

TEDPIX, the Main Index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Gained 12,292 Points to 2.33m on Tuesday, As Reported, Over 15.104b Securities Worth 126.256 Trillion Rials (About \$300m) Were Traded

IRAN NEWS

Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ehsan Khandouzi on Tuesday Said All Agreements, Including Energy Deals, Made Between Tehran and Beijing Have Got Underway and They Are Progressing

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3 DOMESTIC

Iran, UAE To Sign Joint Investment Agreement
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Tehran Slams Germany's Double Standard on Human Rights

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has censured German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock for commenting on human rights in the Islamic Republic, recounting Berlin's complicity in the war crimes committed by the regime of ex-Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during the 1980s imposed war.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani made the remarks in a tweet on Tuesday, one day after Baerbock said the European Union "won't accept" alleged Iranian human rights violations. "It is very unlikely that the German foreign minister is not aware of the Iranian people's mentality towards chemical gases and substances and their connection with the German government," he wrote.

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Iran, Indonesia Stepping Up Efforts To Increase Bilateral Trade to \$20b



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi in his visit to Indonesia said have decided to increase their trade volume to \$20bn and carry out their exchanges with national currencies.

On his official visit to Indonesia on Tuesday, President Raisi expressed hope that this visit would lead to the expansion of interactions between the two powerful Islamic countries and have constructive effects in the region and the world and its effects would be completed with the visit of the President of Indonesia to Tehran.

Stating that Iran and Indonesia have various fields and capacities to improve the level of ties, the Iranian President said that the signing of numerous cooperation agreements in various fields shows the determination of the two countries to develop relations in all fields.

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4 INTERNATIONAL

Russia Says Ukraine Sabotage Group Crosses Border
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Heat Roll Past Celtics 128-102, Take 3-0 Lead
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346 Firms Active in Iran's Nanotechnology

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN -346 companies have been active in the field of nanotechnology in the country by the end of last Iranian calendar year.

The companies produced 1,911 products and 241 pieces of equipment, supplying them to the market, IRNA reported. According to the latest statistics, 281 Iranian companies are active in the field of manufacturing nanotechnology products and 65 companies are active in the field of manufacturing nanotechnology equipment.

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An Interview With Respected CEO of Maskan Tehran Investment Co. (Public Joint Stock Co.)

Thetran, a Capital for Development and Urbanization

Thetran; Leading the top Customer-Oriented Brands



Thetran was selected as the best customer-oriented brand in the field of construction industry. After the evaluations, this company was introduced in the third national

summit of the top 100 customer-oriented units in the field of construction industry. With 63 projects during its 30 years of service, this company has always adhered to the principle that "good housing makes life more beautiful" and has tried to fulfill this motto. Thetran started working in 1373 with the nature of a branch and the center of Tehran city. This company started its activity with Pamchal residential tower by covering the cities of Tehran, Karaj and Qazvin. Subsequently, on 10/2/1385, it continued its activities as an independent company. Also, on 5/29/1390, Tehran company was converted from a private stock to a public one, and on 6/16/1390, it was admitted to the Iranian stock exchange under the symbol of Thetran. The field of activity of the mass construction company is the construction of residential, commercial and office units in the form of diversification (luxury, medium and cheap construction) inside and outside the country. The company's strategies include market development and partnership creation, excellence in speed and quality, synchronization with new technologies and green construction. The main customers of the company include the depositors of Maskan Bank savings fund, investors, mass buyers and other natural and legal persons. The most important reason for choosing and buying the company's production units from customers can be considered the company's brand, construction quality, compliance with construction standards and meeting the needs of customers at different social levels and classes (prosperous, middle and poor). Ali Ghorbani, CEO of Tehran Housing Investment Company (Common Stock) stating that "customers are our main capital" noted: "Achieving a position among one hundred customer-oriented units is a great honor that would not have a single bit of value without the trust of customers; For us, pride means when we see the smiles of our customers' satisfaction, and all the efforts of the Satran team are to make this wish come true."



Introduction:

Tehran, a metropolis resting under the shadow of the ever-proud Damavand Summit of Iran, a quiet and strong city that is like a jewel in the heart of Iran. A phoenix rising from the heart of fire and earth, a myth based on the truth of the art of this land, which took color from every city and its people and created the rainbow of the sky of this land. Standing a city with a role of thousands of years of history and civilization that is introduced with its buildings. Colorful buildings that are a part of a country's cultural identity and show the transformation of a nation's thinking, aspirations and feelings over time. And now, Tehran, with its soaring skyscrapers, is considered the most obvious manifestation of history from the era of tradition to the era of modernity. Bold towers that tell the story of their birth on the old body of Tehran, like an illustrated history; And in the meantime, the men and women who worked hard to tell you the ideas of building good and high-quality housing in a new way, and to build a house of love and hope, to be a shelter for the growth and excellence of the future builders of this Country. In the direction of providing housing, many companies have always been able to enter the field and depending on their performance, they have been able to make a golden leaf in modern history in the construction of diverse and high-quality houses, because the construction industry today has a significant contribution to production. Gross domestic product and is related to a large part of the field of economic activities, and by being at the end of the production chain and with the support of the honorable government, it will be able to create significant capacities to influence related industries.

Mr. Engineer Ghorbani, we will be grateful you introduce yourself to our readers.

In the name of developer of the existence. I am Ali Ghorbani, born in 1352 (1973) and a MA holder in civil engineering. And I have worked privately with the veterans and elites of this field. My soul and life is tied with Sabalan, a land where culture and art are intertwined with people's daily life, therefore, in addition to a technical view of civil engineering issues, the discussion of culture has always been important to me in this area. In regards to my approach to work, I have always put this point at the forefront of my work and that of my employees that we are like a family at work and we must do our best to take steps towards achieving the brand's goals; Most of our time is spent day and night with colleagues in the workplace, so it is natural to put aside misunderstandings and finish things with friendship.

Thank you very much, due to your deserved election as the CEO of this company and the three-decade history of this brand, please explain a little about the features for our dear readers.

Yes, sure; Maskan Tehran Investment Company (Public Joint Stock Company with the symbol of Thetran) started its activity in 1373 (1994) with the nature of a branch and centrality of Tehran, covering the cities of Tehran, Karaj and Qazvin, with the start of operations of Pamchal Tower in Tehran, and subsequently in 1385 (1996) as a company. The company continued its activity independently. The company was converted from a private stock to a public stock in 1390 and was admitted to the Iranian stock exchange almost 12 years ago with the symbol Thetran. The field of activity of this company is mass building, construction of residential, commercial and office units in the form of diversification (luxury, medium and economic construction) inside and outside the country and the company's strategies include market development and partnership creation, excellence in speed and quality is synchronization with new technologies and green construction. The main customers of the company include the depositors of Maskan Bank's Savings fund, investors, mass buyers and other natural and legal persons.

Considering that this company also operates in the Iranian stock exchange and has provided a diverse portfolio for its beneficiaries, I would appreciate it if you could explain more about the future plans of the organization and explain the reasons for choosing this company among competing companies clearly for our audience. Explain:

The most important reason for choosing to buy the company's production units from the customers can be the company's brand, construction quality, compliance with construction

standards and meeting the needs of customers at different levels and social classes. Regarding the future plans, I must also say that this organization is like a ship in the booming housing market, which must be prepared in advance for any changes in the atmosphere of this market, and this will not be possible without accurate market forecasting. When I took the helm of this ship, there were problems, but in addition to these problems, each of the previous managers had also provided facilities for this brand, and each of them helped us from time to time. In the future, Thetran will be trying to give a basic system to its symbol status in the capital market, and on the other hand, by defining new projects, it will continue to be updated in the housing market. The 175-unit Banafsheh 2 in Andisheh and 235-unit Negin Dolatabad projects, which were finally opened in 1401 (2021), are proof of our seriousness to complete the projects and deliver them to our customers on time. The ongoing projects of this company include the super project of 1,172 units of Iranshahr of Andisheh, which is rapidly being completed; A super project that will meet all the residential, service and commercial needs of its residents well, and besides using Iranian Islamic architecture with the help of modern equipment (both in construction and in consumer cases), it has been able to attract the attention of many critics. The future of the company will also change positively by defining two projects in progress, cooperation with the municipality in Yazd with the Shahrara super project and also cooperation with the renovation organization in the 17th district of Tehran, with the residential, cultural, services project that is in the initial stages and will soon find good news about it at the national level. This company with its brilliant history within our beloved country of Iran and outside its borders (such as the Iranian Embassy project in Algeria) and the support of Maskan Bank, Maskan Bank Financial Group, the large holding company of Maskan Investment Group and the use of expert and efficient forces and also, taking advantage of modern technologies, it will be able to respond appropriately to the needs of its customers and stakeholders in the coming years. The final point is that Maskan Tehran Investment Company has always listened to the criticisms, opinions and constructive suggestions of its customers and is doing its best to achieve the goals and visions of this brand on the verge of entering the 33rd anniversary of the establishment of the large holding company of Maskan Tehran Investment Company will do it with the help of Almighty God and cooperation with the group companies.

With best wishes and prosperity for all your readers. I enjoyed this interview very much and I wish you prosperity.

Leader to Make Speech at Imam Khomeini's Demise Anniversary

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei will make a speech at an upcoming ceremony to commemorate the 34th anniversary of the passing away of the late Imam Khomeini.

Ayatollah Khamenei will attend the ceremony set to be held on June 4 at the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, south of the capital Tehran. The announcement was made on Monday by Mohsen Mahmoudi, head of the coordination council at Tehran Province's Islamic Ideology Dissemination Department.

According to Mahmoudi, similar ceremonies over the past three years were limited in the size because of health protocols aimed at containing the Covid epidemic in Iran.

Iran Solid Pillar Upon Which Axis of Resistance Rests

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Hamas official has lauded Iran's unflinching support for Palestinian people and their legitimate cause, describing the Islamic Republic as the main supporter of resistance groups against the occupying Israeli regime.

Ismail Haniyeh, head of the political bureau of the Gaza-based resistance movement, made the remarks in a message addressed to Commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Brigadier General Esmail Qaani, on Monday.

He said Iran is "a solid pillar upon which Palestinian resistance groups, and the Axis of Resistance in general, rest as they continue their primary struggle against the Zionist enemy and US hegemony."

Haniyeh added that Israeli officials mistakenly believed they would be able to "crush the resistance front and terrorize Palestinian people" through targeted killing of commanders of the al-Quds Brigades - the military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement.

The Hamas chief went on to highlight that the Israeli regime erroneously thought its latest military onslaught on the Gaza Strip would help it get out of its internal crises, and restore the deterrence image of its military forces.

He stressed that the results of the Palestinian retaliatory operation "Revenge of the Free", however, further exacerbated the regime's crises.

Haniyeh pointed out that the victory of the Gaza-based resistance factions, particularly the al-Quds Brigades, in the battle was rooted in strength and unity both on the ground and in the field of politics.



He said Qaani's message to the Palestinian resistance groups during the latest Israeli aerial bombardment campaign against the Gaza Strip expressed the position of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and reflected Iran's determination to offer unconditional support to the Axis of Resistance.

