

**IRAN NEWS Extends Its Condolences Over the Demise Anniversary of The Late Imam Khomeini (R), The Founder of the Islamic Revolution, As Well as Anniversary of Khordad 15. The Next Issue Will Hit the News-Stands on Tuesday**

# IRAN NEWS

**President Ebrahim Raisi on Wednesday in the Meeting of Iranian Ambassadors and Heads of Missions Abroad Called for Following up on The Legal and Consular Problems of Iranian Expatriates**

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**2 DOMESTIC**

**Iran Ready to Export Defense Equipment To Friendly States**



> SEE PAGE 2

**3 DOMESTIC**

**Uzbek Trade Delegation Is to Visit Tehran Mid-June**



> SEE PAGE 3

**4 INTERNATIONAL**

**Ukraine War Comes To Moscow As Drones Strike Both Capitals**



> SEE PAGE 4

**8 SPORTS**

**Heat Defeat Celtics To Reach NBA Finals**



> SEE PAGE 8

## Iran-Made Transport Plane Makes Maiden Flight

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's home-made transport plane Simorgh has made its maiden flight one year after it was unveiled by authorities in the country.

The test flight was carried out successfully in an airbase in the central Iranian city of Isfahan on Tuesday in a ceremony attended by the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri.

The aircraft has been designed and manufactured by Iran Aviation Industries Organization, which is a subsidiary of the Iranian defense ministry. Authorities said the aircraft has been developed to boost Iran's defensive superiority.

A report published by the official IRNA news agency described the transport plane as agile, light and quick with a high cargo carriage capacity and features like compatibility with weather conditions of Iran that make it a perfect choice for critical services like medical flights.

It said the aircraft will boost the capacity of Iranian ground and navy forces to transport troops or equipment between their bases across the country.

"The design and manufacturing of this aircraft ... accelerates Iran's entrance into the (global) club of manufacturers of heavy and super modern aircraft," said defense minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani after the plane made its maiden flight.

The aircraft has been named after Simorgh which is a mythical bird in Persian mythology and literature.

## Iran Exports to ECO Member States Stand at \$13b in 2022

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran exported \$13 billion worth of products to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member states in 2022, the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said.

Speaking in a meeting with ECO Secretary General Khosro Nazeri, Mohammad Rezvanifar also put the value of products imported to Iran from ECO member states at \$7.5 billion.

He noted that Iran's value of trade with ECO member states in 2022 hit \$20.5 billion.

Turning to the high capacities of ECO member states in various fields, the IRICA chief pointed out that Iran and ECO member states enjoy high capacities to increase their bilateral trade.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration is ready to make necessary cooperation with ECO member states to materialize the objectives in line with boosting bilateral trade and economic activities, he underlined.

See Page 7

Sokhan Gostar Institute

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## Tehran, Ashgabat Boost Cooperation By Signing Agreements



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi has said that in the wake of Iran's priority given to the expansion of relations with neighbors the level of cooperation between Tehran and Tashkent has considerably been developed.

President Raisi made the remarks in joint meeting of high-ranking delegations from Iran and Turkmenistan in Tehran on Tuesday.

Referring to the problem of water shortage as a common dilemma faced by regional countries, the Iranian president said that if the regional countries try to have constructive cooperation and interaction in this field as Iran and Turkmenistan did by constructing the friendship dam they will overcome their problem.

Raisi said that Iran's regional diplomacy is restoring and reinforcing peace, stability and security.

"We firmly believe that the major part of the region's problems, including lack of formation of serious cooperation in different issues is due to the presence of foreigners in the region," the Iranian president said.

He pointed out that the presence of aliens in the region not only does not result in security and tranquility, it also disrupts security and peace.

The former Turkmen president, for his part, said that Turkmenistan has always supported the Islamic Republic of Iran's policies in the field of restoring peace and stability to the region.

He said that the two countries will continue their cooperation on construction of friendship dam as a model for regional cooperation.

Later after the meeting, Iran and Turkmenistan signed five two cooperation agreements and three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to expand their economic and energy cooperation.

Senior officials from Iran and Turkmenistan put their signatures to the documents which outline cooperation between the two countries on areas like international corridors and cargo transit, energy, agrifood exports, electricity, education and investment, among other things.

Turkmenistan and Iran are two major natural gas producers in the world and have been trading gas for swap delivery purposes for years.

Raisi said after meeting Berdimuhamedow on Tuesday that Iran and Turkmenistan are closer than neighbors because of their historical roots and should seek to expand their bilateral relations.

He said the two countries had agreed to increase the hours and capacity of customs services at their borders to help boost cargo transit from Iran to countries in Central Asia and vice versa.

The Iranian president said Iran will increase its supply of technical and engineering services and agricultural products to Turkmenistan based on MoUs signed on Tuesday.

Meanwhile emphasizing the activation of Ashgabat agreement, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development announced the drafting of a comprehensive transportation document between Iran and Turkmenistan.

Mehrdad Bazrpash made the comments in the meeting with the head of the Transport and Communications Agency of Turkmenistan which is linked with the Cabinet of Ministers on Tuesday.

Bazrpash emphasized strengthening the relations between the two countries by pointing out that the two countries have a lot in common in transportation matters.

See Page 7

## Iran Urges West to Rectify Policy Towards Syria

NEW YORK (IRNA)- Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Zahra Ershadi has urged the Western states to rectify their policy towards Syria.

"We hope that Western countries will soon reassess and rectify their policy towards Syria. By doing so, they can contribute to the restoration of stability, peace, and prosperity in the region," Ershadi said addressing the United Nations Security Council on "The situation in the Middle East: (Syria)".

In her address, she said that despite the UN's diligent efforts, the humanitarian situation in Syria continues to present challenges.

She went on to say that the current level of funding allocated for the Syrian humanitarian response falls far below what is needed. This severe shortage of funding severely hinders the UN's ability to provide adequate assistance to those in need.

She continued: Furthermore, the persistent imposition of unilateral sanctions remains a significant impediment to the improvement of Syria's humanitarian and economic situation.

These unlawful measures have further exacerbated the challenges faced by the Syrian people and severely hampered the capacity of the Syrian government to deliver critical services to those in need, and even delaying the return of refugees and internally displaced people.

See Page 7

## IAEA Has No More Excuse

For years, the UN nuclear watchdog, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has been a tool to put pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran or any other country in favor of the world hegemonies and each time this watchdog by resorting to some baseless claims has used those claims as a lever against the Islamic Republic to get some concessions for the West but each time Tehran by taking prudent decisions has thwarted those charges.

On Tuesday a report reiterated that the differences between Tehran and the IAEA on some issues have been resolved and the IAEA has no more excuse to take punitive actions against Tehran. According to the report by Mehr News Agency, Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog have resolved issues arising from false, unproven allegations against Tehran's peaceful nuclear program.

During the recent technical negotiations between the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the case of one of the alleged "undetected" sites raised by the agency (known as Abadeh) has been closed.

This brings the number of cases concerning the alleged "undetected" sites claimed by the IAEA to two, it added. The report also said the IAEA's claims about uranium particles with 83.7 purity found at the undeclared nuclear sites in Iran have been settled.

Iran and the IAEA are in a dispute triggered by the agency's Israeli-influenced accusations, which were leveled against Tehran's peaceful nuclear activities. The IAEA insisted on investigating what it claims to be "uranium traces" found at "undeclared nuclear sites" in Iran.

The issue has emerged as a key sticking point in talks aimed at salvaging the 2015 nuclear deal, which remains stalled since last August. Iran has dismissed the probe as "politically motivated."

Last September, the head of the AEOI, Mohammad Eslami, strongly rejected all accusations, including the UN nuclear watchdog's allegations, about the existence of undeclared nuclear activities or material in Iran.

"There are no undeclared nuclear activities or material in Iran. All accusations are merely based on fake and incorrect information provided by the usurping regime of Israel," he said.

In a meeting with the IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi in Tehran early in March, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said Tehran expects the IAEA to adopt a "professional and fair" approach to its nuclear energy program and refrain from being affected by certain powers which are pursuing their own specific goals.

See Page 7

## Japan Supports Iran in Emission Reduction Efforts

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Japan is assisting Iranian efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by sharing its expertise to help the country in drawing up a reduction goal.

Iran is one of the few nations that have yet to establish a reduction target under the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. About 70 people, including Iranian officials in charge of climate change policy, attended a two-day seminar this week in the capital, Tehran. It was organized in cooperation with the Japanese government.

The participants studied the various ways to cut emissions. One is by making power generation and transmission more efficient, another is by using hydrogen and ammonia that do not emit carbon dioxide when they are burned. The use of gas created during the process of refining petroleum is also a way to reduce emissions.

An official of Iran's Department of Environment said it is beneficial to learn from a country like Japan. The official expressed hopes the seminar will help Iran set the reduction goal. Watanabe Masashi from Japan's Agency for Natural Resources and Energy served as an instructor at the seminar. He said his agency intends to help Iran to submit its reduction plan by sharing Japan's experiences.

## Zionist Regime's Regional Moves Not Hidden From Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesman has said that the fake Zionist regime cannot save its shaky foundation through its futile attempt to expand its presence in the region as the Islamic Republic carefully watches the regime's moves.

Conveying the message that the Zionist regime is as shaky as a spider web, Nasser Kanaani said in a Twitter post on Wednesday that the regime's struggle to expand its regional presence does not help its weak foundations. The Zionist regime is hated by world nations and will not have a future, Kanaani wrote.

The tweet seems a response to the visit of the president of the Zionist regime to Azerbaijan.

## Iran Ready to Export Defense Equipment To Friendly States

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

**TEHRAN - Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri says the Islamic Republic stands ready to export in wholesale its defense equipment to friendly countries and share its military expertise with them.**

Addressing a gathering of Iranian Foreign Ministry officials and ambassadors in Tehran, Baqeri stressed that the foreign affairs departments can play "a major and important role" in presenting Iran's defense power.

"Introducing the Islamic Republic's defense and military capabilities and sharing them [with friendly countries] can expand the country's defense relations and strengthen deterrence," he said.

"The Iranian Armed Forces are fully prepared to upgrade the level of ties in various fields, including the wholesale export of defense and military equipment as well as training, exercises, and the practical transfer of experience."

On Sunday, Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said Iran "has no restriction" on exporting military equipment to other countries, including Venezuela. Iranian military experts and engineers have in recent years made remarkable breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient.



Iranian officials have made clear that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never open for negotiations.

Elsewhere in his remarks, General Baqeri underlined the importance of boosting relations with the regional and neighboring countries, an accurate policy pursued by the government of President Ebrahim Raisi.

