursion since Spain mended a year-long rift by backing Morocco's autonomy plan for the disputed Western Sahara region, scrapping its decades-long stance of neutrality.

Sanchez then visited Rabat, and the two governments hailed a "new stage" in relations.



The row had begun when Madrid allowed Brahim Ghali, leader of Western Sahara's pro-independence Polisario Front, to be treated for Covid-19 in a Spanish hospital in April 2021.

A month later, some 10,000 migrants surged across the Moroccan border into Spain's Ceuta enclave as border guards looked the other way, in what was widely seen as a punitive gesture by Rabat.

Rabat wants Western Sahara to have autonomous status under Moroccan sovereignty but the Polisario Front insists on a UN-supervised referendum on self-determination as agreed in a 1991 ceasefire deal.

In the days just before Morocco and Spain patched up their ties, there were several attempted mass crossings of migrants into Melilla, including one involving 2,500 people, the largest such attempt on record. Nearly 500 made it across.

The mending of ties has meant a drop in migrant arrivals in Spain, notably in the Canary Islands.

The number of migrants who reached the Canary Islands in April was 70 percent lower than in February, government figures show.

Sanchez warned earlier this month that "Spain will not tolerate any use of the tragedy of illegal immigration as a means of pressure".

Spain will seek to have "irregular migration" listed as one of the security threats on the NATO's southern flank when the alliance gathers for a summit in Madrid on June 29-30.

Over the years, thousands of migrants have attempted to gain entry to the Spanish enclaves by climbing the barriers, swimming along the coast or hiding in vehicles.

The two territories are protected by fences fortified with barbed wire, video cameras and watchtowers.

Iran's Dominance...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran is now among few countries which enjoy having this technology and this achievement has been attained in less than 3 decades while the U.S. and other major countries in the field of satellite carrier have been active for almost a century.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has proved this belief that if there is a will, there is a way and the country has proved it in recent decades by major achievements in different scientific and military fields and now the West has to accept Iran as a major satellite-carrier producer power in the world although it is annoying issue for them.

In last December, Iran used a satellite launch rocket to send three research devices into space to show its power to the hostile states and the West that they should never underestimate the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Due to good planning, Iran can turn into a major power in the space sciences because of its talented scientists and strong determination which is deep-rooted in the Islamic Revolution principles. The Islamic Revolution under the wise and brave leadership of Seyed Ali Khamenei has scaled the summits of success one after the other and because of these achievements, the West does not dare any harm against Iran and it prefers dialogue with Tehran rather than dispute and war and their only weapon which has also lost its effect is their sanctions.

Iran has now started the second step of the revolution and it marches ahead towards success with full speed and no ill-wisher will be able to stop this train from reaching its destination which is the greatness of the Islamic Revolution in the world.

Satellite-carriers, drones, missiles and uranium enrichment are just small samples of Iran's successes which have become bold during its existence, as the country has progressed amazingly in other fields like Nano technology, based-knowledge and medical sciences as the country has turned to a real regional and even global power which cannot be denied by the West.



US WWII Ship Found Off Philippines

MANILA (Dispatches) - A US navy destroyer sunk during World War II has been found nearly 7,000 meters (23,000 feet) below sea level off the Philippines, making it the world's deepest shipwreck ever located, an American exploration team said.

The USS Samuel B Roberts went down during a battle off the central island of Samar on October 25, 1944 as US forces fought to liberate the Philippines -- then a US colony -- from Japanese occupation.

A crewed submersible filmed, photographed and surveyed the battered hull of the "Sammy B" during a series of dives over eight days this month, Texas-based undersea technology company Caladan Oceanic said.

Images showed the ship's three-tube torpedo launcher and gun mount.

"Resting at 6,895 meters, it is now the deepest shipwreck ever located and surveyed," tweeted Caladan Oceanic founder Victor Vescovo, who piloted the submersible.

"This small ship took on the finest of the Japanese Navy, fighting them to the end," he said.