"Oh leaders of the Joint Operations Room, you have recorded a new epic in the history of the battle, and you have proven once again that you are capable of shattering the [Zionist] enemy's hegemony and defeating it," Qaani had written in his message.

He added, "Through cooperation and unity, you were able to pull off another victory and add it up to your long list of triumphs. Such achievements are steady steps on the path towards the final victory."

The commander of the Quds Force also confirmed that Iran will continue its support for the Palestinian people and resistance factions, and will keep on "beefing up the Axis of Resistance until the complete purge of the Zionist entity from Palestinian land."

At least 33 Palestinians, including 13 civilians, were killed and 147 others wounded in the latest round of Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Dena Destroyer, Symbol of Iran's Scientific Capability

TEHRAN (IRNA) - An Iranian deputy minister of defense has described the home-grown Dena destroyer as a symbol of the technical and scientific capability of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Speaking with reporters at a press conference on Tuesday, Manouchehr Alipour said the Dena destroyer made history last week after completing a historic mission in international waters.

Alipour said Dena is a fully home-made destroyer that has been built in six years.

Today, Iran is self-sufficient in producing different types of marine grade stainless steel, the official said.

Iranian Army's 86th flotilla comprising Dena, a warship equipped with anti-ship cruise missiles, torpedoes, and naval cannons, and Makran, a major base ship, returned home a few days ago after successfully completing a circumnavigation mission which was a first in the country's history.

Iran Busts Spying Network

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Intelligence Ministry has arrested members of a spying network who were engaged in a project run by a foreign spy agency to extract information about the Iranians travelling abroad.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the ministry said that the spy agency had been monitoring the Iranians with responsibility in different positions or special expertise in various fields as well as those who have access to important information in the country's sensitive institutions.

The ministry noted that its measures led to the identification of the network's "liaisons and executive agents" in several Iranian organizations and institutions.

The foreign spy agency told one of its spies the names of its targets among the Iranians traveling abroad, the statement read. The spy gave the names to its liaisons until they reached the operators of administrative systems in several organizations.

The operators used their database and extracted the information of the targets and delivered them to the liaisons, it added.

The liaisons transferred the information to the network's ringleader who delivered them to the spying agency.

On Sunday, the Intelligence Ministry announced that its forces busted a terror team affiliated with the Israeli Mossad spy agency in the western part of the country.

Moreover, earlier this week, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) intelligence forces disbanded a terror network affiliated with Daesh Khorasan (Daesh-K) in Iran's southern province of Fars.

G7 Baseless Accusations General Approach of Power-Seeking Nations

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The baseless allegations made by the G7 against Iran are the general approach of power-seeking nations, said a member of Iran's Guardian Council.

"The G7's baseless accusations against Iran are the general approach of power-seeking nations which violate every international obligation through their illegitimate mechanisms," Abbas-Ali Kadkhodaee wrote on his Twitter account on Tuesday.

"Have they ever practiced what they preach?" he asked.

Earlier on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani strongly condemned parts of the final statement of a summit of G7 that was held in Hiroshima, Japan, which contained baseless and fabricated allegations against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He strongly rejected the "selective statement" issued by G7 leaders and its imaginary claims regarding the possession of nuclear weapons by Iran.

While the hegemonic policies of some of the G7 members have created insecurity and instability in the world, and especially the West Asia region, they accuse Iran of destabilization, said Kanaani.

Egypt Ready to Raise Level of Diplomatic Ties With Iran



TEHRAN (MNA) - Informed Diplomatic sources suggest that Cairo is ready to raise the level of relations with Tehran following the Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq's visit to the country.

Referring to the recent meeting of the Sultan of Oman and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, some informed diplomatic sources reported that the restoration of Tehran-Cairo relations was among the most important issues discussed in the meeting.

Now, Cairo is once again prepared to raise the level of diplomatic relations with Tehran to the level of ambassador as the current diplomatic representation in the two countries is at the level of Chargé d'affaires, the sources told the New Arab.

The sources also noted that the Sultan of Oman's visit to Egypt and his meeting with El-Sisi could soon lead to great steps in Iran-Egypt relations.

Earlier on May 15, Fadahossein Maleki a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission said that Iran and Egypt are on track to restore diplomatic relations and reopen their respective embassies.

In January, the Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesperson said the foreign minister of Iran and the president of Egypt had held positive talks on the sidelines of a regional summit about Iraq, held in Jordan in December 2022.

The spirit of the talks was positive, as the two sides were willing to hold negotiations, he added.

Pointing to the constant interaction between Iran and Egypt through their interests sections in Tehran and Cairo, the spokesman said the two countries "have basically no problem for dialogue, meetings, and exchange of views".

"Basically, the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes any positive movement and development leading to the formation of a new atmosphere in the bilateral relations between Iran and Egypt, and would respond positively to any positive initiative in this regard," he added.

Iran Security Forces Will Avenge 5 Iranian Border Guards

TEHRAN (IFP) - The commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Hossein Salami, says Iranian security forces will take revenge for the deaths of the five Iranian border guards who were killed by terrorists in southeastern Iran on Saturday.

In a message to Iran's Police Chief Ahmadreza Radan on Monday, Major General Salami said terrorist groups should know that Iranian police and IRGC forces guarding borders would take revenge "for the... blood of the innocent martyrs" on those who ordered the "crime" and those who carried it out.

The five border guards were killed in clashes with armed terrorists and counterrevolutionary groups in Saravan County, on Iran's border with Pakistan.

A funeral was held for them in the city of Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-and-Baluchestan Province, earlier on Monday.

Qalibaf Re-Elected as Majlis Speaker

ORAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has been re-elected as the speaker of the Iranian parliament (Majlis) for a fourth time in a row.

Members of the Iranian parliament elected Qalibaf as speaker of the Majlis on Tuesday morning.

Qalibaf won 210 votes while his main rival Elias Naderan got 47, according to a report by IRNA which

indicated that third contender for the post Fereydoon Abbasi won only seven votes.

Amirabadi Farahani introduced Qalibaf, Elias Naderan, and Fereydoon Abbasi-Davani as the candidates for the presidency of the 11th Parliament.

Elias Naderan won 47 votes and Fereydoon Abbasi-Davani 7 votes out of a total of 264 votes.

Last year, Qalibaf became the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament of Iran with 194 votes.

Hamid Nouri's Life Is in Danger

TEHRAN (IP) - The spokesman of the judicial system announced that Hamid Nouri's life is in danger in a Swedish prison.

Masoud Setayeshi said that Hamid Nouri has been detained in the solitary cell of a Swedish prison for about 42 months.

In response to the question from the Iran Press news agency, Masoud Setayeshi stated that Hamid Nouri's access to his lawyers is limited.

This official added: "42 months of detention in solitary confinement has left a new standard in Sweden."

Setayeshi said, recently, in the solitary cell of Hamid Nouri, another defendant has been brought in, which has caused additional suffering to Nouri.

The spokesman of the judicial system added that with the presence of this defendant in Hamid Nouri's solitary cell, there is a fear that Nouri's life will be in danger.

Setayeshi said: Nouri is living in a bad situation and he has 15 more hearings of the Court of Appeal until the middle of November this year.

At the same time, this official expressed hope that Hamid Nouri's sentence will be issued based on justice.

Iraq National Security Advisor to Visit Iran

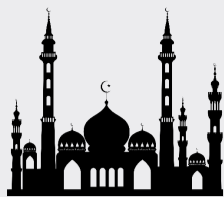
TEHRAN (MNA) - Iraqi National Security Adviser is said to pay a visit to the Islamic Republic in the near future. Qassim Al-Araji is scheduled to visit Tehran soon in a bid to hold talks with Iranian officials on safeguarding common borders, Arab media reported.

The visit aims to address controlling the common borders and countering the activities of some opposition grouplets.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani and the authorities of the Kurdistan region are deploying security guards on the border, the source added.

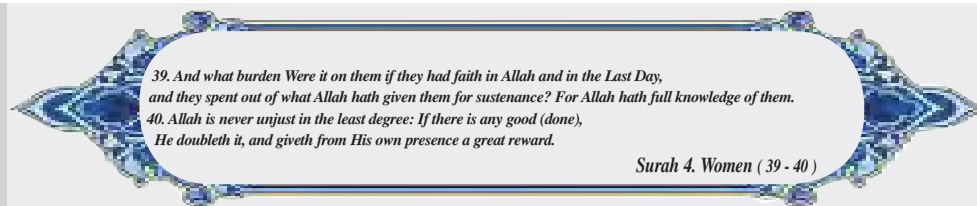
During the visit, Iraqi National Security Adviser is to deliver a report to Iran on the taken measures in line with protecting borders.

On May 20, Commander of Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour said that the Iraqi government is committed to expelling terror groups in the north and Iran is waiting for action in that regard.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:01
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:29
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:11
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:52



Iran, UAE To Sign Joint Investment Agreement

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Economy Minister and Spokesman of Government Economic Team announced that a joint investment agreement between Iran and the United Arab Emirates will be signed in the near future.



Speaking in a presser, Ehsan Khandouzi, emphasized: The United Arab Emirates is a suitable place for real and legal investors.”

He added: A delegation from the UAE traveled to Tehran recently, and I also met the Minister of Economy of the UAE on the sidelines of the trip to Jeddah.

The Minister said: We also had proposals for cooperation with the private sector, and we are waiting for the response.”

He then noted that a short-term economic plan will be unveiled to curb inflation. The plan, which will be implemented for 10 months, includes a number of measures to increase production, control the money supply, and stabilize the exchange rate, he added.

He said the plan was developed by the government’s economic headquarters, which is led by First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber, and was approved by President Ebrahim Raisi on Monday.

The plan includes a number of measures to increase production. It also includes measures to stabilize the exchange rate. The government believes that the plan will be successful in curbing inflation.

Khandouzi also said that SWIFT is considered to be replaced with the Asian inter-banking communication system.

He went on to say that one of the goals of the government is to control the inflation and the government has managed to control and manage the inflation by controlling

the infrastructural factors of inflation in the national economy.

He added that the roots of inflation in the recent five years have led to mistrust of producers to the prices and the decline in purchasing power of the people.

He stated that global inflation last year as well as unrests in the country in the second half of the past year led to the chaos in the forex market and they were effective in the rise of inflation. He added that the government has taken the control of the indiscipline of the government as well as monetary indiscipline.

He went on to say that this year the government is focused on easing the business regulations and the license for starting a business will be issued very fast.

Khandouzi also said that the liquidity growth slowed down by the end of last year and id reduced by 30% and the Central Bank has set the target to reduce it to 25% this year, reiterating that money creation in the national banking system is now under control.

He went on to say that some reforms are needed to reduce the dependence of national economy on the forex fluctuations and this should happen in the field of foreign trade and forex.

He stated that the Central Bank has supplied more forex to meet the needs of imports and production in the first two months of last year.

Khandouzi also said that soon some reforms in the labor law will be announced and it will boost job security for workers as well as employers.