The Iranian Armed Forces, he added, are ready to defend the country against any threats using indigenous strategies and policies.

The top general further said that the world order is changing and moving in the direction of weakening the opponents of the Islamic Revolution, noting that the fact is acknowledged by Westerners and Europeans.

"The future world is a different world. The new world order geometry is altering with the emergence of several new powers, particularly in Asia and in different fields," he asserted.

## Iran Exports to Turkey Hit \$99m in 4 Months



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Statistics show that Turkey has imported commodities worth \$821 million from Iran during the first four months of 2023.

According to the Turkish statistical institute, the value of Turkey's trade exchange with Iran has been over \$1.7 billion during the mentioned period.

Meanwhile, the numbers indicate that trade exchange between the two neighboring states has had a 20-percent decrease in the period.

Analysts have explained the fall in the gas price as the main reason behind the decrease in the Iran-Turkey trade exchange.

Based on the reports released by the Turkish institutes, Iran's exports to Turkey have reduced by 4% from January to the end of April in 2023.

## Speaker Urges Expanding Economic Ties With Turkmenistan

BOJNURD (Dispatches) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf called for expanding trade ties between Iran and Turkmenistan.

On his one-day visit to Bojnurd, the capital city of North Khorasan, Qalibaf said on Wednesday that this province has a long border of nearly 300 kilometers with the neighboring and friendly country of Turkmenistan and this point should be used to develop economic ties with the country.

He referred to his yesterday's visit with the visiting Chairman of the People's Council of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in Tehran, who emphasized the development of commercial and economic ties between North Khorasan and Turkmenistan.

Chairman of the People's Council of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov made a visit to Iran on Tuesday.

## Iran-Saudi Arabia Hajj Cooperation Going Well

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance says the cooperation of Iran and Saudi Arabia over Hajj rituals is going well.

On the sidelines of the cabinet session, Mohammad-Mahdi Esmaili told reporters that the process of sending the Iranian pilgrims to Saudi Arabia is going well and that 14,000 people have so far been sent to Saudi Arabia.

Esmaili also reported the pilgrims' satisfaction with the process and added that this year 85,000 pilgrims are scheduled to be sent to Mecca and Medina.

The first group of pilgrims left the country for Saudi Arabia Wednesday, May 24.

## Education Minister Stresses Preservation of Islamic-Iranian Identity

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Education stressed the preservation of the students' Iranian-Islamic identity as a plan on top of the ministry's agenda.

On the sideline of Iran's weekly cabinet meeting, Reza-Morad Sahraee referred to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei's statement, saying that it is not possible to pass through the difficult and progressive stages without the help of education.

"Teachers as architects of the future of Iran are the main capital of the country," he pointed out.

Sahraee explained the plans of the Education Ministry as well. He stressed the importance of spiritual nurture and soul refinement of the students as an essential part of the Ministry of Education's mission and added 10,000 schools are ready to serve students for the summer training plan.

Making education a skill-based process and turning the schools into skill-learning centers where every student would possess their own skill was among the plans of the minister who put special emphasis on learning instead of memorization.

## U.S. Not a Role Model For Human Rights

TEHRAN (IP) - Vice-President for Human Rights issues Kazem Gharib Abadi says the confession of supporting terrorism and creating terrorist groups is documented and available according to the statements of the American authorities.

Kazem Gharib Abadi noted that the rights of women and people of color are being violated in the U.S. The U.S. has the largest number of prisoners in the world with about 2 million prisoners, and 4000 prisoners die every year due to torture and poor health conditions.

He emphasized that the right to life of many American citizens is being violated, and the recent mass shootings in U.S. schools exemplify it.

The death of 500 Iraqi children due to the U.S. sanctions proves the lack of the right to life and the violation of human rights.

Gharib Abadi condemned the U.S. support of Israel committing crimes in Palestine.

Referring to the terrorist groups being supported by the U.S., Gharib Abadi stated that terrorist groups consider themselves to be Iranian ethnic groups, which is not true. Gharib Abadi put an emphasis on the necessity of investigating the violation of human rights in various fields inside and outside the U.S.

He emphasized that highlighting U.S. crimes, especially in the field of sanctions and terrorism, is a duty for the Islamic Republic of Iran because Iran has always been a victim of terrorism with 17-25 thousand victims.

He pointed out: A joint meeting with countries that have been victims of terrorism can have a common message.

## Iran Highlights Unwelcoming Membership of Zionist Regime in CICA

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has highlighted the unwelcoming membership and unconstructive role of the Zionist regime in the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

Amirabdollahian made the remarks in a meeting with the visiting CICA Secretary General Kairat Sarybay in Tehran on Tuesday.

He hailed the constructive steps taken by Kazakhstan during its rotating presidency of the Conference.

The top diplomat stated that Iran continues to support the possible initiatives that help shake up the place and efficiency of CICA.

The official also expressed Iran's support for elevating the position of CICA to make it an international organization.

The significance of the transition era in the regional



and International political arena should be taken into account in setting out the upcoming work schedule of the Conference, he underscored.

Kairat Sarybay, for his part, thanked the active participation and constructive cooperation of Iran in advancing CICA's objectives.

Meanwhile, he elaborated on the ongoing and upcoming programs of the bloc in his meeting with Amirabdollahian.

CICA is a multi-national forum for enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security, and stability in Asia.

Presently, CICA has 28 member states accounting for nearly 90 percent of the territory and population of Asia. Nine countries and five multi-national organizations, including the United Nations, have observer status in the bloc.

## Iran, UAE to Expand Ties in Both Gov't, Private Sectors

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has said that Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will further expand their bilateral relations by their government and private sectors.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks in a meeting with Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar, the state minister of the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC) in Tehran on Tuesday.

He added deemed the expansion of bilateral cooperation to be in the interest of the two countries and the region. Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar, for his part, emphasized the resolve of the UAE to develop relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Minister Highlights Peace, Security on Iran-Afghanistan Border

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Referring to the recent events that happened in Iran-Afghanistan border areas, the Iranian minister of interior said peace and security have been restored to the areas.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Ahmad Vahidi pointed to the border situation between Iran and Afghanistan and said it is calm.

He pointed to a recent blunder made by Afghan border guards who embarked on shooting toward Iranian border guards and emphasized that the common borders are at complete peace now.

Thanks to the judicious measures taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the timely intervention of Taliban officials, the problem was settled, he said, adding that there are not any problems at the border now.

The minister noted that the Afghans had begun shooting at the common border, and the Iranian forces naturally responded to the shots in the proper manner.

"We currently have direct interaction with Afghan rulers and all misunderstandings and problems should be settled through dialogue and negotiation," the interior minister concluded.

The Iranian Border Police Command said an Iranian border guard has been martyred and two others wounded during the skirmish with the Taliban that broke out at a border region on Saturday.

Iran said the skirmish broke out at a border region between the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan and the Nimruz province of Afghanistan in areas around Sasouli, Hatam and Makaki villages.

## Iran, Saudi to Develop Economic and Commercial Relations

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian foreign minister has said that the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is not merely "a tactical agreement," adding that both countries have agreed to develop bilateral economic and commercial relations.

Hossein Amirabdollahian made the remarks in an interview with the French daily newspaper Le Figaro, which was published, regarding the resumption of relations between the two countries.

"In the foreign policy of the current [Iranian] government, relations with our neighbors are a priority," he said, adding that this is why the Islamic Republic held security negotiations for several months in Baghdad and Oman.

The Iranian foreign minister went on to say that finally during the visit of the Chinese president to Saudi Arabia, a strong idea was put on the table.

The result was Chinese mediation which made it possible to take the decisive step between Tehran and Riyadh, he added.

"We do not consider this rapprochement a tactical agreement," he stressed.

In a joint statement after signing the agreement, Tehran and Riyadh highlighted the need to respect each other's national sovereignty and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of one another.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amirabdollahian noted that the Saudi government has made investment in Iran a priority. "I talked about economic issues during my recent meeting with my Saudi counterpart," the top diplomat said, adding, "We both agreed to develop our economic and commercial relations in the months and years to come." He added that the Saudi government has now put the realization of economic projects a priority.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:02
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:35
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:05
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:49

51. Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who were given a portion of the Book? they believe in sorcery and Evil, and say to the Unbelievers that they are better guided in the (right) way Than the believers!

52. They are (men) whom Allah hath cursed:

And those whom Allah Hath cursed, thou wilt find, have no one to help.

Surah 4. Women (51 - 52)

## Uzbek Trade Delegation Is to Visit Tehran Mid-June

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Director-General of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA)'s International Department Shahram Khasipour says that resolving the issues related to transportation and banking transactions is the prerequisite for the expansion of trade ties between the two countries.**

Khasipour made the remarks in a meeting with his Uzbek counterparts on the sidelines of the Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tashkent.

Referring to the two countries' annual \$450m trade, the official said: "Although the volume of trade between Iran and Uzbekistan has grown compared to last year, considering the potential capacities of the two sides, this figure is not satisfactory."

Emphasizing the need for joint investment between the private sectors of the two countries in the fields of textile, mining, and food industries, he added: "It is necessary for government officials to provide the necessary support to investors and economic operators."

He also emphasized increasing cooperation between the chambers of commerce of both countries especially in the field of exchange of trade delegations, exchange of economic and trade data and information, and also introducing investment opportunities and called them ways for enhancing level of economic cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan.

Then Deputy Head of Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for his part,



announced readiness of the chamber for broadening cooperation with its Iranian counterpart and said that mid-June a trade delegation from Uzbekistan is to visit Iran and the joint commercial committee of Iran and Uzbekistan is going to be established soon.

Last week, Iran and Uzbekistan stressed the need for expanding economic ties by signing a preferential trade agreement (PTA) and removing the obstacles in the way of trade relations.

As reported, in a meeting between the Acting Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mehdi Zeyghami and Uzbekistan Ambassador to Tehran Abdullaev Bakhodir Barotovich, the two sides discussed various issues including the preparations for holding the two countries' joint economic committee meeting in Tashkent and the recent visit of Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Tehran.

Speaking at the meeting, Barotovich said Iran is the closest access route to the open sea for this country and demanded the removal of obstacles to the transit of goods through Iran.

He expressed hope that a roadmap for economic cooperation between the two countries with a target of one billion dollars of annual trade will be signed during the upcoming visit of the Uzbek president to Tehran and said: "With the removal of transit obstacles, trade exchanges between Iran and Uzbekistan will reach four billion dollars."

The ambassador also announced his country's interest in holding business conferences and special events to connect the businessmen of the two countries.