According to US Navy records, Sammy B's crew "floated for nearly three days awaiting rescue, with many survivors perishing from wounds and shark attacks". Of the 224 crew, 89 died.

The battle was part of the larger Battle of Leyte, which saw intense fighting over several days between US and Japanese forces. Sammy B was one of four US ships sunk in the October 25 engagement.

The USS Johnston, which at nearly 6,500 metres was previously the world's deepest shipwreck identified, was reached by Vescovo's team in 2021.

In the latest search, the team also looked for the USS Gambier Bay at more than 7,000 meters below sea level, but was unable to locate it.

It did not search for the USS Hoel due to the lack of reliable data showing where it may have gone down.

The wreck of the Titanic lies in about 4,000 meters of water.

Oceans Saved Us, Now We Can Return the Favor

PARIS (Dispatches) - Humanity must heal oceans made sick by climate change, pollution and overfishing in order to rescue marine life and save ourselves, experts warned ahead of a major UN conference opening Monday in Lisbon.

By absorbing -- decade after decade -- a quarter of CO2 pollution and more than 90 percent of excess heat from global warming, oceans have kept Earth's terrestrial surface liveable.

Our species has returned the favor by dumping mountains of plastic waste into the sea, emptying the deep blue of big fish, and poisoning coastlines with toxic chemicals and agricultural runoff that create dead zones bereft of oxygen.

"At least one-third of wild fish stocks are overfished and less than 10 percent of the ocean is protected," Kathryn Matthews, chief scientist for US-based NGO Oceana, told AFP.

"Destructive and illegal fishing vessels operate with impunity in many coastal waters and on the high seas."

Nearly \$35 billion in subsidies that aggravate overfishing will fall under a harsh spotlight in Lisbon, despite first steps towards a partial ban put in place by the World Trade Organization (WTO) last week.

At the same time, ocean water made acidic by CO2 along with vast marine heatwaves lasting months or longer are killing coral reefs that support a quarter of marine life and provide livelihoods for a quarter of a billion people.

"We have only begun to understand the extent to which climate change is going to wreak havoc on ocean health," said Charlotte de Fontaubert, the World Bank's global lead for the blue economy.

Jointly hosted by Portugal and Kenya, the five-day UN Ocean Conference -- delayed from April 2020 by the Covid-19 pandemic -- brings together thousands of government officials, businesses, scientists and NGOs in search of solutions.

While they do not all see eye-to-eye on what needs to be done, they largely agree on what is at stake.

"If we don't do the right thing, we might end up with a dead ocean," Rashid Sumaila, a fisheries expert and professor at the University of British Columbia, told AFP.

"Think about that -- Oh man, it's scary."

U.S. Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

"Iran will not allow the Americans to scam, so the issue of guarantees and sanctions must be resolved. If Mr. Borrell considers these to be political, he probably means that the Americans must make a political decision," he added.

"The future of the negotiations depends on US decisions because the Iranian government has proven to be serious," he continued.

Emphasizing that Iran has never abandoned the negotiations, Marandi referred to the Tehran nuclear actions in response to the BoG resolution and said that Iran

has made it clear to the United States that America's harsh and irrational actions will be met with new responses.

The Americans know that the situation for themselves and the Europeans has become more difficult because of the war in Ukraine, so it is in the Americans' interest to sign the agreement, he added.

Greece Releases...

FROM PAGE 1

"The Greek government has eventually ordered the return of the cargo to its owner and lifted the seizure order thanks to the Islamic Republic of Iran's decisive and prompt actions, the pursuit of the matter by relevant bodies, and the support from the Minister of Roads and Urban Development [Rostam Qasemi]," read the statement.

At the time, Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) described the seizure of the Iranian oil cargo as an "act of piracy" that was "in violation of international standards."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry also condemned the unacceptable surrender of Greece to illegal US pressures and reiterated that the seizure was an example of international piracy. The seizure of the Iranian oil tanker took place at a time when talks for the revival of the 2015 Iran deal were gridlocked.

