

**Iran's Foreign Minister Is to Leave The Country for the Republic of Azerbaijan to Have Talks With Azerbaijani Officials and Take Part In the Non-Aligned Movement's Meeting in the Coming Days**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran Strongly Rejected the Veracity of a Video Released by Israel's Spy Agency Mossad of a Captured IRGC Agent Caught Before an Attack on Jews and Israelis in Cyprus and Called It an Effort to Cover Up Israel's Own Domestic Crisis**

VOL. XXIX, No. 7803 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY JULY 2, 2023 - TIR 11, 1402

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## Iran Oil Income Stands At \$54b in 2022

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN- The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) in a report put Iran's oil revenue in 2022 at \$54 billion, up \$17 billion from the country's oil income in 2021.

The EIA has estimated Iran's total oil revenue in the mentioned period at \$19 billion, which is equal to 6.5% of OPEC's total oil exports in the mentioned period.

Iran ranked fifth among OPEC members in terms of oil exports in the period. Saudi Arabia had the highest oil export incomes during this period with \$101 billion, Iraq and UAE each with \$41 billion, and Kuwait with \$32 billion ranked second to fourth in this regard.

According to this report, Iran exported \$54 billion of crude oil in 2022, which showed a \$17-billion increase compared to the previous year; in other words, Iran exported \$37 billion of crude oil in 2021.

Back in January, the EIA in a report put Iran's average oil production in 2022 at 2.54 million barrels per day (bpd), 140,000 bpd more than the previous year. **See Page 7**

## SCO to Approve Iran Full Membership Next Week

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran will officially join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a full-fledged member at the group's summit next week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has announced.

"At the meeting of heads of state on July 4, the full membership of Iran will be approved," Lavrov said at the opening of an SCO center in Moscow on Friday.

Iran first applied for membership in the alliance 15 years ago, but it took until 2021 for the request to be approved.

The SCO, which has its headquarters in China, is a diplomatic organization with eight members, namely Russia, India, Pakistan, and the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Set up in 2001, the organization's members work to tackle joint security issues, cooperate militarily and promote internal trade.

Iran and the organization started a formal process for Tehran's accession to the bloc in March 2022. In September of the same year, Iran signed a memorandum of commitment to join the SCO. A month later, the Iranian parliament approved the country's accession to the organization. **See Page 7**

## All Indicators Point to Movement Toward Economic Growth



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi lauded the country's remarkable achievements in industrial fields, saying all indicators point to Iran's movement toward economic growth and progress.

Raisi made the remarks at the 27th Grand Conference on the National Day of Industry and Mining in the capital Tehran on Saturday in the presence of craftsmen, miners, syndicates, traders and merchants.

"In the year 1401, we had considerable growth in the field of production," Raisi said. "The industrialists have made good efforts, and the growth of investment, produced machinery, output, employment and finally the economic growth in the country in the second six months of 1400 and the end of last year as well as the current year show that the country has started a good move towards economic and production growth."

Stressing that the aforementioned growth is technology-based and knowledge-based, the Iranian president added, "Today, the craftsmen have come to this conclusion that growth should be followed by the growth in science and technology."

Raisi said, "We believe that university, industry and mining should conjoin and this can add value to the work. This extensive nexus is necessary and will lead to an upturn in production and economic growth."

Stressing that production is the country's strong point and should not be undermined, the Iranian chief executive said, "Just as missiles are a strong point and a source of power, production is also a strength and a source of power."

Raisi affirmed that knowledge-based production creates strength in the country, adding, "Heads of countries, the world's authorities and decision-making centers view the power of the Islamic Republic as a country that has made the production grow from within."

The Iranian president also argued that evolution in industries is an inevitable necessity, noting that the country's strengths must be consolidated and its weaknesses diminished.

"This is the very evolution from the Leader's perspective that will be achieved by the capable hands of our producers, artisans and merchants."

President also said that in case the producers face problems, the government should even waive its taxes so that their production does not stop.

Raisi noted that in the first year of the administration's term in 2021, it proposed a 5% tax and a 7% tax in the next year to the producers.

He referred to the issue of energy and its uneven distribution: "We have disharmony in electricity, water and monetary system and we must balance it. We must separate the share of industries from daily consumption."

Raisi added that the solution to the challenges is not sought from foreigners; the administration benefits from other countries' experiences but presents its own localized solutions.

## U.S. Congress Demands More Information on Probe Into Malley's Suspension

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs has called on the State Department to provide more information about a decision to place U.S. special envoy on Iran Robert Malley on leave amid an investigation into his handling of classified documents.