## IDRO Announces Support to Development and Renovation Project of Lule Gostar Production Lines



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and Head of Board of Directors of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) Mr. Ali Nabavi during his visit to the production lines of Lule Gostar of Esfarayen Industrial Complex and announced IDRO's support to the development and renovation project of production lines in this complex.**

In meeting with the managers of Esfarayen Industrial Complex, Mr. Nabavi announced efforts of IDRO for using maximum capability of capacities of companies and industrial units and said that feasibility of the new projects and return of the capital is of the important points in the issue of developmental projects which should be taken into consideration.

Nabavi also said that the most important concern of producers is the working capital and in this regard it is necessary to take serious actions.

In this meeting, senior officials of Lule Gostar of Esfarayen briefed Mr. Nabavi of the most important actions of this complex, the amount of production, renovation of production lines, installation of new production lines, warehouse stock, 30% growth of production in recent three years, purchase of raw materials and costs of renovating equipment in order to survive in the competition market.

Planning and Warehouse Manager of Lule Gostar of Esfarayen Complex Mr. Ahmad Feizi, for his part, said that the required cost for renovation and reconstruction of all production lines of the complex is around 10m euros.

Lule Gostar is one of the companies under IDRO's supervision and it is the only producer of seamless steel tube.

## Official Explains Programs of Imam Khomeini's 34th Demise Anniversary

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - The Incumbent Secretary of the Central Committee of Imam Khomeini's Commemoration held a presser on the threshold of the 34th demise anniversary of Imam Khomeini, the Late Founder of the Islamic Republic.**

Referring to "Khomeini is the lasting truth", as the slogan of this year, Mohammad Mehdi Arab Ansari said: "The purpose of holding conferences, ceremonies, and meetings at different levels with the cooperation of institutions and mosques is to clarify the thought of Imam Khomeini.

Arab Ansari stated anniversary of Imam Khomeini's demise ceremony will be held with the presence of people within the country and outside it, in Iraq's Najaf.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution and President will deliver speeches in Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum, with the attendance of people from across the country. Holding photo expos with the theme of Imam Khomeini's will, poem reciting session, and story-telling circles with the theme of Imam's life lessons, and the explanation of Imam Khomeini's political thoughts are among the programs to be held.

He went on to say that since for three months, the committee has started planning for holding various programs, adding that visiting the Late Imam's shrine by pilgrims is one of the programs.

He noted that on June 3 and on the eve of the demise anniversary of the Late Imam, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi will deliver speech at Iman Khomeini's Mausoleum.

Several foreign guests and also intellectuals are to attend the ceremonies marking the demise of the founder of the Islamic Revolution.

## Iran to Start Importing Turkmen Gas in June

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Oil minister on Tuesday said a gas contract will be signed with Turkmenistan soon and imports will begin in June.**

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of his meeting with Batyr Amanov, the chairman of the Türkmengaz State Concern, Javad Owji said that the 13th administration started swapping 1.5 to 2 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas per year when it took office on the basis of a contract with the Republic of Azerbaijan, adding that the volume of gas swap doubled last year following the two sides' agreement.

Turkmenistan is the fourth-largest holder of gas reserves in the world and Iran has the capacity of importing 40 to 50 mcm/d, said Owji, adding, "We intend to boost our gas trade (swap, transit, and transactions) in the region, which be beneficial for both countries."

The 13th administration paid a \$1.65 billion debt Iran owed to Turkmenistan for importing gas in the previous government, the minister mentioned, calling it an important

issue settled in the energy sector.

Owji said the country had 87 million barrels of gas condensates in storage offshore before the incumbent government took over.

Given the incumbent administration's exports to new markets, energy diplomacy promotion, and diversification of domestic consumption, the offshore gas condensate storage has been reduced to zero, he continued.

Iran is currently producing 760,000 barrels of gas condensates a day, said the oil minister.

In response to a question posed by SHANA about the upcoming meeting of the Organization of the Gas Exporting Countries (OPEC), Owji said OPEC and OPEC+ have had constructive cooperation in recent months, helping balance oil prices in international markets by cutting their supplies.

Iran supports the decisions made by OPEC and OPEC+, he concluded.



## Iran, Oman Set to Strengthen Cooperation in Trade, Economic Fields

**TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Golden opportunities have been created for Iran and Oman to expand their cooperation in the trade and economic fields, the chairman of the Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce said.**

Free- and special economic zones are considered as good opportunities for the development of cooperation between the two countries, Jamal Razeghi emphasized.

Turning to the investment capacities and economic interactions of country with the Sultanate of Oman, he said, "Given the trade and economic infrastructures, the way has been paved for the two countries to broaden their activities in the trade and economic fields."

He went on to say that the volume of exports and bilateral trade exchanges between the two countries registered a 52 percent growth last year as compared to a year earlier.

Allowing a hundred-percent ownership of foreign investors of companies in each of two free- and special economic zones, no need for the least initial capital at Omani free zones, low price of land, the existence of

the least preferential tariffs and customs duties in these regions have caused foreign investors to welcome participating in these areas, he stated.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Razeghi referred to the legal advantages and exemptions existing in free zones and added that foreign investors and producers can embark on packaging their products in Oman using raw materials with relatively cheap and reasonable prices.

Given the tough and cruel sanctions imposed against Iran, setting up joint free- and special economic zones can help thwart the adverse effects of sanctions, he added.

## Technological Tourism Industry, Good Opportunity for Economic Benefit

**TEHRAN (IP) - According to the Iran's Vice President for Science and Technology, the technological tourism industry is of interest and it is a good opportunity for the economic benefit of companies.**

Ruhollah Dehghani Firouzabadi, Vice President for Science and Technology at the opening ceremony of "Hezareh" Creative House in Abbas Abad district, referring to human needs, said: "Today, creative content that responds to spiritual needs is expanding rapidly, and technology is at its service."

He added: "The century is the century of economic development of creative companies, how much attention and time we can get from people is comparative.

Technology has come to the aid of tourism and technology improves its content."

Creative houses refer to shared workspaces (Co-Working Spaces) while Independent people, self-employed and startups can do their activities by reserving a desk or room in this shared office.

"Hezareh" creative house with 2000 square meters of floor space and 25 office rooms can accommodate 120 people.

The opening ceremony of this collection was held in the presence of Ruhollah Dehghani Firouzabadi, Vice President for Science, Technology, Seyed Mohammad Hossein Hejazi, CEO of Abbasabad Cultural and Tourism Region, a number of members of Tehran City Council.

## China Declines U.S. Request For Meeting of Defense Chiefs

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has declined a request from the United States for a meeting between their defense chiefs at an annual security forum in Singapore this weekend, media reported, a new sign of strain between the powers.

"Overnight, the PRC informed the U.S. that they have declined our early May invitation for Secretary (Lloyd) Austin to meet with PRC Minister of National Defense Li Shangfu in Singapore," the Pentagon said in a statement to the Wall Street Journal, referring to China by the initials of its official name, the People's Republic of China.

Li has been under U.S. sanctions since 2018 over the purchase of combat aircraft and equipment from Russia's main arms exporter, Rosoboronexport.



## Senegalese Opposition Leader Calls for Mass Protests

DAKAR (Dispatches) - Senegalese opposition leader Ousmane Sonko called for mass protests as the country braced for the outcome of his trial on rape charges.

Escalating a tug-of-war with President Macky Sall's government, Sonko said he was being "illegally held" by security forces. "I urge all Senegalese people to come out onto the streets," he said on social media.

He added: "Everyone should rise up as one, because power should remain with the people."

Sonko, 48-year-old leader of the PASTEF-Patriots party, is a fiery critic of head of state Macky Sall and wields a big following among young people.



## Ukraine War Comes to Moscow As Drones Strike Both Capitals



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Ukrainian drones struck wealthy districts of Moscow, Russia said in what one politician called the most dangerous attack since World War Two, while Kyiv was also hit from the air for the third time in 24 hours.

Since Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into its neighbour in February 2022, the war has largely been fought inside Ukraine. Aerial strikes on targets far from the front lines have intensified recently amid a messy stalemate on the ground with Russian forces entrenched in Ukraine's east and south.

Russia's defense ministry said eight drones sent by Kyiv and targeting civilians were shot down or diverted with electronic jammers, though Baza, a Telegram channel with links to the security services, said more than 25 were involved.

Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential aide, denied Kyiv was directly involved but said "we are pleased to watch events" and forecast more such strikes.

Two people were injured while some apartment blocks were briefly evacuated, according to Moscow's mayor. Residents said they heard loud bangs followed by the smell of petrol. Some filmed a drone being shot down and a plume of smoke.

Tuesday's early-morning drone volley targeted some of Moscow's most prestigious districts including where Putin and the elite have residences. He was later in the Kremlin and received a briefing on the attack, a spokesman said.

Afterward, Putin said Ukraine's biggest ever drone strike on Moscow was an attempt to frighten and provoke Russia, and that air defenses around the Russian capital would be strengthened.

Ukraine, Putin said, had chosen the path of trying "to intimidate Russia, Russian citizens and attacks on residential buildings".

Civilian targets in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities have since the earliest days of the war been struck repeatedly by Russian drones and missiles. But Tuesday marked only the second time the Russian capital had come under direct fire, after an apparent drone strike on the Kremlin earlier this month that Moscow also blamed on Kyiv and said was meant to kill Putin.

The White House said it was still gathering information on the reports of drones striking in Moscow, while reiterating that Washington did not support attacks inside Russia.

Washington is "focused on providing Ukraine with the equipment and training they need to retake their own sovereign territory", a spokesperson said in a statement.

Russian lawmaker Maxim Ivanov called it the most serious assault on Moscow since Nazi Germany's invasion in World War Two, saying no Russian could now avoid "the new reality".

"The sabotage and terrorist attacks of Ukraine will only increase," said another Russian lawmaker, Alexander Khinshtein, who called for a radical strengthening of defenses. "Do not underestimate the enemy!"

Russian state television gave the attacks calm coverage, and many Muscovites carried on with their lives with the fatalism for which they are famous. Most shrugged their shoulders and many voiced sadness that the conflict seemed to be spreading.

Olga, who said she lived near to the site of one of the drone collisions on Profsoyuznaya Street, called the strikes "logical, to be expected ... what else were we waiting for?"

The war has killed tens of thousands of people in Ukraine, uprooted millions, reduced cities to ruins and caused havoc in the global economy.

## North Korea to Launch First Military Spy Satellite in June

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea will launch its first military reconnaissance satellite in June for monitoring U.S. activities, state media KCNA reported, drawing criticism over its potential use of banned missile technology.

Ri Pyong Chol, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission of the North's ruling Workers' Party, denounced ongoing joint military exercises by the U.S. and South Korea as openly showing "reckless ambition for aggression."