Explaining Braveries of Dezful People In War Should Not Be Limited to One Day



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - on the eve of Khordad 4 (May 25) which is named Day of Resistance and Day of Dezful, Khordad 4 Foundation held a press conference at Sacred Defense Museum on Monday with the presence of the CEO of the foundation Brigadier General Gholam-Hossein Kolouli Dezfuli.

In the presser, Brigadier General Kolouli Dezfuli commemorated Day of Dezful and Resistance and termed it the symbol of unity of people in this city for imposing its determination on the Iraqi Baath Regime forces and said that from different cities of Andimeshk, Shoosh, Ahwaz, Ilam, Mehran, Babol and Kermanshah, city of Dezful has been chosen as the symbol of resistance.

He then pointed to the resistance of people of Dezful during the years of Iraqi war and noted that people felt responsible to resist against enemy’s invasion and not to be indifferent to it and they did not leave their lands and for this reason it is necessary to us to commemorate this bravery every year because if we do not preserve the climate of those days and do not transfer it to the new generations, it may be forgotten.

He then pointed to the braveries of people of Dezful during the years of the imposed war, adding that after the war ended, the youth of Dezful were the first who launched defensive lines in 14 districts to confront enemy’s invasion and they turned the city into a barrack-like area. He added that resistance of people of Dezful led to hatred of enemy against people of this city and enemy bombarded the city.

He said that during the 8-year imposed-war, city was attacked by missiles 176 times and over 2500 cannon balls were fired at the city and one of the cannon balls led to martyrdom of over 83 people.

He then pointed to the 2700-day resistance of people of Dezful and said that the city had 2600 martyrs and 4200 disabled and some 150 people are still missing in war.

Kolouli Dezfuli then highlighted major programs of the foundation for commemorating the day and said that some 200 programs in cultural and sport fields have started and some projects have been inaugurated and they will continue till May 25.

He added that some national conferences will be held in Dezful, Qom, Ahwaz and Karaj and on Thursday the Sacred Defense Museum on Thursday will host a conference with presence of military officials as well as Majlis lawmakers and government officials.

He reiterated that the support of governments from Dezful since the end of the war has not been satisfactory and will not meet the demands of noble people of Dezful.

Monthly Non-Oil Export to Pakistan Up 41%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of Iran’s non-oil export to Pakistan increased by 41 percent in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20), as compared to the first month of the past year, the spokesman of Trade Development Committee of the Iranian House of Industry, Mining, and Trade announced.

Ruhollah Latifi said that importing non-oil commodities worth \$116 million, Pakistan was Iran’s fourth export destination in the said month.

As previously announced by the official, the value of Iran’s non-oil export to Pakistan rose 18 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20).

Latifi said that importing non-oil goods worth \$1.488 billion from Iran, Pakistan was the fifth top export destination of the Islamic Republic in the previous year.

Iran imported non-oil commodities valued at \$842 million from Pakistan in the past year, which was 170 percent higher than the figure of the preceding year, the official stated, adding that Pakistan was Iran’s fourth top source of import in the previous year.

On April 30, Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Mohammad-Ali Hosseini and Pakistani Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar discussed the ways for increasing trade between the two countries in a meeting in Islamabad.

Expressing their satisfaction that the trade between the two countries exceeded \$2 billion, the two sides emphasized the need to take more effective steps to strengthen economic cooperation and help expand trade relations.

During the meeting, the Pakistani minister said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with the friendly and brotherly country of Iran.

Poultry Output Down 27% y/y

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran’s poultry production dropped significantly in the calendar month to late April this year, according to official figures.

Figures by the Statistical Center of Iran published on Monday showed that total poultry output in Iran reached 143,155 metric tons (mt) in the month to April 20, down 27% from the same period in 2022.

The SCI said that supply of poultry to registered slaughterhouse across Iran had dropped by 21% compared to the calendar month to late March.

The figures showed that chicken production, including hen and roosters, had accounted for more than 97% of the poultry output in Iran in April as production fell by 27% month-on-month.

Turkey and ostrich meat production in the country reached 1,240 mt and 75 mt, down by 33% and 22% year on year, respectively, over the same period, said the SCI.

The figures come amid efforts by the Iranian government to control rising prices of food in the country. Experts believe meat prices have gone up partly because of lower supply of animal feed to producers as a result of higher international prices.

SCI figures published on Saturday showed that Iran’s annual inflation rate in April had reached 47.6%, one of the highest rates reported by the country in recent years.

Iran, Oman Call for Strengthening Health Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) –Minister of Health and Medical Education and his Omani counterpart in a meeting in Geneva on Tuesday called for boosting health cooperation between the two countries.

Bahram Einollahi met and held talks with Hilal bin Ali Al-Sabti on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly meeting in Geneva.

Referring to the need for regional cooperation to fight diseases, Einollahi noted that the COVID-19 pandemic crisis proved that no country alone can prevent contagious diseases from entering its territory.

Expressing the readiness of Iran’s health ministry to

expand health cooperation with Oman, he added that such cooperation can be formed and strengthened in the field of health tourism, exchange of teachers and students, health measures, and fighting diseases.

Al-Sabti, for his part, announced his country’s readiness to expand regional and joint cooperation with Iran in the field of health, saying that the exchange of medical science professors between the two countries will lead to the promotion of public health and medical knowledge.

He also emphasized facilitating health tourism between the two states.

Iran-Indonesia Oil Cooperation to Be Promoted

TEHRAN (Shana) - Iran’s deputy oil minister for international affairs and trade and Indonesia’s minister of energy and mineral resources here on Monday discussed the promotion of bilateral cooperation in the oil and gas industry.

Ahmad Asadzadeh held talks with Arifin Tasrif a day ahead of Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi’s arrival in the Indonesian capital.

Iran and Indonesia signed documents on cooperation in oil and gas industry in the presence of the two countries’ presidents on Tuesday.

Preferential trade agreement (PTA), Visa Waiver Program (VWP), cultural exchanges, cooperation on supervising pharmaceutical production, scientific and technological cooperation, and cooperation in oil and gas industry were agreed in the 11 documents inked by Iran’s foreign, communication and information technology, trade, vice president for scientific and technological affairs, deputy minister of industry, mine and trade, and oil ministers and their Indonesian counterparts.



ICCIMA Re-Elected to Chair ICC Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - An absolute majority of ICC Iran voted for Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on Monday to chair the body for another term.

Iran Chamber of Commerce secured 20 votes to gain the chairmanship.

Iran Export Confederation (with 15 votes), Hossein Salimi (with 14 votes), Bank Pasargad (with 12 votes), Iran Insurers Syndicate (with 12 votes), Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (with 11 votes), and Bank Parsian (with 10 votes) were also elected as other members of ICC Iran.

Taavon Insurance Company and Keshavarzi Bank were also elected as alternate members.

In December 2022, Mohammad Khazaei, an aide to Iran Chamber of Commerce president and the Director General of ICC Iran, was elected as member of the General Council at the World Chambers Federation (WCF) of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

IME Honors Chadormalu Co. As One of Top Companies



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) held the second ceremony of honoring the top companies of IME which was held in presence of economy minister and caretaker of industry ministry.

According to the reports, Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company one of the listed companies on the IME was honored as one of the top companies regarding its offering of products in the exchange.

The company offered over 8m tons of different products of steel chain on IME in the past year and for this reason it was honored and the CEO of the company Eng. Taherzadeh received the plaque of appreciation.

According to the reports the total value of the trade was over 250,000b rials which accounted for 21% of total commodity trade on IME in the field of mine and industry last year.

Hungary, Austria Spar Over Release of People Smugglers



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Hungary's decision to release foreigners convicted of human-trafficking triggered protests by its neighbor Austria with Vienna summoning the Hungarian ambassador.

Citing overcrowded prisons, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government issued a decree in April allowing the release of foreign nationals convicted of people smuggling, on condition that they leave Hungary within 72 hours once freed.

"We think this is an entirely wrong signal," Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg told journalists ahead of a European Union meeting in Brussels, adding that he demands "full clarification" from Budapest.

Russia Says Ukraine Sabotage Group Crosses Border



KYIV (Dispatches) - Moscow said its troops were battling a Ukrainian "sabotage" group that infiltrated Russian territory as Kyiv insisted it is still fighting for control of the flashpoint eastern city of Bakhmut.

The announcement of the latest incursion in the southern region of Belgorod came after Ukraine said Russian forces pummelled the eastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro with missiles and drones overnight.

Russian authorities said they had introduced an "anti-terror regime" in Belgorod, which has been attacked since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February last year.

A similar regime -- which gives special powers to security services and places a number of curbs on the public -- was in place in Chechnya between 1999 and 2009.

"In order to ensure the safety of citizens in the Belgorod region, the legal counter-terror regime has been introduced today," governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

He also said that at least six people were injured in an attack and most were in hospital with shrapnel and other wounds.

The Kremlin said President Vladimir Putin had been informed of the cross-border incursion, adding Moscow believed the attack was designed to "divert attention" from Bakhmut.

Gladkov said troops and members of the FSB security service were "taking the necessary measures to eliminate the enemy."

He said three people from the town of Graivoron received shrapnel wounds.

Members of the anti-Kremlin Freedom of Russia Legion claimed responsibility for the attack.

In a video released by a Telegram channel claiming to represent the group, a camouflaged spokesman, surrounded by armed men in fatigues, said: "Russia will be free!", using a slogan frequently used by Russian opposition activists.

"We want our children to grow up in peace and be free," the spokesman added.

The Telegram channel said that two settlements including Graivoron had been attacked.

Kyiv denied involvement.

"Ukraine is watching the events in Russia's Belgorod region with interest and is studying the situation, but has nothing to do with it," Ukrainian presidential advisor Mikhaylo Podolyak said.

Podolyak suggested that Russian "guerrilla groups" could be responsible.

"The only driving political force in a totalitarian country of tightened screws is always an armed guerrilla movement," he said.

After Putin sent troops to Ukraine, the border region of Belgorod has been repeatedly shelled, and dozens of people have been killed.

Authorities have also reported a series of incidents involving members of "sabotage" groups crossing over from Ukraine.

In April, the city of Belgorod was bombed by a Russian fighter jet which dropped ammunition over the city by accident.

The attack was reported ahead of a widely-expected Ukrainian offensive, though President Volodymyr Zelensky has said his country is not yet ready.

Ukraine's army said earlier Monday that Russian forces pummelled Dnipro with 16 missiles and 20 attack drones overnight.

In the southern Kherson region, a 45-year-old man died when a shell fragment hit him in the heart, officials said. Two people also died in Russian attacks on the region of Donetsk over the past day, officials said.

Scholz Publicly Backs Biden Over Trump for Re-Election



BERLIN (Dispatches) - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he prefers U.S. President Joe Biden to his predecessor, Donald Trump, and hoped Biden would be re-elected for a second term in office.

Addressing pupils at a primary school close to Berlin, Scholz accused Trump of being divisive and that he would be bad not only for the United States but also for Germany.

The unusually direct language used by Scholz could reflect how bilateral relations were often strained during the Trump presidency, led at the time by Scholz's predecessor Angela Merkel, when Scholz was finance minister.