"These reports raise serious concerns both regarding Malley's conduct and whether the State Department misled Congress and the American public," Michael McCaul wrote in a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

McCaul called Malley's security clearance suspension "troubling" and blasted the State Department for stonewalling the House Foreign Affairs Committee's past "efforts to conduct oversight."

"While the suspension of special envoy Malley's clearance is independently troubling, our concern is compounded by the State Department's failure to respond to the committee's efforts to conduct oversight of its negotiations with and policy toward Iran. Since April 11, 2023, the committee has repeatedly requested [Malley's] testimony, which the department has not fulfilled, despite [his] numerous press engagements dating back to May 30, 2023," McCaul said.

The Texas Republican further asserted that "at no point did the department indicate that Malley's security clearance was suspended or under review, or that he was being investigated for potential misconduct" when the department rebuffed efforts to get him to testify.

"The department's failure to inform Congress of this matter demonstrates at best a lack of candor, and at worst represents deliberate and potentially unlawful misinformation," McCaul wrote to Blinken.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman then demanded the State Department provide his panel with a "full" and "transparent" accounting of the circumstances surrounding Malley's security suspension and investigation by July 11. **See Page 7**

## Tehran Soon to Launch Court Process Over Gen. Soleimani Assassination

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's top human rights official says a court process will soon be launched into the case of the assassination of the anti-terror icon Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani by the US military in early 2020.

Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights and deputy head of the Iranian Judiciary, told the Iranian Students News Agency, ISNA, an indictment had earlier been issued in the case and the trial process would start soon. He said three judges had been named to supervise the legal case and they would begin their task soon.

Earlier this year, Gharibabadi said 94 Americans face accusations in the case, including former US President Donald Trump, who ordered the assassination.

In May, Tehran's prosecutor general issued a guilty plea for over 70 people including Trump, his secretary of state Mike Pompeo and General Frank McKenzie former commander of the United States Central Command in connection with the assassination of General Soleimani in 2020. Iran and Iraq have also set up a joint judicial committee to investigate the case. General Soleimani was assassinated in a US drone attack in Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

## Iranians Made Tremendous Sacrifices In Fight Against Daesh

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The leader of the Fatah (Conquest) Alliance in the Iraqi parliament has hailed the heroic sacrifices made by Iranian military advisors in the fight against Daesh Takfiri terrorists, saying the Islamic Republic played a significant role in preserving Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Hadi al-Ameri, who is also the secretary general of Iraq's Badr Organization, made the remarks on Friday as he addressed a tribal gathering in the southern Iraqi province of Dhi Qar.

He said the "Iranian brethren" played a "significant role" in protecting Iraq against the Daesh terrorist group.

The senior Iraqi legislator further said that Iranians made enormous sacrifices in this regard, and top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated by the US military in Iraq in 2020, had the leading role. **See Page 7**

## UN Blasts Desecration of Quran in Sweden as "Vile"

NEW YORK (IRNA) - The High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Miguel Moratinos expresses "unequivocal condemnation" of burning pages of the Muslim Holy Quran in Sweden, terming the act as "vile".

"Such a vile act is disrespectful to Muslims who are celebrating the holy occasion of Eid Al-Adha," Moratinos said in a statement released on Thursday (June 29).

The high representative reiterated that desecration of the sacred books and places as well as religious symbols is "unacceptable", and can lead to "incitement of violence."

At the statement, the UN official stressed the "importance of upholding the freedom of expression as a fundamental human right."

As he noted, "mutual respect is essential for building and promoting just, inclusive and peaceful societies rooted in human rights and dignity for all."

According to the IRNA report, a Swedish extremist burned pages of holy Quran in front of the eyes of about two hundred Muslims in Stockholm.

Such a desecration which was made under the support of the Swedish officials and the country's police is faced with huge wave of condemnation from the world, from the World of Islam in particular.

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## New Damavand Destroyer to Join to Army 's Navy Fleet

TEHRAN (MNA) – Released footage on social media Saturday suggests that the Navy's northern fleet will receive a Damavand-class destroyer in the near future.

The Damavand destroyer is an all-Iranian vessel and the second warship of the Moudge-class and an advanced type of Jamaran destroyer, which joined the Northern Fleet of the Army Navy in 2014. The class appeared to be a development of the Alvand class. It

was named Damavand after its inauguration in the Caspian Sea. In 2017, this destroyer hit the eastern breakwater of the port while entering Anzali port and had an accident, but it was rebuilt with the efforts of Iranian experts. The ship has the ability to carry helicopters, anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missiles, torpedoes, modern guns, and air defense guns. The vessel is also equipped with electronic warfare devices.