U.S. and South Korean forces have carried out various training exercises in recent months, including the biggest-ever live-fire exercises last week, after many drills were scaled back amid COVID-19 restrictions and diplomatic efforts with North Korea.

Ri said the drills required Pyongyang to have the "means capable of gathering information about the military acts of the enemy in real time."

"We will comprehensively consider the present and future threats and put into more thoroughgoing practice the activities



## U.S. Urged Not to Use Bomb-Grade Uranium in Nuclear Power Experiment

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Former U.S. State Department and nuclear regulatory officials urged the U.S. Energy Department to reconsider a plan to use bomb-grade uranium in a nuclear power experiment, saying that its use could encourage such tests in other countries.

The Energy Department and two companies aim to share costs on the Molten Chloride Reactor Experiment (MCRE) at the Idaho National Laboratory and use more than 1,322 pounds (600 kg) fuel containing 93% enriched uranium. Bill Gates-backed company TerraPower LLC, the utility Southern Co and the department hope the six-month experiment will lead to breakthroughs in reactors that could help reduce pollution linked to climate change. But a group of former Nuclear Regulatory Commission members, including former Chairman Allison Macfarlane, and U.S. assistant secretaries of state responsible for nonproliferation, said MCRE could give other countries an excuse to enrich uranium to bomb-grade level in pursuit of new reactors.

"The damage to national security could exceed any potential benefit from this highly speculative energy technology," the experts said in a letter to Energy Department officials. They fear an increase in such experiments boosts risks that militants looking to create a nuclear weapon could get hold of the uranium.

"It is shocking that the Energy Department, without even notifying the public, would undermine a decades-old, bipartisan U.S. policy to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons," said Alan Kuperman, a professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, who organized the letter.

MCRE's design could be converted to run on low-enriched uranium incurring a delay and boosting some costs, but other costs could be saved on security, the letter said.

The Energy Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A TerraPower spokesperson said MCRE would be conducted at a secure facility already handling bomb-grade uranium. TerraPower said a reactor being

developed at its lab in Washington state called the Molten Chloride Fast Reactor, would use fuel far less pure of up to 20% enriched uranium, far less of a proliferation risk.

for strengthening all-inclusive and practical war deterrents," Ri said in the statement carried by the KCNA news agency.

Nuclear-armed North Korea has said it has completed development of its first military spy satellite, and leader Kim Jong Un has approved final preparations for the launch.

The statement did not specify the exact launch date, but North Korea has notified Japan of a planned launch between May 31 and June 11, prompting Tokyo to put its ballistic missile defenses on alert. Japan has said it would shoot down any projectile that threatens its territory.

"Even if North Korea might call it a 'satellite', this is a violation of relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions that prohibit North Korea from all launches using the ballistic missile technology," Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi told a news conference on Tuesday.

South Korea's foreign ministry also slammed the North's use of ballistic missile technology as a clear violation of the U.N. sanctions, saying Ri was making a "farfetched excuse" to bolster its weapons programs.

## NATO to Deploy More Troops to Kosovo Town to Curb Violence

ZVECAN (Dispatches) - NATO troops secured a town hall in Kosovo's Zvecan and the alliance said it would send more soldiers to the region, a day after 30 NATO soldiers and 52 protesters were hurt in clashes and the EU and U.S. urged a de-escalation of the violence.

Unrest in the region has intensified since ethnic Albanian mayors took office in northern Kosovo's Serb-majority area after April elections that the Serbs boycotted, a move that led the U.S. and its allies to rebuke Pristina on Friday.

NATO said in a statement it would send additional forces to Kosovo to curb the violence, but provided no details of when this would happen or the number of soldiers involved.

Serbs refused to take part in local elections in April and ethnic Albanian candidates won the mayoralties in four Serb-majority municipalities with a 3.5% turnout.

Northern Kosovo's majority Serbs have never accepted Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence from Serbia, and consider Belgrade their capital more than two decades after the Kosovo Albanian uprising against repressive Serbian rule. Ethnic Albanians make up more than 90% of the population in Kosovo as a whole, but northern Serbs have long demanded the implementation of an EU-brokered 2013 deal for the creation of an association of autonomous municipalities in their area.

In the town of Zvecan, dozens of soldiers in anti-riot gear from the United States, Poland and Italy secured a municipal building as Serbs protested against an Albanian mayor coming to office.

The Serbian protestors dispersed around 4 p.m. (1400 GMT), and will return on Wednesday morning, the Serbian Tanjug news agency reported, citing Serbian officials in Zvecan.

A Reuters reporter saw four big NATO convoys heading to the north late on Tuesday afternoon.

Russia, which has long had close ties with Serbia and shares its Slavic and Orthodox Christian traditions, called on Tuesday for "decisive" to quell the unrest in Kosovo.

The Russian foreign ministry urged "the West to finally silence its false propaganda and stop blaming incidents in Kosovo on Serbs driven to despair, who are peaceful, unarmed, trying to defend their legitimate rights and freedoms."

Moscow helped block Kosovo's bid for U.N. membership at Belgrade's request.

The United States ambassador to Kosovo Jeffrey Hovenier blamed Pristina for fuelling tensions in the north by moving Albanian mayors to their offices on Friday despite Serb opposition.



## Sudan Truce Extension Brings Renewed Fighting, Little Aid

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Fighting flared again in Sudan despite the latest ceasefire pledges of the two warring generals, meant to allow desperately needed aid to reach besieged civilians.

U.S. and Saudi mediators announced late Monday that the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces had agreed to extend by five days the humanitarian truce they frequently violated over the past week.

Since the extension announcement, residents reported "clashes with various kinds of weapons in southern Khartoum", and fighting in Nyala, South Darfur's state capital.

"There is no ceasefire in Sudan," analyst Rashid Abdi, a fellow with the Rift Valley Institute, said on Tuesday.

Writing on Twitter, he pointed to "a deep disconnect between the reality on the ground in Sudan and diplomacy in Jeddah", where the mediators had brokered the truce between army leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The mediators admitted the truce had been "imperfectly observed" but said the extension "will permit further humanitarian efforts."

The war has killed more than 1,800 people, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. More than a million have been internally displaced and nearly 350,000 have escaped to other countries, the UN said.

Residents have been hiding from street combat and roaming looters in the capital city of more than five million, nearly 700,000 of whom have fled, according to the United Nations.

Since battles began on April 15, both generals have committed to a series of truces, though the United States and Saudi Arabia said this seven-page deal is different because the warring parties signed it, and there is a monitoring mechanism.

Although some Sudanese have used relative lulls in the fighting to escape, aid has only trickled in.

The United Nations warned on Monday that Sudan has become one of the highest alert areas for food insecurity, requiring "urgent" international action.

Sudan was already poverty-stricken before the war, with a third of its 45 million people relying on aid.

## Plastic Pollution: Treaty Talks Get Into the Nitty-Gritty



PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron warned that global plastics pollution was a "time bomb", as diplomats began five days of talks in Paris to make progress on a treaty to end plastic waste.

Representatives of 175 nations with divergent ambitions met at the UNESCO headquarters with the aim of making progress towards reaching, by next year, a historic agreement covering the entire plastics life cycle.

As the talks opened, the head of the negotiations Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velazquez said the challenge was "immense, as we are all aware here, but it is not insurmountable"

"The world's eyes are on us," he said.

Macron urged participating nations to put an end to today's "globalised and unsustainable" production model, where richer countries export plastic waste to poorer ones.

"Plastic pollution is a time-bomb and at the same time already a scourge today," he said in a video message, adding that the fossil-fuel based material posed a risk to global warming goals, as well as biodiversity and human health.

He added that the first priorities of the negotiations should be to reduce production of plastics and to ban "as soon as possible" the most polluting products like single use plastics.

The stakes are high, given that annual plastics production has more than doubled in 20 years to 460 million tons, and is on track to triple within four decades.

Two-thirds of this output is discarded after being used once or a few times, and winds up as waste. More than a fifth is dumped or burned illegally, and less than 10 percent is recycled.

The head of the UN Environment Programme Inger Andersen told the delegates that a throwaway plastic culture was "gushing pollution galore, choking our ecosystems, warming the climate, damaging our health" and that the most vulnerable were the hardest hit.

"Only elimination, reduction of, a full lifecycle approach, transparency and a just transition, only those can bring success because the truth is that we cannot recycle our way out of this mess," she told delegates to loud applause.

In February 2022, nations agreed in principle on the need for a legally binding UN treaty to end plastic pollution around the world, setting an ambitious 2024 deadline.

The Paris meeting, which runs to June 2, is the second of five sessions in the process.

Policy actions to be debated during the talks include a global ban on single-use plastic items, "polluter pays" schemes, and a tax on new plastic production.

Environmental groups are encouraged that global plastics pollution is finally being tackled, but are concerned the treaty may not include targets to reduce overall plastic production.

"There is a consensus on the issues at stake and the will to act", Diane Beaumenay-Joannet, an advocate at the Surfrider Foundation, told AFP.

Environmentalists have also raised concerns about the influence of industry lobbying on the talks.

Plastics are everywhere: packaging, clothing, construction materials, medical tools, even diapers.

In nature, microplastics have been found in ice near the North Pole and inside fish navigating the oceans' deepest, darkest recesses.

In humans, microscopic bits of plastic have been detected in blood, breast milk and placentas.

Plastic also contributes to global warming: it accounted for 1.8 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases in 2019, 3.4 percent of global emissions, a figure that could more than double by 2060 according to the OECD.

## Slovenia Celebrates UNESCO Recognition for Renowned Lipizzan Horses



LIPICA (Dispatches) - People watched in awe as the world-renowned Lipizzan horses put on a dazzling show this month in the village of Lipica in the small Alpine state of Slovenia.

The home of one of the world's most distinguished horse breeds — and seven countries in the region that once were part of the Habsburg Empire — have reason to celebrate.

Their shared tradition of Lipizzan breeding recently made UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The noble Lipizzans, also known as Lipizzaners, are descendants of long stallion lines crossing Spanish, Arabic and Berber horses and were first bred by the Habsburg court in the 16th century.

They are famous for their "airs above the ground" classical dressage jumps — a series of difficult movements requiring strength and precision, in which the horse's feet leave the ground.

This rare breed — featuring white hair but grey skin — is also famed as a carriage horse.

The name derives from tiny Lipica, nestled among Slovenia's verdant hills and lush forests.

The picturesque village is home to one of the world's oldest stud farms, which dates back to 1580 and currently stables more than 400 blue-blooded horses.

"This is the Lipizzan's home," said Slovenian culture minister Asta Vrečko, ahead of the Unesco ceremony last weekend.