Responding to a pupil's question, Scholz said: "I think the current president is better, so I want him to be re-elected."

Fighting Rages in Sudan's Capital As Truce Deadline Nears



KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Gunfire and explosions rocked Sudan's capital Monday, hours before a one-week humanitarian ceasefire was to take effect after a series of previous truce announcements were all violated.

The United States and Saudi Arabia on Sunday announced that the ceasefire agreed between the rival camps would take effect at 9:45 pm (1945 GMT) Monday to enable humanitarian assistance to civilians.

Unlike truces previously announced, the US and Saudi said this one is different because it was "signed by the parties" and will be supported by a "ceasefire monitoring mechanism".

Desperate residents voiced hope that the new agreement would stem the brutal warfare that has shaken the capital Khartoum and other parts of the impoverished country, particularly the western Darfur region.

Fighting erupted on April 15 between the army, led by Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces commanded by Burhan's former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The two sides on Sunday affirmed that they would respect the ceasefire, which was welcomed by the United Nations, African Union and East African bloc IGAD.

According to a text of the agreement released by the US, warring sides were to use the two days before it takes effect Monday night to "inform their respective forces" about it and "instruct them to comply."

But for the 37th consecutive day, the capital of five million awoke Monday to the sound of air strikes and anti-aircraft fire, said witnesses, as the city endures sweltering heat and only intermittent water and power supplies.

"Fighting and troop movements have continued even today, despite a commitment by both sides not to pursue military advantage before the ceasefire takes effect," Volker Perthes, the UN's envoy to Sudan, briefed the Security Council on Monday.

"Fighter jets are bombing our neighbourhood," Khartoum resident Mahmoud Salah el-Din told AFP. "We have seen no sign that the Rapid Support Forces are preparing to withdraw from the streets."

Colombia Suspends Truce With Major Rebel Group in Flashpoint Regions

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Colombian President Gustavo Petro suspended a truce with leftist guerrillas in four flashpoint regions following the killing of four Indigenous children by those rebels.

Petro said the bilateral ceasefire "is suspended and all offensive operations are reactivated" in the Meta, Caqueta, Guaviare and Putumayo regions.

Four children and teenagers from the Murui Indigenous community were executed in southern Colombia by dissidents of the now-disarmed Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels, authorities said on Sunday.

Those four regions are a stronghold of FARC dissident guerrillas who refused to join a 2016 peace accord that saw most of the rebels lay down their arms and form a communist political party.

The rebel Estado Mayor Central responded to the news with a scathing attack on the government.

"The unilateral ceasefire will unleash war and the numbers of dead, injured and prisoners will multiply," the group said in a statement sent to media.

The four Murui minors were executed on the border between the southern departments of Caqueta and Amazonas after defecting from a dissident faction of FARC called the Carolina Ramirez front, the country's human rights ombudsman said in statement on Sunday.

The front, which belongs to the Estado Mayor Central, was among the groups that adhered to a ceasefire proposed by the government several months ago and were set to begin new peace talks soon.

"Recruiting and killing children and adolescents from Indigenous communities are not exactly gestures of goodwill to achieve peace. In addition to being evident violations of international humanitarian law," the ombudsman noted.

Petro slammed the murders as "an atrocious crime, a blow to peace" and warned of "measures against these actions."

At the end of last year, Petro announced a bilateral ceasefire with numerous armed groups.

Bulgaria Breaks Two-Year Deadlock With Power Sharing Gov't

SOFIA (Dispatches) - After five elections in two years, Bulgarian parties agreed to form a power sharing government with rotating prime ministers to implement badly needed reforms in the graft-ridden EU nation.

Former EU commissioner for innovation Mariya Gabriel, tasked by the conservative GERB party to lead negotiations, announced the agreement with the anti-graft We Continue the Change (PP).

"We all made a lot of concessions," Gabriel told a news conference in the capital Sofia.

The 44-year-old ex-commissioner, who resigned from her post in Brussels last week, will initially be deputy prime minister, under the leadership of 60-year-old researcher Nikolay Denkov of the PP-DB coalition.

Denkov and Gabriel will rotate as prime ministers for a period of nine months each.

"We sought a solution to avoid the real danger of new elections," Denkov said Monday.

Analysts cautiously welcomed Monday's announcement, with polling institute Trend's Evelina Slavkova calling it a "step in the right direction... towards a government of salvation, almost."

The European Union's poorest country has been plagued by political instability and led by caretaker governments in the past two years.

A fifth vote in early April did not provide clear majorities either.

GERB won 69 MP seats in the 240-seat legislature and has remained badly isolated, with their main rivals PP-DB getting 64 MP seats.

Four smaller parties also secured seats.

Bulgaria has never had a rotating premiership but the compromise remained the only option for a cabinet after Gabriel failed to secure backing from two out of three smaller parties for a cabinet of GERB led by herself as prime minister.



Denkov, who will take over the premiership for the initial nine months will present the full cabinet list to President Rumen Radev in the coming weeks before seeking parliament approval.

The government's priorities include the urgent passing of a 2023 budget, making progress on accession to eurozone

and the visa-free Schengen area.

Gabriel has backed the efforts by PP-DB to oust chief prosecutor Ivan Geshev and pass constitutional reforms to improve accountability and establish a control mechanism that the EU recommended.

Rampant corruption made thousands of Bulgarians take to the streets in the summer of 2020, finally forcing out GERB after a decade in power under three-time premier Boyko Borisov.

The controversial yet all-powerful Geshev, in office since 2019, was also targeted by protesters who accused him of shielding Borisov from justice.

Geshev refused to resign last week, theatrically tearing to pieces his written resignation in front of journalists and threatening his political opponents, including his former close ally Borisov, with revelations.

Geshev on Monday insisted that he was facing "a coordinated political attack", as prosecutors said they are looking into leads incriminating Borisov and Gabriel.

"The prosecutor's response has paradoxically contributed to the achievement of a political compromise", which has become urgent in view of "the extremely difficult situation in the country", Gallup International analyst Parvan Simeonov told AFP.

Weakened by the turmoil, Bulgaria was forced to abandon its bid to join the eurozone in 2024 and was unable to accede to the Schengen free movement zone.

The Eastern European country has also been prevented from tapping into the EU resilience and recovery fund.

Turkey's Third-Place, Far-Right Candidate Endorses Erdogan

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The third-placed contender in the Turkish presidential elections formally endorsed President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the second-round runoff vote to be held on May 28th.

The nationalist presidential candidate Sinan Ogan, 55, has emerged as a potential kingmaker after neither Erdogan nor his main challenger, opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu, secured the majority needed for a first-round victory on May 14th.

Ogan, a former academic who was backed by a far-right anti-migrant party, won 5.17% in the May 14 vote and could hold the key to victory in the runoff now that he's out of the race.

His endorsement of Erdogan came days after he held a surprise meeting with the Turkish leader in Istanbul on Friday. No statement was made following the one-hour meeting.

Ogan had attracted votes from people who disapproved of Erdogan's policies but didn't want support Kilicdaroglu, who leads Turkey's center-left, pro-secular main opposition party.

Analysts say that despite Ogan's endorsement, it is not certain that all of his supporters would go to Erdogan. Some were likely to shift to Kilicdaroglu while others might chose not to vote in the runoff race. Adding to the uncertainty is the fact that the anti-migrant party that had backed Ogan hasn't yet announced which of the two contenders it would endorse.

Erdogan received 49.5% of the votes in the first round - just short of the majority needed for an outright victory - compared to Kilicdaroglu's 44.9%.

Erdogan's ruling AK party and its nationalist and Islamist allies also retained a majority in the 600-seat parliament. That increases Erdogan's chances of re-election because voters are likely to vote for him to avoid a splintered government, analysts say.

Ogan listed the conditions to earn his endorsement while speaking to Turkish media last week. Among them were taking a tough stance against the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and a timeline for the expulsion of millions of refugees, including nearly 3.7 million Syrians.

Erdogan, meanwhile, told CNN International in an interview that he would not bend to such demands.



Dark Cloud Over ChatGPT Revolution, The Cost

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The explosion of generative AI has taken the world by storm, but one question all too rarely comes up: Who can afford it?

OpenAI bled around US\$540 million last year as it developed ChatGPT and says it needs US\$100 billion to meet its ambitions, according to industry media The Information.

"We're going to be the most capital-intensive startup in Silicon Valley history," OpenAI's founder Sam Altman told a panel recently.

And when Microsoft, which poured billions of dollars in investment into OpenAI, is asked about how much its AI adventure will cost, the company answers with assurances that it is keeping an eye on its bottom line.

Building something even near the scale of what OpenAI, Microsoft or Google have on offer would require an eye-watering investment on state-of-the-art chips and recruiting prize-winning researchers.

"People don't realise that to do a significant amount of AI things like ChatGPT takes huge amounts of processing power. And training those models can cost tens of millions of dollars," said Jack Gold, an independent analyst.

"How many companies can actually afford to go out and buy 10,000 Nvidia H100 systems that go for tens of thousands of dollars a piece?" asked Gold.

The answer is pretty much no one and in tech, if you can't build the infrastructure, you rent it and that is what companies already do massively by outsourcing their computing needs to Microsoft, Google and Amazon's AWS.

And with the advent of generative AI, this dependency on cloud computing and tech giants deepens, leaving the same players in the driver's seat, experts warned.

The unpredictable costs of cloud computing, "is a heavily underestimated problem for many companies", said Stefan Sigg, Chief Product Officer at Software AG, which develops software for businesses.

Sigg compares cloud costs to electricity bills and says companies that don't know better are in for "a big surprise" if they let their engineers run up bills in the mad rush to build tech, including AI.

Microsoft's signature cloud offer is Azure and some observers believe the giant's all-in bet on AI is really about protecting Azure success and guaranteeing the cash cow's future.

Azure has been the giant's unsexy bread-winner for years, bringing in huge profits but without attracting the headlines of an iPhone or social media that go straight to the consumer.

For Microsoft, "the golden goose is monetising cloud with Azure because we're talking about what could be a US\$20, US\$30, US\$40 billion opportunity annually down the road if the AI bet is successful," said Dan Ives of Wedbush Securities.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella insists that generative AI is "moving fast in the right direction".

Deeply respected on Wall Street, Nadella will have a six- or nine-month grace period to show his bet is a winner, Ives predicted.

Microsoft acknowledges the risk, but insists that on AI, it must "lead this wave," CFO Amy Hood told analysts this month.

"We will charge for those AI capabilities, and then ultimately, we'll deliver operating profit," she said.

Piling up profit at the company founded by Bill Gates can only mean passing on the cost of AI to customers.

From Main Street to Fortune 500, the dependency on the AI-amped will be an expensive one and companies and investors are drumming up alternatives to at least reduce the bill.



Researchers Find Traces of Human DNA Almost Everywhere

LONDON (Dispatches) - Detailed remnants of human DNA can be found just about everywhere that people have been, a surprising finding that raises a host of ethical issues for researchers, a new study says.