## Iran Proposes OIC Emergency Meeting Over Qur'an Desecration

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has called for an "emergency" meeting of the foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on the recent blasphemous act against the Holy Qur'an in Sweden.

In a Friday phone conversation, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and the OIC Secretary-General Houssein Ibrahim Taha discussed the sacrilegious burning of a copy of the Qur'an outside a mosque in the Swedish capital, Stockholm.

Amirabdollahian said the OIC foreign ministers should hold the meeting at the earliest possible time to address the desecration.

He said the meeting can be convened at the same time as the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in Baku, Azerbaijan, on July 5-6.

The top Iranian diplomat once again censured the recent "offensive and provocative" act against the Qur'an.



In a repeated and state-authorized instance of sacrilege against the Muslim holy book, two men stood outside the central mosque in Stockholm on Wednesday and burned a copy of the holy book following a go-ahead given by a Swedish court.

The move was made to coincide with the Muslim festivity of Eid al-Adha, which marks the conclusion of the annual Hajj pilgrimage that is partaken by millions of Muslims from across the world.

The OIC chief, meanwhile, hailed Iran's leading role in the organization and the attention it gives to the condemnation of the blasphemous act. He said the OIC plans to convene an emergency meeting in the Saudi city of Jeddah at the level of ambassadors and permanent representatives toward that end.

## Active Opposition to Insults Against Holy Quran Is Duty of Muslims



TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi in telephone conversation with his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune while congratulating the Eid al-Adha to him, said that the Muslim nations are duty-bound to actively oppose the sacrilege of Islamic sanctities, especially the Holy Quran.

President Raisi reiterated his government's will to expand relations with Muslim and friendly countries, and expressed hope that given the two sides' considerable capacities, Iran-Algeria relations will further expand in trade and economic fields.

President Tebboune, for his part, congratulated the Iranian government and nation on Eid al-Adha, and emphasized defending the Islamic identity and his country's interest in the expansion of relations in all areas.

In a court-authorized act of sacrilege against the Muslim holy book, two men stood outside Stockholm Central Mosque on Wednesday and burned a copy of the Quran. The move was made to coincide with the Muslim festivity of Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice), which marks the conclusion of the annual hajj pilgrimage.

Disrespecting the Holy Quran is actually disrespecting all divine religions, humanity, and divine values, Raisi said, adding that the Muslim world will not let it pass.

People should know how those who claim to support freedom of expression disrespect Muslim sanctities arrogantly, he said.

"They are lying; they are not supporters of freedom of expression, speech, and pen. They oppose freedom and want to impose their despotism as freedom of expression on humanity."

## Muslims Will Never Overlook Desecration of Holy Qur'an

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says the Muslim world will never overlook the recent act of sacrilege against the Holy Qur'an in a Western country.

The Iranian president made the remarks while addressing the Friday prayer event in the city of Rafsanjan, in the southeastern province of Kerman, in reaction to the blasphemous burning of a copy of the Qur'an, Islam's holy book, in Sweden's capital during a protest authorized by police as Muslims celebrated the Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice) holiday.

Raisi said "the most valuable divine book" has been disrespected in recent days in a Western country that claims to defend free expression.

He said the move has not only upset two billion Muslims but also the followers of all divine religions.

"An insult to our beloved Qur'an is an insult to all divine religions, humanity and all divine values, which the Islamic society will not tolerate," the Iranian president said.

Raisi also said the youth should realize how those who claim to champion freedom of expression arrogantly carried out a blasphemous act against Muslim sanctities. "They are lying and do not support freedom of expression and opinion. They oppose freedom and seek to impose their despotism in the form of freedom of expression on humanity."

The Iranian president said the Qur'an is a manifestation of freedom that teaches humanity but those who insult the sanctities are against freedom of expression.

## Tehran, Moscow Strengthen Cooperation in Fight Against Terrorism

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran and Russia strengthen bilateral cooperation in the field of protection of important government facilities and fight against terrorism and insecurity measures, Iran's police commander said referring to his visit to Moscow.

Regarding the MoU signed between Iran and Russia during his visit to Moscow, Brigadier General Ahmadreza Radan said that according to the document, Iran's police and the National Guard Troops of Russia will strengthen bilateral cooperation in the field of exchange of experience in law enforcement, protection of important government facilities, combating terrorism and insecurity measures, and fight against organized crime.

Radan described the increasing spread of narcotics as

a threat to the world and added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is at the forefront of the fight against narcotics and this is a struggle to help all countries of the world."