The event was attended by the eight countries that jointly applied for recognition of their shared breeding heritage — Austria, Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

For a moment, time stood still as horses and riders from the eight nations performed their dressage and driving exhibition.

"They are phenomenal animals. The way that they've been trained and the level of skill of the riders is incredible," said 42-year-old horse farm owner Laura Highlander, who travelled all the way from the United States to see the horses.

"I was super excited to be able to come... and see them in their training," she added after visiting the Lipica stud farm.

Dark at birth, the Lipizzan horses' coat turns white by the time they are about four years old, which is also when their demanding training starts and the most promising stallions are selected.

"Lipizzans can have a strong temperament. They are usually serene, sometimes shy. They are kind and it is up to us to recognise the quality of each horse," Miro Dragic, head of the Lipica stud farm riders' team, told AFP.

If health permits, these athletic equine stars, can be worth up to several hundred thousand euros (dollars) each, and can remain active well into their mid-20s

Only the best stallions will be trained in the elitist "haute école" of classical dressage to eventually master an equine ballet of cantering, caprioles and pirouettes.

The riders, who sport tailcoats and Napoleonic bicorne hats, must also be at the top of their game to get the best from their sensitive partners.

"With horses it's like with people. There are many external elements — weather included — that can affect them," stableman Amadej Cej told AFP while grooming one of his elegant stallions.

It's stablemen like Cej who spend quality time with these beautiful creatures, attending to their every need "from birth until their end".

## Study Finds How Human Stomach Cells Help in Diabetes Treatment



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A team of researchers revealed that stem cells from the human stomach may be transformed into cells that produce insulin in response to rising blood sugar levels, presenting a promising strategy for treating diabetes.

A preclinical study by Weill Cornell Medicine researchers demonstrated that they could take stem cells obtained from human stomach tissue and reprogram them directly - with strikingly high efficiency - into cells that closely resemble pancreatic insulin-secreting cells known as beta cells. Small groupings of these cells transplanted cured diabetic symptoms in a mouse model.

"This is a proof-of-concept study that gives us a solid foundation for developing a treatment, based on patients' own cells, for type 1 diabetes and severe type 2 diabetes," said study senior author Dr. Joe Zhou, a professor of regenerative medicine and a member of the Hartman Institute for Therapeutic Organ Regeneration at Weill Cornell Medicine.

Insulin is a hormone that regulates blood glucose levels -- without it, blood glucose becomes too high, causing diabetes and its many complications. An estimated 1.6 million Americans have type 1 diabetes, which results from an autoimmune attack that destroys beta cells in the pancreas. At least several million other Americans lack sufficient beta cells due to severe type 2 diabetes. Current treatments in such cases include manual and wearable-pump injections of insulin, which have multiple drawbacks including pain, potentially inefficient glucose control, and the necessity of wearing cumbersome equipment.

## Scientists Discover Rare Methane-Spewing Underwater Volcano in Norwegian Waters

OSLO (Dispatches) - Underwater mud volcanoes form after the continuous eruption of fluids and gases from inside the seabed and are very difficult to spot and map

Scientists have discovered a submarine volcano near Norway's Bear Island, or Bjørnøya, in the Barents Sea, which continuously spews methane and mud. The scientists also revealed that the volcano was located inside a giant crater, which probably formed following a large explosion at the end of the last ice age.

The volcano has been named Borealis Mud Volcano, and it is only the second of its kind ever discovered in Norwegian waters.

An underwater geological structure formed after the continuous expulsion of fluids or gas such as methane from the seabed is known as a mud volcano.

"Exploring the seabed and discovering new methane [seeps] is like finding hidden treasures," said Stefan Buenz, a professor at The Arctic University of Norway (University of Tromsø) and co-leader of the Advancing Knowledge of Methane in the Arctic (AKMA) expedition that made the discovery.

"Every time we go down to the seabed, we get the feeling that we have just begun to understand the great and incredible diversity of such [seep] systems," Buenz said in a translated statement.

The newly-found volcano is 8 feet tall and measures 23 feet in diameter. The volcano sits inside a much larger crater, which is 300m wide and 25m deep, which likely formed after a massive methane eruption 18,000 years ago. It was spotted by researchers on May 7 using a remote-controlled rover. The rover captured footage which showed the volcano continuously spewing fluids and methane from inside the earth.

"Seeing an underwater eruption in real time reminds me how 'alive' our planet is," Space.com quoted Giuliana Panieri as saying, a professor in geology at The Arctic University of Norway and the leader of the expedition.

Researchers estimate that the number of mud volcanoes present on the seabed could be in the thousands globally. However, they are very difficult to spot and map. Earlier, the Håkon Mosby mud volcano was spotted by scientists in Norwegian waters.

According to the University of Bergen's Center for Geobiology, the volcano measures 1 km in width and is located 1,250 metres below the water's surface on the seabed south of Svalbard.

Experts believe studies around underwater mud volcanoes could provide humans to assess previous environments and conditions on Earth, and could also help researchers explore conditions on other planets.



## Study Explores Smartwatch Potential in Health Care



LONDON (Dispatches) - Smartwatches could soon benefit overstretched health practitioners and their patients, says Business School researcher Ruhi Bajaj, lead author of a preliminary study exploring the potential role of such devices in health care.

Integrating smartwatch data into clinical care and electronic medical records could provide a more comprehensive view of a person's health and complement routine clinical data. This may lead to better patient or client engagement in self-care and increased health care efficiency by automating some diagnostic processes, says Ruhi.

However, concerns around the interpretation of smartwatch data analysis and the corresponding potential increase in workload are barriers to integrating smartwatch data into workflows.

As such, Ruhi's study aimed to co-design, develop and evaluate a prototype of a health monitoring tool using smartwatch data analytics to assist health care professionals with clinical decision-making. The study is published in the March 2023 edition of Future Internet.

In the first phase, Ruhi and her co-authors, Dr. Fernando Beltran and Dr. Rebecca Meiring employed a co-design approach to gain insight into the needs of eight health care providers in Auckland. A general practitioner, physiotherapist, four clinical exercise physiologists, and two physical trainers participated.

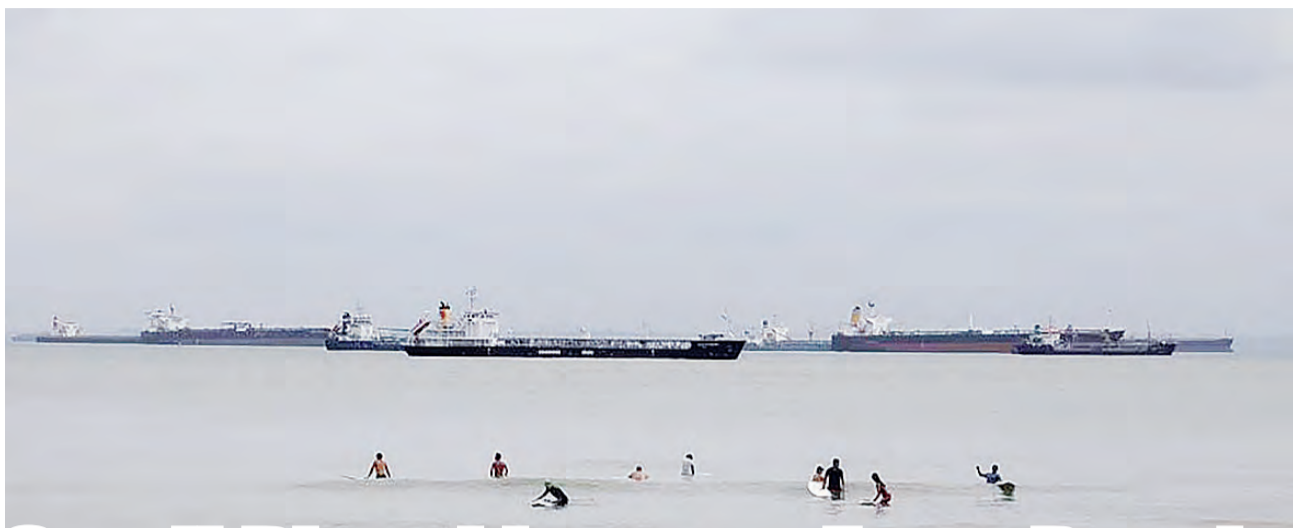
The academics explored the health care professionals' needs for an application that would allow them to monitor, interpret and make decisions based on smartwatch data.

## Pakistan Will Not Default With or Without IMF

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) – Pakistan Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said that Pakistan will overcome the economic crisis with or without the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

While talking to a private news channel, Ishaq Dar said that Pakistan will not default with or without the IMF. He added that foreign powers are surprised that Pakistan does not default so far.

He claimed that former prime minister Imran Khan had destroyed the national economy after coming into power. He added that Imran Khan's government got a \$100 billion market from the previous PML-N government but it was destroyed and Pakistan had nearly defaulted.



## Saudi Diesel Imports From Russia, Exports to Singapore Hit Records

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Leading crude exporter Saudi Arabia is maximising refining profits by importing unprecedented amounts of cheap Russian diesel and in turn shipping record volumes to Singapore, where the fuel can achieve higher margins, shiptracking data shows.

Russia has had to divert the volumes it sold to Europe, previously its dominant product market, after the European Union banned oil product imports in February as part of its response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

That allowed state oil giant Saudi Aramco to increase its May import arrivals to Singapore to record levels and cash in on better arbitrage netbacks in the east than Europe, driven by tighter Asian supply during the maintenance season, traders and analysts said.

"Diesel supply in Singapore is relatively tight due to regional refinery maintenance, while Middle East supplies are rising, which may create spot arbitrage opportunities for traders to move the cargoes (to Singapore)," Vortexa's head of APAC analysis Serena Huang said.

Saudi Arabia will import up to 500,000 tonnes (3.7 million barrels) or more of Russian diesel in May, with most of it arriving at Ras Tanura, where one of Saudi Aramco's refineries is located, two trading sources, Kpler and Refinitiv showed.

At the same time, diesel from Saudi Arabia arriving in Singapore is set to hit 400,000 tonnes - an unprecedented level, data from Refinitiv, Vortexa and two industry sources found. The sources asked for anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

The rise in Saudi supplies could replenish Singapore stocks as exports from northeast Asia fall during the refinery overhaul season between May and July, the sources added.

It is however unclear whether Saudi Arabia was storing some of its own production and shipping mostly Russian supplies via swap trades instead, since both are of typical diesel specifications.

Russian 10 ppm sulphur gasoil cargoes are traded at discounts of around \$30 a barrel to free-on-board Middle East quotes, versus Asia's spot premiums for the same grade at 16 cents a barrel to Singapore quotes, according to trade sources and Refinitiv data.