Environmental samples of human DNA were found nearly everywhere, save for isolated islands and remote mountaintops where people have never visited, researchers said. While sequencing this DNA offers researchers consistent data, it also presents an ethical dilemma because it reveals so much personal genetic information.

"We've been consistently surprised throughout this project at how much human DNA we find and the quality of that DNA," David Duffy, a professor of wildlife disease genomics at the University of Florida in Gainesville, said in a school news release. "In most cases the quality is almost equivalent to if you took a sample from a person."

The DNA samples were of such high quality that scientists could identify mutations associated with disease and determine the genetic ancestry of nearby populations, researchers reported.

In fact, environmental human DNA even could provide specific genetic information about individual volunteers, the investigators discovered.

The research started from an attempt to study endangered sea turtles and viruses that can cause cancer in them by gathering environmental turtle DNA from the tracks they leave in the sand.

Scientists found human DNA in their turtle samples, raising the question of where else people might have coughed, spit, shed and flushed genetic samples in the environment.

Modern genetic sequencing technology makes it relatively easy to sequence the DNA of every organism in an environmental sample, researchers noted. They wondered how much human DNA there would be in samples taken from various places, and whether it was intact enough to harbor useful information.

Duffy's team found quality human DNA in the ocean and rivers surrounding UF's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience and Sea Turtle Hospital in St. Augustine. The DNA was found close to town, far from human settlement, and even in the sand from isolated beaches.

The researchers also traveled to a remote island never visited by people, and found it free of human DNA -- at least until they showed up. They were able to retrieve DNA from the footprints that volunteers left in the sand, and these samples were good enough to allow some genetic sequencing.

Duffy also tested the technique during a trip to his native Ireland. He followed a river that winds through town on its way to the ocean and found human DNA everywhere but the remote mountain stream where the river starts, far from civilization.

Researchers also collected room air samples from a veterinary hospital and recovered DNA matching the staff, the animal patient and common animal viruses.

These sort of environmentally collected DNA samples could, if ethically handled, prove a boon to a number of research fields ranging from medicine to archaeology to criminal forensics.

For example, scientists could track cancer mutations from wastewater samples or locate undiscovered archaeological sites by checking for hidden human DNA. Detectives could identify suspects from the DNA floating in the air of a crime scene.

But because humans can't help but leave DNA samples in their wake, scientists and regulators will need to grapple with the ethical dilemmas inherent in the widespread availability of precious human genetic information.



New Monoclonal Antibody Drug May Treat Rheumatoid Arthritis



LONDON (Dispatches) - An investigational drug may hit the reset button on a faulty immune system for some people with rheumatoid arthritis.

Rheumatoid arthritis, or RA, is an autoimmune disease that occurs when the body misfires against its own joints and tissues, causing joint pain, stiffness, fatigue and other symptoms.

The drug, peresolimab, is a monoclonal antibody that stimulates human programmed cell death protein 1 (PD-1), which serves as the brakes on the immune system, said study author Dr. Ajay Nirula. He's vice president of immunology for Lilly Research Laboratories in San Diego, which is developing peresolimab. It funded the new research, which was published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine.

PD-1 is a protein found on T cells that helps keep the body's immune responses in check.

"Some autoimmune disease like RA could be caused by an inability to push the normal brakes on the immune system," Nirula said. The new drug hits this brake by stimulating PD-1. "We are trying to turn down the immune system by replacing a missing signal," he added.

And so far, so good, the researchers report.

The new study included 98 people with difficult-to-treat RA. They received 700 mg of peresolimab, 300 mg of peresolimab, or a placebo intravenously once every four weeks.

Compared to folks who got a placebo, participants who took the higher dose of peresolimab had significantly less joint pain, swelling, tenderness and inflammation at 12 weeks as measured on a standard scale assessing RA symptom severity. The safety profiles were similar across all groups in the study.

Half of World's Largest Lakes and Reservoirs Drying Up

BOULDER (Dispatches) - More than half of the world's largest lakes and reservoirs are dwindling and placing humanity's future water security at risk, with climate change and unsustainable consumption the main culprits, a study said.

"Lakes are in trouble globally, and it has implications far and wide," Balaji Rajagopalan, a professor at the University of Colorado Boulder and co-author of the paper, which appeared in Science, told AFP. "It really caught our attention that 25 per cent of the world's population is living in a lake basin that is on a declining trend," he continued, meaning some two billion people are impacted by the findings.

Unlike rivers, which have tended to hog scientific attention, lakes aren't well monitored, despite their critical importance for water security, said Rajagopalan. But high-profile environmental disasters in large water bodies like the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, signaled to researchers a wider crisis.

To study the question systematically, the team, which included scientists from the United States, France, and Saudi Arabia, looked at Earth's biggest 1,972 lakes and reservoirs, using observations from satellites from 1992-2020. They focused on larger freshwater bodies because of the better accuracy of satellites at a larger scale, as well as their importance for humans and wildlife.

Their dataset merged images from Landsat, the longest-running Earth observation program, with water surface height acquired by satellite altimeters, to determine how lake volume varied over nearly 30 years.

The results: 53 per cent of lakes and reservoirs saw a decline in water storage, at a rate of approximately 22 gigatonnes a year. Over the whole period studied, 603 cubic kilometres of water was lost, 17 times the water in Lake Mead, the United States' largest reservoir. To find out what drove the trends, the team used statistical models incorporating climate and hydrologic trends to tease out natural and human-driven factors.

For natural lakes, much of the net loss was attributed to climate warming as well as human water consumption. Increased temperatures from climate change drive evaporation, but can also decrease precipitation in some places.

"The climate signal pervades all factors," said Rajagopalan.

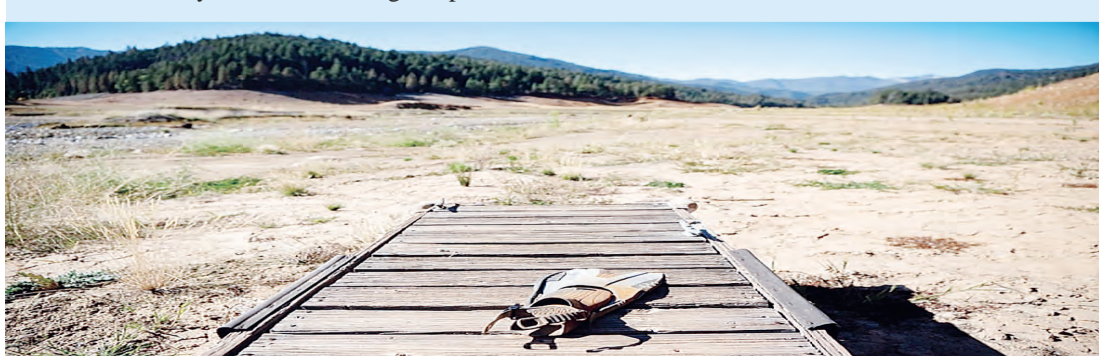
Lead author Fangfang Yao, a visiting fellow at CU Boulder, added in a statement: "Many of the human and climate change footprints on lake water losses were previously unknown, such as the desiccations of Lake Good-e-Zareh in Afghanistan and Lake Mar Chiquita in Argentina."

One surprising aspect was that lakes in both wet and dry regions of the world are losing volume, suggesting the "dry gets drier, wet gets wetter" paradigm that is frequently used to summarise how climate change affects regions, doesn't always hold. Losses were found in humid tropical lakes in the Amazon as well as Arctic lakes, demonstrating a trend more widely spread than predicted.

Accumulating sedimentation was blamed for storage loss in drying reservoirs.

But although most global lakes were dwindling, nearly a quarter saw significant increases in their water storage. These included in the Tibetan Plateau, "where glacier retreat and permafrost thawing partially drove alpine lake expansion," the paper said.

Hilary Dugan, a scientist who studies freshwater systems at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and who wasn't involved in the study, told AFP the research advanced scientific understanding of lake volume variability, which is of "huge importance."



Plastic-Eating Fungi Found in Chinese Coastal Salt Marshes



LONDON (Dispatches) - An international team of scientists identified plastic-eating bacteria and fungi in Chinese coastal salt marshes, presenting new possibilities for global waste management, according to a study published last week.

"A total of 184 fungal and 55 bacterial strains capable of breaking down" various plastics were found in the Jiangsu province of eastern China, the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew said in a statement.

Researchers from China and the UK in May 2021 sampled microorganisms from China's Dafeng, a UNESCO-protected site near the coast of the Yellow Sea.

They found a distinct "terrestrial plastisphere", described as a "man-made ecological niche", which is an ecosystem that has evolved to live with the presence of coastal plastic debris.

"Scientists are increasingly looking at microorganisms, such as fungi and bacteria, to help tackle some of the most pressing challenges of the modern age, including the rising tide of plastic pollution," Kew Gardens said.

The new findings contribute to existing studies on plastic-degrading microorganisms with some 436 species of fungi and bacteria found capable of breaking down plastic to date, it added.

"Kew scientists and partners believe their latest findings could lead to the development of efficient enzymes designed to biologically degrade plastic waste," it went on.

In 2020, approximately 238 million metric tonnes of waste from short-lived plastics — such as packaging that ends up in municipal waste — was generated worldwide, according to a recent report from the United Nations Environment Programme.

Economists Push Back Expected Fed Rate Cut to 2024

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Economists have pushed back their expectations of when the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates and have raised their forecasts for inflation and the strength of the job market, a survey released on Monday showed.

Economists now believe the U.S. central bank, which is debating whether it needs to raise rates again, will lower its targeted policy rate in the first quarter of next year, according to the survey released by the National Association for Business Economics.

In February, survey respondents saw the Fed cutting rates in the final three months of this year. Forecasters maintained their view on the peak level of the Fed's benchmark overnight interest rate, which jibes with the central bank's current target range of between 5% and 5.25%.



China's Micron Chipmaker Ban Ramps Up U.S. Trade Tensions

BEIJING (Dispatches) - A move by Beijing to bar U.S. firm Micron Technology Inc from selling memory chips to key domestic industries has ramped up tensions in an ongoing trade spat with Washington and lifted shares of firms that could benefit from the move.

China's cyberspace regulator said late on Sunday that Micron, the biggest US memory chipmaker, had failed its network security review and that it would block operators of key infrastructure from buying from the company.

It did not provide details on what risks it had found or what products from the company would be affected.

Analysts said they saw limited direct impact on Micron, as most of its key customers in China are consumer electronics players but warned the move could prompt some companies to rid their supply chains of Micron products due to political risks.

Beijing's decision was opposed by Washington but also helped stocks of Micron's rivals in China and South Korea, which are seen benefiting as mainland firms seek memory products from other sources.

"We firmly oppose restrictions that have no basis in fact," a spokesperson from the US Commerce Department said in a statement on Sunday. "This action, along with recent raids and targeting of other American firms, is inconsistent with (China's) assertions that it is opening its markets and committed to a transparent regulatory framework."

Tensions between Washington and Beijing have grown in recent months following raids and visits by Chinese authorities to U.S. corporate due diligence firm Mintz Group and management consultancy Bain.