UAE-Operated...

FROM PAGE 1

Yemen's lawmakers censured the Saudi-led military alliance over its seizure of ships carrying oil products destined for Yemen, calling it a violation of the terms of the truce.

According to a report published by al-Masirah television network, the Yemeni House of Representatives called on the Security Council and the United Nations to oblige member states of the Saudi-led coalition to deposit Yemeni crude oil revenues in the country's banks, support medical services, pay the salaries of civil servants, and improve public welfare. Saudi Arabia launched the devastating war on Yemen in March 2015 in collaboration with its Arab allies and with arms and logistics support from the US and other Western states.

The objective was to reinstall the Riyadh-friendly regime of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and crush the Ansarullah resistance movement, which has been running state affairs in the absence of a functional government in Yemen.

While the Saudi-led coalition has failed to meet any of its objectives, the war has killed hundreds of thousands of Yemenis and spawned the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Inter Milan Ready to Sell Striker to Newcastle

MILAN (Dispatches) - Inter Milan are prepared to sell Joaquin Correa to Newcastle United this summer as they look to recoup some money, according to reports.

Correa joined Inter from fellow Serie A side Lazio last summer on an initial season-long deal with an obligation to make the transfer permanent for €31m.

The Argentina international scored 17 goals and contributed five assists over the previous two seasons for Lazio to earn him the move to the San Siro.

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Ress Wins 50m Backstroke Gold After Review

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - American Justin Ress won gold in the 50m backstroke in dramatic circumstances at the world championships in Budapest on Saturday after officials overturned his initial disqualification following a lengthy review.

Victory was earlier awarded to compatriot Hunter Armstrong after it was ruled that no part of Ress's body was above the water as he reached first for the wall.

Tsitsipas Delighted With Breakthrough Title Win on Grass

MALLORCA (Dispatches) - Stefanos Tsitsipas showed few signs of nerves in his maiden ATP Tour grass-court final on Saturday at the Mallorca Championships, where the second seed downed Roberto Bautista Agut to claim his first tour-level title on the surface.

In a topsy-turvy encounter, Tsitsipas was broken when serving for the match at 5-3 in the deciding set, but the Greek held firm to claim a thrilling 6-4, 3-6, 7-6(2) win and clinch the ninth tour-level title of his career. The second seed was clinical with his opportunities at key moments to prevail after two hours and 31 minutes.

“It looks like I’m playing longer matches on grass than I do on clay,” joked Tsitsipas in his on-court interview. “This was an incredible fight and an incredible battle. I know it can be difficult for one person to deal with the loss, but I think for tennis it is great that we are able to play at this high level and show our sport [at its limits].”

It was a Tour-leading 40th win of the season for Tsitsipas, who also lifted the trophy at the Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters in April. The Greek moved past Ilya Ivashka, Marcos Giron, Benjamin Bonzi and Bautista Agut this week to improve his career record on grass to 14-10, and Tsitsipas climbed one spot to No. 5 in the Pepperstone ATP Live Rankings as a result of his exploits in Mallorca.

Tsitsipas came out firing in the early stages and the Greek’s aggressive play earned him a 4-0 lead as Bautista Agut struggled to settle in front of an enthusiastic home crowd.

Although the Spaniard was able to regain his composure to reclaim one break, Tsitsipas found sufficient rhythm on serve to ease to the first set.

Bautista Agut appeared in deep trouble when Tsitsipas broke again in the third game of the second set, but the situation appeared to bring freedom to the home favourite. The Spaniard reeled off five



games in a row from 1-3, demonstrating the sort of clean hitting that earned him a quarter-final win against World No. 1 Daniil Medvedev on Thursday, to roar back into the contest. Bautista Agut claimed the second set having struck 12 winners to just three from his opponent.