Globally, Saudi's diesel exports in April hit an all-time high of around 3.7 million tonnes, Kpler data showed. Jizan refinery, solely owned by Aramco, had been expected to increase diesel exports when crude runs stabilise.

Aramco declined to comment.

FGE analyst Lu Yawen said more Middle East gasoil cargoes were heading east rather than west to Europe, where high inventories and weak economic growth have depressed prices.

Falling freight costs also aided the arbitrage flow, two other oil and shipping analysts said. The cost to charter a Long Range (LR) vessel on the Middle East to Singapore route has dropped to slightly below \$25 a tonne from around \$34 a ton in the last two months, they added. That is half the cost for the same ship to travel to Europe, they said.

Global diesel supplies have increased since the start of 2023, with China and the Middle East ramping up exports and as mild winter in Europe capped demand, helping to reduce prices.

## ONGC Videsh Has Less Than \$100m Stuck in Russia

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's flagship overseas firm ONGC Videsh has less than \$100m of dividend income lying in Russia because of Ukraine conflict but the company is not in a hurry to bring it back, a senior official said.

Indian state oil firms have invested \$5.46b in buying stakes in four different assets in Russia. These include a 49.9 per cent stake in the Vankorneft oil and gas field and another 29.9 per cent in the TAAS-Yuryakh Neftgazodobycha fields.

They get dividends on profits made by the operating consortium from selling oil and gas produced from the fields. Soon after invading Ukraine in February last year, Russia put restrictions on repatriation of dollars to check volatility in foreign exchange rates.

OVL, the overseas arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), got its last dividend back in July 2022. One dividend payout that came after that is lying in the company's account in Russia.

Its managing director Rajarshi Gupta said the dividend income lying in Russia is "less than \$100m."

"We are not in a hurry to get it back as the company has capital and operating expenses for the three projects in Russia," he said. "It is business as usual as far as dividend is concerned."

OVL holds interest in Russia through a Singapore subsidiary.

Moscow declared Singapore as an unfriendly nation last year and so money from Russia cannot flow to any company incorporated in that country.

He said the company is looking at right banking channels and discussions are on. Last week, Oil India officials said \$300m dividend income of the company and its partners are stuck in Russia.



## Turkey's Economic Confidence Hits 20-Month High in May

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey's economic confidence index in May rose to the highest level in the last 20 months, official data showed Monday, maintaining an upward trend after a slight fall in February following massive earthquakes.

The index rose 1.4% to 103.7 in May on a monthly basis, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said. It fell slightly in February to 99.1 points, following the tremors that devastated the country's southern region, killing over 50,000 people.

Elaborating on the data, Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati said they expect investment, production and consumption to continue to increase.

Nebati said the environment clouded by uncertainty stemming from elections is being left behind as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won a new five-year mandate on Sunday.

Erdoğan is set to rule until 2028 after securing over 52% of the vote in the presidential runoff, two weeks after he fell short of scoring an outright victory in the first round.

Erdoğan's governing Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and its allies secured a parliamentary majority in the May 14 vote.

"With the completion of the parliamentary elections and the election of our President, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, by our nation once again, the perception of uncertainty caused by the election agenda has also been left behind," Nebati wrote on Twitter.

"Thus, we expect the confidence in our economy to strengthen further in the coming period; investment, production and consumption will increase by the strengthening," he added.

The TurkStat data showed that three of five sub-indexes posted increases in May, one declined, and one was flat.

## Thai Economy Resilient, on Path to Full Recovery

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Thailand's economy is on a solid path to recovery and showing resiliency, helped by good revenue collection and a normalization of its tourism sector, while inflation should come in below 3% this year, its finance minister said.

Southeast Asia's second-largest economy

expanded faster than expected in the first quarter of this year due to a revival in its vital tourism sector.

The economic recovery has been supported by a comprehensive and timely policy mix of fiscal and monetary policies, which respectively should continue to be implemented proactively and prudently, Arkhom Termittayapaisith told a World Bank forum.

While predicting inflation would come in below 3% this year, inside the central bank target range of 1% to 3%, Arkhom said he could not tell whether there would be a reduced need for raising interest rates.

"There is still uncertainty over energy prices and U.S. issues," he told reporters on the sidelines.

The central bank is expected to raise its key rate again by a quarter point to 2.0% on Wednesday before holding it steady through 2024, a Reuters poll showed.

On Monday, the finance ministry in a statement said the economy in April was supported by stronger tourism, higher farm production and falling inflation, while Thailand was well-positioned to withstand global volatility.

Arkhom said revenue collection also showed strong signs of recovery in the 2022 fiscal year and was expected to surpass the pre-pandemic level in the 2023 fiscal year.

"I'm confident that Thailand is firmly heading towards full recovery and soon return to its vibrant economy," he added.

The finance ministry forecast economic growth of 3.6% this year, after a 2.6% expansion last year.

The World Bank in a statement on Monday said Thailand now needed to address growing spending needs, while keeping public debt under control.

Thailand's public debt rose due to the pandemic response, but overall fiscal risks remain manageable, the bank said.

## ADB Approves \$350m In Budgetary Support To Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday approved a \$350m special policy-based loan to provide budget support to Sri Lanka for its economic stabilization but warned that the cash-strapped country faced a long road to recovery.

The program approved by the Manila-based ADB is part of a broader package of financial assistance anchored by the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Extended Fund Facility for the country, the bank said in a statement.

The IMF recently extended a nearly \$3b bailout facility to debt-ridden Sri Lanka to help stabilize the country's economy after it was jolted by a devastating economic crisis last year. "Sri Lanka is facing a severe and unprecedented economic crisis. High inflation has eroded purchasing power, livelihoods have been affected, and past development gains have been reversed," the ADB said in a statement.

Debt-ridden Sri Lanka, still struggling to normalise its crisis-hit economy after it declared its first-ever debt default in April last year, is hopeful that inflation will reduce to single digits by the year's end.

"ADB is concerned about the deep crisis in the country and its impact on the people of Sri Lanka, especially the poor and the vulnerable, particularly women," ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa said.

"ADB is committed to standing with Sri Lanka as it addresses its present challenges and strides toward economic stabilization, sustainable recovery, and inclusive growth," he said.

"Sri Lanka has embarked on bold reforms to address the causes of both internal and external imbalances and return to a sustainable debt trajectory. The country faces a long road to recovery and must remain steadfast in the implementation of necessary reforms..." the statement said.

Transparency and open communication will be crucial in building agreement around the reforms. ADB will proactively engage with the government, other stakeholders, and development partners to help address structural impediments and plan future support, the statement said.

Under the IMF's bailout package, Sri Lanka set in motion hard structural reforms to address the economic crisis, some of which have met with political resistance.

The ADB asserted that it supported Sri Lanka's response throughout the crisis.

"In 2022, in close coordination with development partners, ADB provided emergency assistance to support basic services and sustain livelihoods. ADB repurposed USD 334 million of existing loans as an emergency response to support the import of essential items such as fertiliser, medicines, chemicals for water treatment, working capital for small and medium-sized enterprises, and cash transfers to the most poor and vulnerable," the bank said.

## South Africa's Central Bank Flags Risks of Capital Outflows and Sanctions



JOHANNESBURG (Dispatches) - South Africa's central bank has warned of risks to the country's financial stability, due to capital outflows and the possibility of sanctions following a U.S. diplomat's accusation of supplying weapons to Russia to aid its campaign in Ukraine.

These risks, along with the threat of a grid failure due to repeated power cuts and persistent high inflation, have increased the systemic risks to the financial system, the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) said in its biannual health check on Monday.

The South African economy has been pummeled by a host of negative factors this year, with the continent's most advanced economy facing its worst-ever power cuts, adding billions of rand to the cost of doing business and household expenses.

In February, the country was also put on a "grey list" by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental financial crime watchdog, to force it to implement standards to prevent money laundering and terrorism financing. The FATF greylisting and poor local economic conditions have brought down foreign participation in South African government bonds to 25% from 42% in the last five years, SARB's Financial Stability Review (FSR) said.

These local issues were followed earlier this month by a diplomatic stand-off with the U.S. as one of its diplomats accused the country of supplying weapons to Russia, leading to fears of sanctions and to a sharp drop in the rand.

Sanctions on South Africa would make it "impossible to finance any trade or investment flows, or to make or receive any payments from correspondent banks in USD," the report said. It said the country's domestic financial institutions and financial system remained resilient amid the recent global banking sector turmoil, but a mix of global and local factors could test its strength beyond the next 12 months.

## Iran Army to Use Its Power, Expertise to Eliminate Threats

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian Army commander said that the army will use its high military strength and professional expertise to eliminate threats and increase political, security and military interactions.

Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi made the comments at the meeting of the heads of the Islamic Republic of Iran's missions abroad which was held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday.

"Undoubtedly, in the era of globalization and in the transition period of

the international system, which is still in an anarchic state, diplomacy is considered as one of the most important tools for enhancing the power of countries," he said, adding that "The complexity of the international environment with extensive changes in players, rules and trends has caused governments to make maximum use of the capacity of diplomacy and international interactions to deal with various threats and use the opportunities of the environment."



## Inside South Korea's Race to Become One of World's Biggest Arms Dealers

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea is using a \$13.7 billion arms deal with Poland - Seoul's biggest ever - to lay the groundwork for a military-industrial juggernaut that the two nations' defence companies hope will feed Europe's hunger for weapons far into the future.

South Korea's arms sales jumped to more than \$17 billion in 2022 from \$7.25 billion the year before, according to its defence ministry, as Western countries scrambled to arm Ukraine and tensions rose in other hot spots such as North Korea and the South China Sea.

The arms deal with Poland, a key NATO member, last year included hundreds of Chunmoo rocket launchers, K2 tanks, K9 self-propelled howitzers, and FA-50 fighter aircraft. The deal's value and the number of weapons involved made it stand out even among the world's biggest defence players.

South Korean and Polish officials say their partnership will help them conquer the European arms market even beyond the Ukraine war, with Seoul providing high-quality weapons faster than other countries and Poland offering manufacturing capacity and a sales pipeline into Europe.

Reuters spoke to 13 company executives and government officials, including those directly involved in the deal, who said the arrangement provides a blueprint for using international public-private partnerships and consortiums to extend Seoul's reach and achieve its ambition to be one of the world's biggest weapons suppliers.

"The Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and others were thinking of buying defense products only in Europe, but now it is more well known that you can buy at a low price and have it delivered quickly from Korean companies," said Oh Kyeahwan, a director at Hanwha Aerospace who was involved in the Poland deal.

South Korean companies do not disclose the unit prices for their weapons, which are often sold with support vehicles and spare parts.