Micron said on Sunday it had received the regulator's review and looked "forward to continuing to engage in discussions with Chinese authorities." The company is the first US chipmaker to be targeted by Beijing after a series of export controls by Washington on certain American components and chipmaking tools to block them being used to advance China's military capabilities.

China launched the review in late March amid a dispute over chip technology and worsening relations between Washington and Beijing.

The move also comes shortly after Group of Seven nations agreed to "de-risk, not decouple" economic engagement with China and as US President Joe Biden called for an "open hotline" between Washington and Beijing.

The U.S. Commerce Department said it would speak directly with authorities in Beijing to clarify their actions.

"We also will engage with key allies and partners to ensure we are closely coordinated to address distortions of the memory chip market caused by China's actions," the department said.

While the Chinese statement and state media said the Micron decision needed to be seen as an individual case in the context of national security concerns, not geopolitics, prominent Chinese commentator Hu Xijin struck a different note.

"Washington itself encourages US companies to do things that endanger China's national security, so it suspects that Chinese companies are doing the same," the former editor-in-chief of nationalist state tabloid Global Times tweeted. "The whole world should be wary of the US."

China Holds Lending Rates Steady

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - China kept its benchmark lending rates unchanged for the ninth month in May on Monday, matching market expectations, as a weakening yuan and widening yield differentials with the United States limited the scope for any substantial monetary easing.

A raft of data over the past month or so, including April indicators last week, pointed to an economy losing momentum after the initial post-COVID bounce and lifted hopes of more easing measures.

But given capital outflow risks that could further hurt a sliding yuan, some analysts now expect the People's Bank of China (PBOC) could lower the amount of cash banks must set aside as its next policy move.

Earlier in the day, China's one-year loan prime rate (LPR) was kept at 3.65% and its five-year LPR was unchanged at 4.30%.

In a Reuters poll of 26 market watchers conducted last week, 23 predicted no change to the rates for this month.

"Despite the April weakness, we do not expect policymakers to unleash major stimulus as the 5% GDP growth target is still well within reach and issues such as property risks and youth unemployment require a more targeted approach," economists at Goldman Sachs (NYSE:GS) said in a note. "Within monetary policy, symbolic measures such as a reserve requirement ratio (RRR) cut are more likely than policy rate cuts this year given the already wide U.S.-China interest rate differential and RMB depreciation pressure."

China's yuan weakened past the psychologically important 7 per dollar last week to hit five-month lows. It has fallen nearly 5% from highs hit in late January. [CNY/]

At the same time, the yield gap between China's benchmark 10-year government bonds and their U.S. counterparts is hovering at the widest level in two months.

The steady LPR fixings also came after the PBOC rolled over maturing medium-term lending facility (MLF) loans while keeping the interest rate unchanged last week.

The MLF rate serves as a guide to the LPR and markets mostly use the medium-term rate as a precursor to any changes to the lending benchmarks.

Economists at Capital Economics said last week the central bank's goal was to ensure that credit growth, which slumped in April, would not slow too much as "the reopening boost to credit demand fades."

"This can probably be achieved without policy rate cuts, which we think the PBOC will try to avoid," they said.



India's Economy Sustaining Recent Growth Momentum, Inflation Slowing

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India's economy has sustained the growth momentum seen in the last fiscal quarter of 2022/23, while latest inflation outcome has been better than forecast, the Reserve Bank of India said.

Growth in the first quarter of 2023/24 is expected to be driven by private consumption, a revival in rural demand and renewed buoyancy in manufacturing on easing of input cost pressures, the central bank said in its "State of the Economy" report, published as part of its monthly bulletin.

"Investment activity is also expected to improve, drawing strength from the thrust on capital expenditure in public spending and moderation in commodity prices," it added.

India's services exports rose 13.1% on year to \$30.48 billion in March, provisional RBI data showed in early May. April services exports as per provisional government data rose to \$30.36 billion.

The RBI said if services exports maintain their recent high momentum, the drag from net external demand should moderate through April-June 2023.

"Domestic service sector activity will continue to be led by the rebound in contact-intensive services and the resilience in construction activity," it added.

Based on partial data available for April 2023 and assuming an implied GDP growth of 5.1% for Q4 of 2022/23, the economic activity index now casts GDP growth for Q1 2023/24 at 7.6%, RBI said.

India's annual retail inflation eased to 4.7% in April from 5.66% the previous month, data earlier this month showed.

Iraq's Kurdish Oil Output Falls as Pipeline Outage Continues

LONDON (Dispatches) - Oil production in Iraq's Kurdistan region continues to drop as export flows to Turkey's Ceyhan port show few signs of restarting after a stoppage that has lasted almost two months.

Turkey halted Iraq's 450,000 barrels per day (bpd) of northern exports through the Iraq-Turkey pipeline on March 25 after an arbitration ruling by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

The ICC ordered Turkey to pay Baghdad

damages of \$1.5 billion for unauthorised exports by the KRG between 2014 and 2018.

The 59-day stoppage is estimated to have cost the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) more than \$1.5 billion.

The halt, coupled with limited storage space in the region, sent most of the region's 450,000 bpd of production offline within weeks. Fields that had continued producing are now offline or operating with reduced output.

The 4,500 barrel per day (bpd) Taq Taq field is no longer producing into storage, said a spokesperson at operator Genel Energy.

The Khurmala field is now producing at about 50,000 bpd, according to a source familiar with field operations.

This is a reduction from 100,000 bpd a month ago and 135,000 bpd before the pipeline stoppage.

Resulting lost revenue for the KRG stands at more than \$1.5 billion, according to Reuters estimates based on exports of 375,000 bpd, the KRG's historic discount against Brent crude and 59 days of outages.

Iraq asked Turkey this month to resume pipeline flows and loading operations at Ceyhan on May 13.

Turkish pipeline operator BOTAS said it needed more time to check the technical feasibility of the pipeline to resume flows, an Iraqi oil official said.

However, BOTAS has yet to receive instruction from Turkish authorities, the source said, citing unofficial contact with Turkish energy officials.

"We're talking about weeks, not days, as an expected time frame to resume exports. This issue is more political now than technical," the source said.

Representatives of Iraq and Turkey's energy ministries were not immediately available for comment.

Iraqi government officials previously told Reuters they blamed elections for the delay.

Turkey held presidential elections on May 14 but neither of the two main candidates exceeded the required 50% of the votes and a run-off is scheduled for May 28.

Grain Deal Extension Key To Food Flows, Market Stabilization

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The extension of a deal that has allowed Ukraine to ship grain through the Black Sea to parts of the world struggling with hunger is important to keep global food supplies flowing and stabilize markets, according to the United Nations.

In a boost to global food security after Russia's invasion of Ukraine drove up prices, Moscow last week agreed to a two-month extension of the breakthrough accord brokered between the warring sides by Turkey and the U.N. last summer.

The extension was announced by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has played an extensive role in negotiating with both sides.

The deal last July came with a separate agreement to facilitate shipments of Russian food and fertilizer that Moscow insists hasn't been applied.

Russia had threatened to bow out if its concerns were not ironed out by May 18. Such brinkmanship isn't new: With a similar extension in the balance in March, Russia unilaterally decided to renew the deal for 60 days instead of the 120 days outlined in the agreement.

Extending the Black Sea Grain Initiative is a win for countries in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia that rely on Ukrainian wheat, barley, vegetable oil and other affordable food products, especially as drought takes a toll. In addition, the deal helped lower prices of food commodities like wheat over the last year.

"We don't see prices rising again and hitting the poorest people the hardest," the World Food Programme (WFP) told Anadolu Agency (AA) on Sunday, underlining that the continuation of the initiative was good news for the entire world.

A Joint Coordination Center (JCC) with officials from the three countries and the U.N. was set up in Istanbul to oversee the shipments. More than 30 million metric tons of grain have been transported by more than 950 ships as part of the deal.

The continuation of the deal is important for the uninterrupted operation of global food supply chains, especially for countries in need, said Eren Günhan Ulusoy, director of the International Association of Operative Millers Eurasia.

There is an expectation of 787 million tons of grain production and 794 million tons of consumption for the 2023-24 season in the world, he told AA.

He added that Ukraine delivered 30.2 million tons of grain to the world through the grain corridor, underlining that the route would only grow in importance come August-September.

Asia to Drive Oil Demand Growth in Second Half



DUBAI (Dispatches) - Asia will lead oil demand growth of around 2 million barrels per day (bpd) in the second half of the year, a senior executive at Vitol said on Monday, an increase that could potentially lead to a shortage of supply and drive up prices.

International benchmark Brent crude has fallen to around \$75 a barrel from a peak of nearly \$140 in March last year, just after the disruption caused by oil producer Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Prices have drawn support from surprise voluntary output cuts by some members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, including Russia (OPEC+) announced in April. The group meets again on June 4 to review output policy.

"We are going into the second half of the year where, largely thanks to Asian demand growth, the world is going to need about 2 million bpd more than it needs now," Mike Muller, Vitol Asia president, told the Middle East Petroleum & Gas Conference in Dubai.

"For those of you asking whether OPEC+ needs to take more off the market or not, I will then let you draw your own conclusions," he said.

Muller's view echoes remarks from the International Energy Agency, which shortly after OPEC+ announced its output cut in April, said the producer group risked exacerbating an oil supply deficit expected in the second half of the year.

Also speaking at the Dubai conference, Feridun Fesharaki, chairman of the FGE energy consultancy said the world could face a supply problem as Western sanctions on Russian oil curtail production growth if demand growth rises as predicted.

Russia can maintain production at around 10 million to 11 million bpd, he said, but would be unable to contribute sufficiently to ensure 2 million bpd of future growth given Western sanctions imposed on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine.

Iran, Iraq Follow Up on Shalamcheh-Basra Railway

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran and Iraq transport ministers discussed the advancement of the 'Shalamcheh-Basra Railway' project and the upcoming ministerial meeting of the neighboring countries in Baghdad. Iran Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Mehrdad Bazrpash, followed up on the advancement of the 'Shalamcheh-Basra Railway' project, particularly with regard to the initiations for land acquisition,

with his Iraqi counterpart Razak Muhibis Al-Saadawi over the phone. During the talks, Bazrpash pointed to the responsibility of Iran's Railways for following up construction of 'Shalamcheh-Basra Railway' constantly. Following the 2021 bilateral agreement for the construction of the Shalamcheh-Basra Railway, Iran and Iraq transport ministers met in Tehran in April to kick off the implementation of the project.



In Niger, France Tests Out New Strategy for Africa Operation

NIAMEY (dispatches) - It's not yet dawn but dozens of troops from Niger and France's legendary Foreign Legion are boarding a French C-130 military transport plane, each weighed down with gear.

In the green-lit hold, their faces are locked in concentration as the aircraft takes off over the arid Sahel. A few soldiers manage to doze off, their heads resting on their bags or their heavy helmets.

Their mission: to make a parachute jump to take an abandoned military position in Niger not far from the Malian border -- an area where the ruthless Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (IS-GS) is resurgent.

The joint operation is symbolic of the new approach President Emmanuel Macron wants to use for France's mission in West Africa's deeply troubled Sahel.