Despite the mid-match barrage from Bautista Agut, Tsitsipas was able to unlock the Spaniard’s delivery again for a 3-1 lead in the deciding set. Although the Greek stuttered when serving for the title at 5-3, he dominated the deciding-set tie-break to extend his ATP Head2Head series lead over the Spaniard to 3-0.

Bautista Agut was bidding for his second title of the year after he claimed the 10th ATP Tour crown of his career in Dubai in February. The Spaniard’s run in his homeland this week improved his record for the 2022 season to 23-8.

“I’d like to congratulate Roberto on your run to the final,” said Tsitsipas at the trophy presentation. “You are one of the toughest competitors out there and one of the toughest guys I have played. There is lots of respect from my side for [producing] such premium tennis at such a high intensity and level.

“You’ve done incredible things for our sport, especially against top players, and have proven yourself again and again, so congrats on an amazing week. I’m happy that we had such a good battle in the final.”

McLaughlin Breaks Own 400 Meters Hurdles Record

EUGENE (Dispatches) - Focus, skill and a little bit of “Track Town, USA” magic propelled Sydney McLaughlin to break her own world record - again - in the 400 meters hurdles.

The Olympic gold medallist won the U.S. championships final in 51.41 seconds at Hayward Field, improving upon her own benchmark time at the American track haven of Eugene, Oregon.

The 22-year-old wrested the lead early and never gave the rest of the field a fighting chance, clinching her spot in the world championships in front of an adoring crowd.

“It’s Track Town, USA, what can you expect?” said McLaughlin. “Any time I come here I can just feel something amazing is going to happen.”

She previously set the record with a 51.90-second performance at the U.S. Olympic trials in Eugene almost a year ago to the day, only to shatter that figure in Tokyo, collecting gold in 51.46.

“I don’t anything compares to the first time you do it, just crossing that line in awe,” she told reporters, when asked to compare which of her record-breaking efforts meant the most.

“This is just a great indicator of where we are and hopefully (we’re) going to go home and work on some things.”

Running out of lane five, McLaughlin put on a flawless performance with her opponents offering little in the way of pressure to push her toward the finish line.

McLaughlin, who also collected a relay gold in Tokyo, offered a subdued smile and double thumbs up as her accomplishment became clear.

Britton Wilson finished 1.67 seconds behind with Shamier Little taking third in 53.92.

“Zoning in on what I have to focus on puts me in a headspace to really not worry about anyone else and focus on 10 my hurdles,” she said after the race, adding that she planned to celebrate by eating some “real food - beside vegetables.”

McLaughlin faces a potential showdown at the world championships with chief rival and reigning champion Dalilah Muhammad, who was absent from the national championships due to injury.

Bale Set to Join MLS Side Los Angeles FC



LONDON (Dispatches) - Wales forward Gareth Bale on Sunday appeared to confirm his move to Major League Soccer (MLS) side Los Angeles FC (LAFC) following his departure from LaLiga champions Real Madrid.

The 32-year-old, who signed for Spanish giants Real from Premier League side Tottenham Hotspur in 2013 for a then-record transfer fee of 100 million euros (\$105.54 million), is set to join as a free agent with his contract due to end this summer.

“See you soon, Los Angeles,” Bale wrote in a post on Twitter, following reports of the

transfer on Saturday. The post, which was retweeted on LAFC’s official Twitter account, was accompanied by a video of Bale wearing an LAFC jersey and cap.

Bale enjoyed a trophy-laden spell with Real, winning three LaLiga titles, five Champions League crowns, three Club World Cups and the Spanish Cup, although his time at the club was marred by injuries.

The Welshman will likely be best remembered for scoring twice, including a stunning overhead kick, in the 2018 Champions League final against Liverpool and also netting a superb winner against Barcelona in the 2014 Copa del Rey final.

But he was also often targeted by the Spanish media, who labelled him a “parasite” after he missed Real’s 4-0 home loss to Barcelona in March immediately before appearing for Wales, and he was jeered by some fans during a league game in April.