Hanwha Aerospace already had a 55% share of the global howitzer market - a number that will rise to an estimated 68% with the Poland deal, according to research by NH Research & Securities.

The deal established consortiums of South Korean and Polish companies that will build the weapons, maintain the fighter jets and provide the framework to eventually supply other European states, said Lukasz Komorek, director of the Export Projects Office at the state-owned Polish Armaments Group (PGZ).

That will include building South Korean arms on license in Poland, officials in Seoul and Warsaw said. Plans call for 500 of 820 tanks and 300 of 672 howitzers to be built in Polish factories starting in 2026.

"We don't want to just play the role of subcontractor, technological transfer provider and the purchaser," Komorek said. "We can both create the synergy and use our experiences to conquer the European markets."

Sash Tusa, a defense and aerospace analyst at Britain-based Agency Partners, said that although both countries have well-established defense industries, the long-term plans will face hurdles. Political winds could shift, he said, reducing demand for weapons such as howitzers and tanks.

Even if production and demand hold up, European countries might want deals of their own with South Korea along the lines of what Poland has - co-production agreements that could create jobs and stimulate industry, Tusa said.

"It may work for some countries at very, very low volume," he added of Polish-brokered South Korean weapons sales, discussing challenges the joint operation might face.

At a Hanwha Aerospace factory on South Korea's southern coast, six huge



automated robots and more than 150 production workers are churning out 47-ton K9s destined for Poland.

The self-propelled guns use NATO-standard 155mm ammunition, have computerised fire-control systems, are designed to easily integrate into command and control networks, and offer performance comparable to more expensive Western options. Major powers such as Australia and India operate them.

To meet demand, the company expects to add about 50 more workers and more production lines, production manager Cha Yong-su said during a recent tour. The robots handle about 70% of the welding work on a K9 and are key to expanding capacity, he said. They operate an average of eight hours per day but can work around the clock if needed.

"Basically, we can meet any amount of order you want," Cha said.

South Korea's offer to provide weapons faster than almost anyone was a key consideration, Polish officials say. The first shipment of 10 K2s and 24 K9s arrived in Poland in December, just months after the deals were signed, and at least five more tanks and 12 additional howitzers have been delivered since.

By contrast, Germany, another major arms manufacturer, has yet to deliver any of the 44 new Leopard tanks Hungary ordered in 2018, said Oskar Pietrewicz, senior analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs.

"Countries' interest in South Korea's offer may only grow considering the limited production capacity of Germany's defence industry, which is a major arms supplier in the region," he said.

Executives in South Korea's arms industry say that will be a selling point for future clients.

A close relationship between South Korea's military and its arms industry allows them to rearrange domestic orders to make room for export production and expand production in the country's highly industrialized manufacturing base, officials said.

"They put things together in weeks or months that would take us years," a European defense industry executive said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

## Nouri's Lawyer Challenges Legal Jurisdiction of Swedish Court

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A lawyer of Iranian national Hamid Nouri, who has been illegally jailed for years in solitary confinement in Sweden on bogus allegations, has lashed out at the show trial staged against his client, insisting that the Swedish has no legal jurisdiction over a case that has nothing to do with the European country.

"This is a very strange case," said Thomas Bodstrom in an exclusive interview with Press TV on the case staged against his 62-year-old client, emphasizing: I cannot understand why we should have a trial in Sweden about what had happened in another country 35 years ago for a person who is not a Swedish person."

He further pointed out that some of the witnesses introduced against the defendant have had conflict of interests in the case, underlining that Nouri should be

acquitted despite the purported "evidence" propped up against him.

Nouri's attorney also blasted the Swedish judiciary for brutally holding his client in solitary confinement for over 40 months and not allowing him to have regular family visits in violation of its own laws, insisting that his client is entitled by law to have in-person visitations.

"What I am most upset about it is that he is almost isolated 24 hours a day and now he has been there for more than three and a half years. This would be his fourth summer in custody," Bodstrom said.

He then emphasized that the "worst" part is that Nouri is isolated in a seven-square-meter jail and is "treated very badly."

Nouri has now spent more than three-and-half-years in solitary confinement which is a "record" in

Sweden, he added.

Bodstrom additionally noted that Nouri had also been denied valuable documents essential for his defense due to what the court claims to be "erased by mistake."

He also noted that Nouri's lawyers have on many occasions complained about the way he is being treated in jail "but nothing happened."

Nouri, a former Iranian judiciary official, was arrested upon arrival at Stockholm Airport in November 2019 and was immediately imprisoned. He was put on trial on unfounded allegations staged against him by elements representing the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) terrorist group that has openly boasted about carrying out terrorist operations against Iranian officials and civilians perceived to be supporters of the government.

### Tehran, Ashgabat...

FROM PAGE 1

"Our approach in the government is to develop relations with all neighbors, including Turkmenistan," he added.

Stating that there are 600 wagons passing through shared Sarakhs and Incheh Borun border crossing every day, Bazrpash said "Considering the potential of these borders, we should look for a further increase in wagons."

Stressing the revival of Ashgabat agreement, the Iranian minister suggested that the implementation and operational phase of the Ashgabat transit agreement be followed up on in the joint economic commission of Iran and Turkmenistan, which will be held in Turkmenistan next month, with the participation of the member states.

Bazrpash emphasize Turkmenistan's greater participation in completing the North-South corridor, especially in the south of their country and on the Persian Gulf and added, "Currently, Arab countries have invested in the Persian Gulf, and Turkmenistan can also play a part in this corridor."

Considering maritime transportation, the Iranian minister said, "The two countries of Iran and Turkmenistan have many water borders, which facilitate the docking of commercial ships in Turkmenbashi port, strengthen the maritime search and rescue for vessels under the Iranian flag, and increase the level of services requested by the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Bazrpash also voices Iran's readiness in welcoming Turkmen investors in the ports at the north and south of Iran. Other issues emphasized in this meeting included the strengthening of air cooperation between the two countries and resolving visa-related barriers.

### Iran Urges West to...

FROM PAGE 1

She reiterated that to effectively address the humanitarian and economic crisis in Syria, a comprehensive approach is crucial. This approach should encompass several key elements, including securing sufficient funding, ensuring impartial distribution of aid, and removing unilateral sanctions.

Ershadi in some part of her address said that terrorism remains a significant threat to Syria and the wider region and must be addressed decisively. We are concerned about terrorist activities in the areas under occupation. The illegal presence of military forces in Syria is the primary source of insecurity in the country and must be ended in order to create a conducive environment for crisis resolution.

She added the fight against terrorism must be carried out in full respect of Syria's national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence, and without using it as a pretext to violate these fundamental principles of international law.

She stressed that Iran stands firmly behind the prompt resumption of the Constitutional Committee meetings. We are committed to supporting this process, adding that moreover, Iran, in collaboration with its partners in the Astana format, Russia, and Turkey, remains unwavering in its commitment to working towards long-term and sustainable normalization in Syria. In this context, we fully endorse and support the continuation of the Syrian-Turkish dialogue, recognizing it as a crucial component of such broader efforts.

### IAEA Has...

FROM PAGE 1

Back in February, the AEOI spokesman, Behrouz Kamalvandi told Press TV that the IAEA publicizes confidential reports about Iran's nuclear activities even before the investigations are complete in order to prepare the ground for fabrications against the country's peaceful nuclear program.



He criticized the IAEA for allowing the correspondence between Tehran and the agency to leak to the press.

Now on the eve of the meeting of the board of governors of IAEA, Iran has said the differences with the IAEA have been resolved and there is no excuse left for the IAEA to take any punitive and illogical action against Iran in the meeting.

Last week and reacting to threats by the Zionist regime and the Western states against Iran's nuclear facilities and said that threats against Iran's nuclear program have been rendered totally meaningless due to the indigenization of the country's nuclear industry.

Speaking at a gathering of the heads of Iranian diplomatic missions held at the Foreign Ministry in Tehran, Spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi said even the enemies acknowledge that the Islamic Republic's nuclear capabilities have reached a level that cannot be eliminated.

"Given that Iran's nuclear capabilities have been indigenized and have grown deep roots, any threat against the country's nuclear industry is completely meaningless," he said.

Kamalvandi further emphasized that the nuclear industry is a driving force in different industries and is not limited to a specific field.

He said Iran can provide one million patients with radiopharmaceuticals. The spokesman pointed to US sanctions against Iran, saying the US had claimed that medicines were not subject to sanctions, "but the truth was something else."

Addressing the same event, Eslami, head of the AEOI, highlighted Iran's nuclear achievements, including developing the technology to produce heavy water.

Many companies from different countries want Iranian heavy water and its derivatives, he said.

"Today, the whole nuclear fuel cycle, namely exploration, extraction, processing from mines, conversion, enrichment, and production of fuel and its use in reactors, is being carried out by our young and hardworking experts and scientists," Eslami said.

He also asserted that Iran's capability regarding the nuclear fuel cycle "cannot be negated."

These remarks once again reiterate that Iran will not retreat from its peaceful nuclear program and it will continue the program in compliance with the international laws and in the framework of cooperation with the IAEA, and as Tehran has repeatedly said it does not seek having A-bombs because Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution has called A-bomb haram (forbidden) and for this reason the IAEA is better not to seek any baseless claim against Tehran's peaceful nuclear program and it is also better to stop pleasing the West by continuing charges against Iran's nuclear program.

Iranians will not retreat from their legal rights of having peaceful nuclear program and they know that the IAEA is just propaganda machine of the West and they will never trust it unless this UN body acts fairly and do not blindly support baseless claims of any country.

So we recommend board of governors of the IAEA to come their senses and close the dossier of the Islamic Republic of Iran forever and to go to focus on Israel's nuclear arsenals which are a threat to humanity.

### Iran Exports to ECO...

FROM PAGE 1

The deputy minister of economy further noted that developing transit and increasing the volume of goods transited from ECO member states are among the areas that these countries can take advantage of to facilitate, accelerate and increase the transit volume.

The ECO secretary general, for his part, pointed to the key role of Iran in promoting trade between the member states and added that given the high capacities that exist among ECO member states, the eight percent share of trade among them is too little.

He added that effective steps should be taken in line with increasing this figure.

Reducing customs tariffs among member states and exchanging data electronically are among the moves that will greatly help facilitate trade among member states and increase bilateral transit exchanges, Nazeri added.

## Chelsea Appoint Jurasek As New Chief Executive

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea announced the appointment of Chris Jurasek as their new chief executive, with president of business Tom Glick about to leave the club after less than a year.