After nearly a decade, its troops were forced to pull out of Mali -- still fighting an Islamist insurgency -- following a military coup.

The junta then, according to Western governments, called on Russia's Wagner mercenary group for help.

France's exit from Mali has encouraged the jihadists to regain freedom of movement in the border region -- and the parachute operation is aimed at keeping them at bay.

After an hour's flight, the crew announces the countdown for the drop over the Liptako region.

The alarm rings. The aircraft's side doors open. Time to jump.

"Don't stop!" shouts an officer as the paratroopers hurl themselves into the night at a frantic pace, filling the sky with mushrooms of beige silk.

In just one minute, dozens of soldiers have jumped over the sandy expanses of southwestern Niger. The plane, abruptly emptied of its passengers, turns around, heading back to its base near the capital Niamey.

On the ground, the soldiers are about to get to work.

The cooperation with Niger is part of a strategy which Paris hopes will show the key lesson from Mali: support local forces by providing the equipment and expertise they need, but don't substitute for them.

"In Niger and everywhere in Africa, the idea is now different from what was done in Mali. Today our help starts with what the partner needs," said the commander of the French forces in the Sahel, General Bruno Baratz.

The pullout last year from Mali brought the curtain down on the long-running Barkhane operation against Islamist militants in the francophone ex-colonial region -- a hugely problematic deployment that left over 50 French troops dead.

Neighbouring Burkina Faso, also led by a junta, this year also pushed out



French forces from its territory, a prelude to what the West fears will also be a pivot to Wagner.

It was against this increasingly difficult background that Macron ordered lower-profile operations more specifically tailored to the needs of partner countries.

The new strategy is upheld to the letter in Niger, which has accepted 1,500 French soldiers on its soil to bolster its armies at a time when IS-GS is once again a threat.

Ahead of the jump over Liptako, a commander with the Foreign Legion's 2nd Paratroop Regiment told the assembled troops that the mission would be "hard."

"There's heat, there's the environment, and we don't know where the enemy is. We are counting on you to help us," he said to the Nigerian troops.

"I believe the French army is trying to use Niger as a laboratory for new relationships" in Sahel, and "be a supporter rather than a leader" said Michael Shurkin, director of global programmes at risk management firm 14N Strategies.

"France is convinced it needs to be as discreet as possible," he said.

"France was fighting its own war in parallel to what Malians were doing. Now France is trying to do things differently."

A French military officer, who asked not to be named, said the new strategy still meant a "de-Barkhane-isation" of attitudes in the French armed forces, who grew used to tracking militants in the desert in much more autonomous conditions.

But Niger seems satisfied.

Canada's Gasoline Prices Set to Rise as Driving Season Starts



OTTAWA (Dispatches) - Alberta's wildfires could shut in more oil production, adding to rising gasoline demand at the start of Canada's driving season this weekend and pushing gasoline prices in Canada higher, analysts told The Canadian Press.

"It's not unusual to see gas prices go up and down around weekends, and especially long weekends," Colin Cieszynski, chief market strategist at SIA Wealth Management, told The Canadian Press.

Wildfires in Alberta could put upward pressure on oil and gasoline prices, the analysts say.

Following a brief respite at the end of last week, the wildfires in Alberta began raging again this week as temperatures rose, threatening the oil sands operations in the province and forcing operators to shut in oil and gas production.

Meanwhile, U.S. gasoline prices are stuck at an average of \$3.53 per gallon this week, unchanged from last week, AAA estimated on Thursday.

"Despite mild weather and a less volatile economic forecast, drivers are not hitting the road and raising gasoline demand to traditional seasonal levels," AAA spokesperson Andrew Gross said.

"It's possible this is merely the lull before Memorial Day, but it could be a trend that lingers into summer."

Still, the average U.S. gasoline price is now \$1.075 per gallon below year-ago levels, according to Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at fuel-saving app GasBuddy.

The national average price of gasoline this Memorial Day weekend is expected to be \$1.10 less than it was in 2022, at \$3.53 per gallon on average, GasBuddy said on Thursday.

According to GasBuddy's 2023 Summer Travel Survey, released on Thursday, 64% of Americans are planning to take a summer road trip this year, up from 58% last year. However, 60% of that group has yet to confirm their plans by booking accommodations, activities, or other travel plans.

"While gas prices are far lower in most areas than they were last year, Americans seem to feel a bit worse about the economy this year on the heels of rising interest rates, the bank crisis, and inflation that has spiked, impacting their ability to take a road trip during the summer driving season," GasBuddy's De Haan commented.

Can Turkmenistan Become an Important Gas Supplier For Europe?

LONDON (OilPrice) - In recent months, traditionally isolationist Turkmenistan has begun to make efforts to open up more to the outside world. As a result, intense competition has ensued among key actors, including Russia, China and the United States, for access to Turkmenistan's transportation routes and energy resources. One consequence of Ashgabat's opening has been the revival of interest in establishing the Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP) to transport Turkmenistani energy to Europe.

In late December 2022, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced Ankara's intentions to begin work on transporting Turkmenistani natural gas to Western markets. At a trilateral summit between Turkey, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, all sides agreed to cooperate on developing the necessary infrastructure for supplying Turkmenistan's gas to Europe, including the development of the proposed TCP with an estimated cost around \$5 billion, a proposed length of 300 kilometers and an annual capacity of 30 billion cubic meters. The pipeline would run from Turkmenbashi to Baku along the bottom of the Caspian Sea and connect to the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC), allowing Turkmenistani gas to flow into Europe.

The TCP has been postponed for a number of years due to various problems; nevertheless, its construction could be significant in bringing energy balance to the region. It is no coincidence that Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu have expressed optimism about Turkmenistan's prospects for supplying gas to Europe in recent months (Trend.az, March 16). Previously, at a conference in the United Arab Emirates, Turkmenistani officials had mentioned their country's plans to build a pipeline through Azerbaijan to Europe.

346 Firms Active...

FROM PAGE 1

On November 28, 2022, President Ebrahim Raisi declared the "National Document for the Development of Nano Science and Technology".

The document, consisting of 7 articles, was approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution on November 15.

Policy making and planning for progress in nanotechnology started in 2003 with the formation of a special headquarters for the development of nanotechnology, and accelerated with the approval of the first 10-year document for the development of nanotechnology entitled "Future Strategy Document".

In this document, Iran was targeted to be among the top 15 nanotechnology countries in the world and aimed to generate wealth and improve people's lives. The general approach of the first ten-year document was the training of human resources and the provision of infrastructure for the development and commercialization of technology.

In order to continue the nanotechnology progress, the upcoming national document has been compiled with new goals and approaches such as being a reference in

science and technology, industrialization, maximum impact of nanotechnology in priority industrial areas, and entry of nano products into the global markets and the promotion of people's lives.

By 2033, the advancements of nanotechnology in Iran will improve the quality of life and the production of wealth. The country moves towards global authority in science and nanotechnology by producing innovative products while having a stable place in the market of other countries.

General goals are improving the scientific position and promoting the authority of the country in science and nanotechnology, promotion of innovation based on novel technologies with high economic and social impact, upgrading existing industries by nanotechnology, stable export and promotion of Iranian nano products in regional and global markets, enhancing the effectiveness of nanotechnology in improving the quality of life and social impact.

Priority industrial areas in the national document are consisting of water and environment, energy, agriculture, health, and construction.

Tehran Slams Germany's Double...

FROM PAGE 1

"How does she give herself the right to talk about the human rights of the Iranian people as her government is responsible for equipping the Saddam regime with chemical weapons as well as killing and poisoning thousands of Iranian citizens!" He also posted pictures showing the aftermath of Iraq's chemical bombardment of the Iranian city of Sardasht on June 28, 1987.

Over 100 people were killed in the attack and thousands more were exposed to chemical agents.

After more than three decades, many of the survivors of the crime still have to live with the long-term respiratory and even psychological effects of inhaling mustard gas.

Iran, Indonesia...

FROM PAGE 1

Iranian President expressed hope that great steps would be taken during this visit for expanding ties with Indonesia, saying that during the 70 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, they have always had good interactions in various political, economic, commercial, regional, and international fields.

He said that cooperation with the Islamic and neighboring countries is a priority of Iran's foreign policy.

Expanding relations with Indonesia, one of the most important and effective countries in Asia and the world, which is also a member of important regional and international organizations, is of great importance to Iran.

Stressing Iran-Indonesia commonalities in various regional and international issues, like Palestine and Afghanistan, Raisi said that the two countries are committed to supporting the rights of the Palestinians until the liberation of Holy Quds.

The two sides also enjoy common views regarding the formation of a comprehensive government in Afghanistan that represents all ethnic groups and religions and restores the rights of all Afghan people.

Today, Iranian women and girls have an effective and successful participation in various fields and have become a source of pride for the country, he stated. "We believe that Afghan women and girls also have the ability to bring pride to Afghanistan and the Islamic nation, and they should be given the possibility of doing social activities and having educational opportunities."

The two decades of US presence in Afghanistan brought nothing but destruction, death, and 35,000 disabled children, Raisi said.

Iran and Indonesia are serious about fighting unilateralism in regional and international issues, he stressed.

The Iranian president said the signing of different documents for bilateral cooperation in various sectors reaffirms both sides' will to develop relations in all fields.

In the presence of Raisi and Widodo, senior officials of Iran and Indonesia signed 11 documents and agreements to strengthen cooperation in preferential trade, cancellation of visas, cultural exchanges, supervision over the pharmaceutical products, science and technology as well as oil and gas.

Raisi also said oppressive sanctions and pressure have failed to hinder Iran's progress, expressing Tehran's firm determination to improve relations with Muslim and neighboring states.

He added that despite pressure and oppressive sanctions, the Iranian youths have succeeded in taking major steps towards the improvement of science and technology as well as the country's economic development.

"Sanctions and threats have never been able to stop Iran," he added.

Reiterating Iran's foreign policy to boost relations with powerful Muslim and neighboring states, he said, "The expansion of ties with Indonesia, as one of important and effective countries in Asia and the world and a member of important regional and international organizations, is very important for Iran."

He noted that Iran and Indonesia enjoy diverse capacities to deepen relations and expressed hope that his visit to Jakarta would lead to constructive outcomes for the expansion of ties between the two powerful Muslim countries in the region and the world.

He added that Tehran and Jakarta have a common stance on key regional and global issues, including Palestine and Afghanistan.

"The two countries are committed to supporting the rights of the Palestinian people until the liberation of al-Quds," he said.

The Iranian chief executive also stressed the importance of establishing an inclusive government in Afghanistan with the participation of all ethnic and religious groups which strives to restore the Afghan people's rights.

Meanwhile high-ranking Indonesian and Iranian officials signed 11 cooperation documents and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to develop economic and political interactions between the two countries.

A ceremony to sign the 11 cooperation documents and MoUs was held in the Indonesian capital city Jakarta on Tuesday.

The agreements consist of deals on preferential trade, visa waiver, cultural exchanges, cooperation on supervising the production of pharmaceutical products, collaborations in scientific, technological, and innovative arenas, and bilateral cooperation in oil and gas sectors.