Bale led Wales to a first World Cup finals since 1958 as they beat Ukraine 1-0 in their playoff in Cardiff earlier this month.

Ten Hag Surprised by Lack of Transfers

LONDON (Dispatches) - Erik ten Hag has been ‘surprised’ by the lack of transfers at Man Utd since his arrival after the club were told how much they will have to pay for Lisandro Martinez this summer, according to reports.

The Red Devils have been linked with numerous players already in the summer transfer window but they are yet to seal a deal for any of their top targets.

Negotiations for Frenkie de Jong seem to be taking up a lot of their time as they attempt to strike an agreement with Barcelona for the Netherlands international although there seems to have been some progress recently.

As well as De Jong, a report earlier this week insisted that Brentford midfielder Christian Eriksen – who is available on a free transfer – and Ajax winger Antony are their other two main targets.

Ten Hag is also keen to strengthen the Premier League club’s defence with Ajax defender Martinez emerging as a potential option – but they could face competition from rivals Arsenal.

And now the Daily Mirror claim that Ajax have told Man Utd and Arsenal that they can sign Martinez this summer if they stump up £42m.

Arsenal were knocked back when they made a £25m enquiry, while the Red Devils were hoping to pay around £30m for Martinez – who would like to make the move to the Premier League – but now there are ‘fears Ajax are pricing him out of a move’.

Ten Hag knows the Argentina international, who can play at center-back or left-back, from his time at Ajax where they won two Eredivisie titles together.



Nadal Pain-Free For First Time In Year and Half

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal said today that for the first time in 18 months he has defeated the crippling foot pain which threatened to push him to the brink of retirement.

Nadal captured his 14th French Open and record-extending 22nd major earlier this month to put himself halfway to the first men’s calendar Grand Slam since 1969.

However, in the aftermath of his Paris victory, he revealed that he had needed to have his left foot anaesthetised to keep competing.

He then underwent “pulsed radiofrequency stimulation”, a treatment aimed at reducing nerve pain.

“I can walk normal most of the days, almost every single day. That’s for me the main issue,” said the 36-year-old Spaniard at Wimbledon today.

“When I wake up, I don’t have this pain that I was having for the last year and a half, so quite happy about that.

“And second thing, practicing. Since the last two weeks, I didn’t have one day of these terrible days that I can’t move at all. The feeling and overall feelings are positive.”

Nadal is a two-time champion at Wimbledon but his last title at the All England Club came 12 years ago. This year he is seeded two which at least gives him the benefit of avoiding old rival and top seed Novak Djokovic until the final.

The Spaniard hasn’t played a grass-court warm-up event, preferring instead to focus on alleviating his foot pain and then practising on the surface in Mallorca.

“In 2003 (his debut year), I never thought that I’d have a chance to win Wimbledon,” he said.



Bagnaia Wins Dutch MotoGP

ASSEN (Dispatches) - Italy’s Francesco Bagnaia won the Dutch MotoGP on Sunday after championship leader Fabio Quartararo crashed out of an incident-packed race following what he called a “rookie’s mistake”.

Frenchman Quartararo fell twice, flipping spectacularly over his handlebars in the second incident although he walked away afterwards, shaking his fists in anger at his error.

Bagnaia, in contrast, stayed out of trouble to record his third victory of the season and a welcome full points score after failing to finish in the last two races.

“I am so happy after two difficult races,” the Italian said.

In a great day for Italian riders, Marco Bezzecchi on a Ducati was second while Spanish rider Maverick Vinales rounded out the podium in the 11th race of the season.

Quartararo heads into the summer break with a 21-point lead over Aleix Espargaro, who was fourth on Sunday.

The Frenchman fell on the fifth then on the 13th lap out of 26 in front of the enthusiastic crowd in the Netherlands.

Even if he quickly got back on his feet, he had to give up after this second accident.

The Frenchman got off to a bad start and was quickly overtaken by Aprilia rider Espargaro.