After a lowly 12th-place Premier League finish in Clearlake Capital's first season as owners, Chelsea appointed Mauricio Pochettino as their new manager yesterday, with the London side seeking a return to the English and European triumphs they enjoyed during Roman Abramovich's reign at Stamford Bridge.

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## Rybakina Overcomes Slow Start to Down Fruhvirtova

PARIS (Dispatches) - Elena Rybakina shook off a sluggish start and continued her fine run on clay as the world number four moved into the second round of the French Open with a 6-4 6-2 victory over Czech qualifier Brenda Fruhvirtova.

The Wimbledon champion announced herself as a player for all surfaces by capturing the Italian Open title earlier this month, but dropped serve in the seventh game against Fruhvirtova before breaking right back and easing through the opening set.

# Heat Defeat Celtics to Reach NBA Finals

MIAMI (Dispatches) - They certainly didn't make it easy, but the Miami Heat are officially headed to the NBA Finals.

Caleb Martin and the Heat fended off the Boston Celtics at TD Garden to take Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals 103-84. Martin dropped 26 points and shot 11-of-16 from the field in what turned out to be a blowout win in Boston. That snapped a three-game win streak for the Celtics, and kept the Heat from landing on the wrong side of NBA history.

The Celtics were just the fourth team in league history to even force a Game 7 after falling into a 0-3 series hole. No team has ever successfully rallied from that deficit and won the series in 151 attempts.

The Heat are headed to their second NBA Finals in four seasons.

Caleb Martin dropped 26 points to help lead the Heat in what turned out to be a blowout win in Game 7.

Though TD Garden was ridiculously loud to start the game, the Heat shut down Boston early. They took a 7-point lead into the second quarter after holding the Celtics to just 15 points in the opening period — which marked their lowest-scoring first quarter all season. The Celtics shot 0-of-10 as a team from behind the arc in the first quarter.

To make matters worse for Boston, Jayson Tatum rolled his left ankle hard on the very first possession of the game. While he stayed in, his ankle was clearly bothering him. He took only a single field-goal attempt in the first 12 minutes.

The Celtics finally made a pair of 3-pointers early in the second quarter, but the Heat rather easily pushed their lead to 17 points just a few minutes into the period. Though the Celtics cut into that a bit, Miami still took an 11-point lead at halftime.

Derrick White single-handedly mounted an 8-0 run for the Celtics in the opening minutes of the third period, which cut the score back to single digits for the first time since the first quarter. He then got the deficit back to just 8 points on a floater just after the five-minute mark of the quarter, which



forced Heat coach Erik Spoelstra to call a timeout. Finally, for about the first time all game, the Celtics seemed to have the momentum back on their side.

But it was Martin who hit a huge 3-pointer and then a fadeaway bucket from the short corner just before the end of the third to get the Heat back to a double-digit lead.

Martin opened the fourth quarter with another 3-pointer before two quick buckets from Butler. That 7-0 run suddenly had the Heat up by 17 points once again. And just a few minutes later, after a mini Bam Adebayo run, the Heat had built up a 21-point lead.

The Celtics' push was over, and TD Garden had a very different vibe than the first few minutes of the game. Miami simply cruised the rest of the way to the 19-point win, which earned the Heat a return trip to the NBA Finals for the first time since they lost to the Lakers in the 2020 bubble.

Jaylen Brown led the Celtics with 19 points and 8 rebounds, though he had a career-high 8 turnovers — which set a Celtics franchise record in a Game 7. White finished with 18 points, and Tatum added 14 points and 11 rebounds. Brown, Tatum and Marcus Smart shot a combined 3-of-19 from the 3-point line.

Butler finished with 28 points, 7 rebounds and 6 assists in the win. He was named the Eastern Conference finals MVP after the game, and averaged 24.7 points, 7.6 rebounds and 6.1 assists throughout the series.



PARIS (Dispatches) - Fourth seed Casper Ruud coasted into the French Open second round with a 6-4 6-3 6-2 victory over Swedish qualifier Elias Ymer to kick off his bid for a second straight final in Paris.

Ymer was no match for the baseline power of the Norwegian world number four, who lost in the 2022 final to Rafael Nadal, an absentee this year. "Last year was one of the best tournaments of my life," Ruud said. "You want to defend what you did last year."

"Last year was incredible for me and I will try to do it again wherever I play."

He got his first break at 3-3 when Ymer sailed a forehand wide.

The Norwegian, whose season start was far from successful before winning the title on clay in Estoril in April and reaching the last four in Rome two weeks ago, broke his opponent again at the start of the second set.

Pummelling Ymer with thundering baseline winners, Ruud was in no mood to slow down, and even after the Swedish journeyman clawed his way back with a break of his own he responded with another break to bag the set.

## No Rest for Pochettino as Chelsea Face Crucial Summer

LONDON (Dispatches) - As the dust settles on another Premier League season, most managers will be switching off for a few weeks of relaxation before planning for the next campaign. But for new Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino the work starts immediately.

When the Argentine opens the door to his plush office at Chelsea's Cobham training ground he will find his in-tray already overflowing.

Chelsea's 12th-placed finish in the Premier League was their worst since 1994 -- hardly what new co-owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghbali imagined when they swept in after the sudden collapse of the Roman Abramovich empire.

They have sanctioned around 600 million pounds worth of spending to super-size a squad that has proved far less than the sum of its very expensive parts.

Results have been so disappointing that two managers were sacked this season -- Champions League winning Thomas Tuchel in September and Graham Potter, the man Boehly said fitted his "vision" for the club, after only 31 games.

Club great Frank Lampard steered the listing ship to the end of the season as interim manager, but he managed only one win in his nine Premier League games in charge.

No blame will be attached to Lampard, but for American Boehly, the appointment of the man known in the British media as "Poch" simply has to work.

Which is why the summer recess will be crucial for the west London club if they are to re-establish themselves as potential challengers to Manchester City, Arsenal, Manchester United and even Newcastle United next season.

On the plus side for former Tottenham Hotspur and Paris St Germain coach Pochettino, he takes over with the club at such a low ebb that logic suggests things can only get better.

But he still faces many challenges to make that happen.

Firstly, he must forge a workable team in his own image from a bloated squad that needs serious pruning in the coming weeks as the club seeks to lower its wage bill.

# Juventus Fined, Avoid Points Deduction



ROME (Dispatches) - Juventus escaped an additional Serie A points deduction but agreed to pay a fine of more than 700,000 euros (\$751,000) for lying about players foregoing wages during the Covid-19 pandemic after a plea bargain approved by the Italian Football Federation tribunal.

The plea deal, which Juventus had requested, brings to an end a series of cases in Italy's sporting courts involving the Turin club.

Last week they were given a 10-point deduction in Serie A after a revision of their initial 15-point penalty inflicted on the club over illicit transfer activity.

Juventus have agreed not to appeal that penalty as part of Tuesday's deal.

The disciplinary tribunal of the Italian federation (FIGC) said in a published decision that it had fined the troubled club 718,240 euros, while seven of its management figures were ordered to pay fines ranging from 47,000 euros to 10,000 euros.

Excluded from the plea agreement, however, is former chairman Andrea Agnelli, who jointly requested along with prosecutors that his hearing be postponed to June 15, given what the tribunal called "advanced talks" on potential sanctions.

The federation had been tasked with considering the deferred payment of certain players' wages by the club and its key figures, as part of a wide-ranging scandal involving false accounting and transfer trickery that has rocked Italian football.

Newspaper La Stampa, which, like Juventus, is owned by the Agnelli family, wrote on Tuesday that the club had accepted the deal to avoid another points deduction, which could have pushed it further away from the European places in Serie A.

Juventus are seventh in Serie A with one game of the season remaining, after the imposition of the 10-point deduction.

If they hold that position on the final day, they will qualify for next season's Europa Conference League, but they still have a chance of finishing as high as fifth and going into the Europa League.

Juve faces separate criminal proceedings in the affair, with 12 current and former key club figures including former chairman Agnelli potentially facing trial.

## Swiatek Says Ukraine War Has Caused Chaos in Sport

PARIS (Dispatches) - Reigning French Open champion Iga Swiatek says the Ukraine war has caused "chaos" in the world of sport.

In an interview with French daily Le Monde, the Pole also hit out at the ruling bodies of tennis, the ATP and WTA, saying they had failed to provide leadership on the issue of Ukrainian players facing Russians on the court.

"There are indeed tensions among the players, sometimes the atmosphere in the locker room is quite heavy," the 21-year-old said.

"At the beginning of the conflict, there was a lack of leadership on the part of the tennis authorities, we were not brought together to explain how we were supposed to manage this complex situation and how to behave."

"Those who are in the worst position are the Ukrainian players and it would be good if we paid more attention to what they feel and what they endure."

Her fears were illustrated on Sunday when Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk was booed at the French Open for refusing to shake hands with Belarusian opponent Aryna Sabalenka.

Kostyuk said the Paris crowd should "feel embarrassed" by their actions.

Swiatek, whose country neighbours Ukraine, was asked if she would support the participation of athletes from Russia and their ally Belarus at the Paris Olympics next year.

"It is not for us as athletes to make such a decision," she said. "There is currently a kind of chaos in sport and the most important thing is not to make it worse, to share values that are the right ones and to be clear that we cannot tolerate the ongoing war."



## 10,000 Runners to Be Involved in Paris Olympics Torch Relay

PARIS (Dispatches) - There will be 10,000 torchbearers to carry the Olympic flame as it passes through some 60 French departments ahead of the 2024 Games, Paris Olympic organisers announced.

After the flame is lit in the traditional ceremony in Olympia, Greece, it will arrive by sea in Marseille aboard the three-master Belem on May 8.

From there it will travel across France on its way to the Olympic opening ceremony in the capital on July 26.

There has been speculation that the Olympic flame will be placed on the Eiffel Tower, but the president of the organizing committee, Tony Estanguet, told a press conference the final destination had not been decided.

"The Eiffel Tower has not been decided as the lighting location for the cauldron," he said. A novelty this time is "collective relays", which could be groups of up to 24 people, with one carrying the torch.

There will be 3,000 collective and 7,000 individual torchbearers, including equal numbers of men and women aged 15 and over.

Each torchbearer will carry the flame for around 4 minutes over a distance of 200 meters. A third of the torchbearers will be selected by the organizing committee and the sports bodies, another third by relay sponsors Coca-Cola and French bank BPCE, another third by other Olympic partners, and the final 10 percent by the regions hosting the relay.

The International Olympic Committee forbids elected officials and religious figures carrying the flame.

Some French departments refused to take part, deeming the 180,000-euro (\$193,000) cost prohibitive. The organizers said there would be "an itinerant bubble" of security around the flame provided by the French gendarmes, police and local security forces.