The documents and MoUs were inked in the presence of the presidents of Indonesia and Iran and senior ministers from the two countries.

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Koepka Wins PGA Championship

ROCHESTER (Dispatches) - Brooks Koepka claimed a PGA Championship hat-trick and a landmark major win for LIV Golf yesterday but the day also belonged to Michael Block, a 46-year-old club professional, who capped a golfing fairytale with a hole-in-one.

Koepka, saying he had learned his lessons from last month's Masters when he led by two going into the final round before a collapse opened the door for Jon Rahm to grab the Green Jacket, began the day with a one-shot advantage and would not let go.

Marciniak to Officiate Champions League

LONDON (Dispatches) - Polish referee Szymon Marciniak, who officiated the World Cup final in December, will take charge of next month's Champions League final between Manchester City and Inter Milan, UEFA said.

Marciniak, 42, became the first Polish referee to officiate a World Cup final when he took charge of Argentina's penalty shootout victory over France in Doha and was praised for his handling of the contest.

Heat Roll Past Celtics 128-102, Take 3-0 Lead

MIAMI (Dispatches) - Erik Spoelstra had his team fully expecting that Game 3 of the Eastern Conference finals would be extremely difficult, that the Miami Heat were going to have to take the best shot that a desperate bunch of Boston Celtics could muster.

It was a Heat romp — and a team that had to pull off a frantic rally just to make the playoffs is now one win from the NBA Finals.

Gabe Vincent scored a career-high 29 points, Duncan Robinson added 22 and the eighth-seeded Heat rolled past the Celtics 128-102. Miami leads the series 3-0, with a chance to finish off a stunning sweep at home in Game 4.

"That was a solid, mature, professional approach," said Spoelstra, now on the brink of a sixth trip to the NBA Finals as Miami's coach. "There's a lot of pent-up stuff here and we're getting closer, but we still have to finish this off."

Caleb Martin scored 18, Jimmy Butler finished with 16, Bam Adebayo had 13 and Max Strus added 10 for Miami. Every team in NBA history that has won the first three games of a best-of-seven has ultimately prevailed; the Heat are 8-0 in that situation.

"The rim was as big as the ocean for everybody," Adebayo said, after Miami shot 57%.

Jayson Tatum scored 14 and Jaylen Brown added 12 for the second-seeded Celtics, who won three times on Miami's floor on the way to winning last season's East finals — but simply never had a chance in this one and basically emptied the bench for the fourth quarter.

"I just didn't have them ready to play," said Boston coach Joe Mazzulla, who has been the subject of tons of criticism in this series — and will surely face more going into Tuesday. "Whatever it was, whether it was the starting lineup or an adjustment, I have to get them in a better place, ready to play. That's on me."

Grant Williams and Payton Pritchard each added 12 for Boston.

"To their credit, they're playing well above their means," Brown said. "They're ballin' right now and I've got to give them respect. Gabe Vincent, Martin, Strus, Duncan Robinson, guys that we should be able to keep under control are playing their (butt) off."



The NBA Finals start June 1, and the way things are going, that might mean the league is about to go a few days without games. The Western Conference finals could end Monday; Denver leads that series against the Los Angeles Lakers 3-0. And now, the East finals could end Tuesday.

"It's the first to four games," Vincent said. "We're not satisfied with three."

There's never been a season where both conference finals ended in sweeps; it happened in 1957 in the division finals immediately preceding the title series, when Boston beat Syracuse 3-0 and St. Louis beat Minneapolis 3-0.

Of all the 3-0 series leads in NBA history, this one might be the most unexpected — a No. 8 seed in the Heat, a team that struggled just to get into the playoffs, a team that was less than 3 minutes away from being eliminated in the play-in tournament, getting past top-seeded Milwaukee in five games, then fifth-seeded New York in six, and now on the brink of denying the Celtics a second consecutive East crown.

And the Heat let Boston know how much they were enjoying this one.

Mindful that Boston's Al Horford directed a timeout signal toward the Miami bench during Game 1 when the Celtics were on a second-quarter spurt to build a comfortable lead, Butler did the same to Horford as the Heat were running away in the third quarter of Game 3.

Besides, the Heat rallied to win Game 1 anyway. There was no rally required in Game 3 by the Heat. There was barely one attempted by the Celtics, for that matter.

Medvedev Wins Italian Open Title

ROME (Dispatches) - Daniil Medvedev rose to number two in the world rankings ahead of the French Open by capturing the Rome title on Sunday and the Russian said his unexpected win on clay counts as one of his most special triumphs.

Heading into Rome, Medvedev had won 18 of his 19 titles - including the 2021 U.S. Open - on hardcourts, with his Mallorca Open victory on grass the same year the only exception.

The 27-year-old, who previously made no secret of his dislike for clay, was a player transformed at the Italian Open and ended the tournament with a 7-5 7-5 win over rising Dane Holger Rune.

Asked where his victory ranked among his many successes, Medvedev told reporters: "In a way, number one, just because it's the first one on clay and it's unbelievable."

"I'd never have thought I'd be able to make this. I have to be honest, a Grand Slam is always bigger. The U.S. Open is always number one there."

"This one is special because I didn't think it was going to happen. I still don't believe - not that I won it, but I played so well this week."

Anthony Confirms Retirement

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Ten-time NBA All-Star Carmelo Anthony confirmed his retirement from basketball, formally bringing the curtain down on his two-decade professional career.

Anthony, 38, whose last game in the NBA was for the Los Angeles Lakers in April 2022, announced his decision in a video montage of his career posted to his Instagram account.

"I remember the days when I had nothing, just a ball on the court and a dream with something more," Anthony said in the video.

"But basketball was my outlet. My purpose was strong. My communities, the cities I represented with pride and the fans that supported me along the way."

"I am forever grateful for those people and places because they made me, Carmelo Anthony."

"But now the time has come for me to say goodbye: to the court where I made my name, to the game that gave me purpose and pride."

Anthony, chosen with the third overall pick in the 2003 draft, departs the sport as one of the most prolific scorers in basketball history.

Over the course of 20 seasons in the NBA, he amassed 28,289 points at an average of 22.5 points per game, with 7,808 rebounds and 3,422 assists.

He launched his career with the Denver Nuggets before moving to the New York Knicks in 2010, where he spent seven years before stints with the Houston Rockets, Portland Trail Blazers and Lakers.

At international level he won three straight gold medals as a member of the US Olympic team in 2008, 2012 and 2016 and also a bronze at the 2004 Athens Games.

Risk of F1 Race Ban Recedes

LONDON (Dispatches) - Alpine's Pierre Gasly moved away from the risk of a Formula One race ban on Monday after dropping two of the 10 penalty points accrued for a series of minor offences over the past year.

Twelve points in a 12-month period triggers an automatic suspension.

Cavendish to Retire at End of Season



PARIS (Dispatches) - Mark Cavendish said he will retire at the end of the season, bringing the curtain down on the career of one of cycling's all-time great sprinters.

The British rider, whose 34 Tour de France stage wins are joint most with Belgian legend Eddy Merckx, will have one final chance to claim the record outright in July when he takes part in the race one last time.

The 38-year-old, known as the "Manx Missile", made the announcement alongside his wife and children at a press conference in Coccaglio during Monday's rest day at the Giro d'Italia.

"I've absolutely loved racing every kilometre of this race so far, so I feel it's the perfect time to say it's my final Giro d'Italia and 2023 will be my final season as a professional cyclist," Cavendish said.

"Cycling's been my life for over 25 years. I've lived an absolute dream."

"The bike has given me the opportunity to see the world and meet incredible people, a lot of whom I'm proud to now call friends. I love the sport more than you can even imagine and I can't see myself going too far from it, that's for sure."

Over a storied career Cavendish's deep racing knowledge, a fearless, aggressive approach and the ability to marshal teammates and outspeed rivals has earned him a staggering 161 wins with 53 of those coming at Grand Tours.

"This race (the Giro) has an important place in my heart as a cyclist and a person," he said. "The Giro d'Italia gave me my first Grand Tour wins in 2008. Italy was my home for many years during my career. And the people here welcomed me, as one of their own."

One of cycling's most popular riders, Cavendish also endured private trauma away from the sport. In a horrific incident last year, he and his wife were held at knifepoint by robbers in a late-night attack.

Born in Douglas, on the Isle of Man, the former junior bank clerk joined a nascent British Cycling Academy in 2003.

By 2008 he won a first Tour de France stage with German team T-Mobile, racking up 30 in a period of dominance until 2016, when he was stuck down by the draining condition of Epstein-Barr virus.

Tour de France director Christian Prudhomme told AFP ahead of the 2018 Tour that Cavendish had "nothing to prove".

"Many people will mention Mario Cipollini but for me Mark Cavendish is the Tour de France's all-time great sprinter," the race director said.

Only Champions League Glory Will Make Us Complete

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - A banner inside Manchester City's Etihad Stadium was adorned with a photo of their manager with the words "Pep Guardiola, he changed football" printed across it.

The Spaniard was not about to start blowing his own trumpet during the celebrations after his side lifted the Premier League title for the fifth time in six seasons.

His record of 11 league titles in 15 seasons as manager of Barcelona, Bayern Munich and now City, speaks for itself.

Five of those have come at City and in the next three weeks he could take them to another level by winning the FA Cup and then the cherished Champions League to complete the treble.

While insisting that failing to conquer Europe's summit with City by beating Inter Milan should not diminish what he has achieved at the club, he knows his City career might ultimately be judged on whether he wins the Champions League with them.

"Fifth Premier League title in six years, I could not imagine winning five in six," Guardiola told reporters.

"I have the feeling we've done something exceptional but to be considered one of the greatest we have to win the Champions League, otherwise it's not complete."

"We won a lot but can't deny that it can be unfair to have to win the Champion League to give value to what you've done."



Brazil Condemns Racist Attacks on Brazilian Player in Spain

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazil condemned the "racist attacks" Brazilian football star Vinicius Jr has repeatedly suffered in Spain and called on the Spanish government and sports authorities to punish those involved, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The ministry called in Spain's ambassador today to explain the situation following the latest incident on Sunday when racist insults were allegedly hurled at the Black top-scoring forward for Real Madrid.

"Taking into account the seriousness of the facts and the occurrence of yet another inadmissible episode, the Brazilian government deeply regrets that, until now, effective measures have not been taken to prevent and avoid the repetition of these acts of racism," the statement said.

The foreign ministry confirmed that Ambassador Mar Fernandez Palacios was asked to inform on the incident that prompted President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to call on FIFA and LaLiga to act to stop racism taking root in football stadiums.

Videos posted on social media and verified by Reuters showed hundreds of Valencia fans singing "Vinicius is a monkey" as the Real Madrid bus arrived at the stadium in Valencia before yesterday's match.

The game was stopped for 10 minutes after the 22-year-old forward, Real Madrid's second top scorer in all competitions this season on 23, pointed out fans who were allegedly hurling racist comments at him. Vinicius Jr was sent off for his reaction during the incident.