Iran has gained valuable experience in the fight against drug trafficking, and it can share it with Russia and other countries, he added.

Last week, Brigadier General Ahmadreza Radan traveled to Moscow at the official invitation of the Russian National Guard General Viktor Zolotov.

At the end of his meeting with Zolotov, the two sides signed a long-term cooperation MoU to develop and expand security and law enforcement cooperation.

Another topic of the agreement is the exchange of experiences to combat the factors that create insecurity.

## Iran Among Top 10 Countries in Pharmaceutical Production

TEHRAN (IP) - Director General of Pardis Technology Park (PTP) for Communications and International Affairs pointed to Iran's ranking as one of the top 10 countries in the world regarding the diversity of pharmaceutical production.

Pardis Technology Park, located in the northeast of Tehran, with an area of about 110 hectares, is known as Iran's most critical and largest technology park.

Amin Reza Khaleghian, Director General of Pardis Technology Park (PTP) for Communications and International Affairs, pointing to Iran's world ranking in terms of diversity of pharmaceutical production, stressed the production and export of knowledge-based companies, including radio and television transmitters, being produced under imposed sanctions, to 40 countries.

Khaleghian pointed to PTP's role in paving the way for Iranian companies to attend exhibitions in joint pavilions, like in the past 15 years in Russia, Venezuela, Greece, Zimbabwe, and Kenya.

Referring to the agreement concluded with Venezuela for selling a thousand hemodialysis machines (HD), He announced sending the first shipment, where the rest will be sent over time.

He stressed the production of drugs to treat Multiple sclerosis (MS), a condition that can affect the brain and spinal cord, causing a wide range of potential symptoms, including problems with vision, arm or leg movement, sensation, or balance, in Iran as the sixth country in the world to produce them.

He added that the treatment for Cutaneous leishmaniasis (CL), the most common form that causes skin lesions, mainly ulcers, on exposed parts of the body, is produced by one of the companies of PTP, and most of the medicine for CL treatment is exported.

## Iran-Led Meeting in Geneva Debates Role of Religions in Human Rights

LONDON (IRNA) - A meeting on the role of religions in promoting human rights has been held at the initiative of Iran on the sidelines of the 53rd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC53) in Geneva.

The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Ali Bahreini, chaired the meeting.

Bahreini stressed the importance of religions in promoting human rights, arguing that many human rights values are rooted in divine religions.

During the meeting, Khalil Hashemi, the ambassador and representative of Pakistan, referred to UN Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 and the measures of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to counter religious intolerance and called for discussions about the role of religions in promoting human rights in the Human Rights Council.

Representatives of different member and observer countries of the Human Rights Council, as well as representatives of different parts of the human rights mechanism, participated in the meeting.

## Over 2.m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Week



TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week enjoyed trade of 2,045,136 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$470m on its physical market.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 1,627,304 tons of commodities valued at nearly \$303m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,183,066 tons of cement, 257,068 tons of steel, 176,500 tons of sponge iron, 40,190 tons of zinc, 6,440 tons of aluminum, 6,045 tons of copper and 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate.

Based on this report, the exchange saw trade of 400 kg of saffron on its agricultural trading floor.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 370,467 tons of commodities worth more than \$150m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 131,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 108,200 tons of bitumen, 55,443 tons of polymeric products, 48,000 tons of lube cut, 18,199 tons of chemicals, 7,875 tons of sulfur, 919 tons of oil, 650 tons of petroleum products, 460 tons of insulation and 420 tons of feedstocks.

The IME also traded within the same week 47,364 tons of commodities on its side market.

## Felicitations Message on National Day of Industry and Mine

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) in a message felicitated the national day of industry and mine.



In his message Dr. Ali Rostami felicitated the day and said industry and mine are of the most important pillars of job creation and development in the country and it is also considered as the driving force of economic development.

He noted that choosing a day and naming it as the day of industry and mine in the national calendar shows the serious concern and deep attention of decision-makers of the country to this field so that even the Supreme Leader Iran has the best and diverse mines that they have remained either intact or its products have been exported in the crude form and this trend should be corrected.

Rostami added that therefore managers of this field should respect and follow this important, effective and supportive approach of the Supreme Leader and take steps with full strength in line with national growth and development.

He concluded his message with felicitating all who are involved in the industry and mine sector of the country and wished them prosperity.

## 3.5m Tons of Goods Transited Via Iran in Q1

TEHRAN (MNA) - As announced by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), 3.5 million tons of commodities were transited through the country during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21).

As reported, the figure shows a 7.86-percent fall as compared to the first three months of the past year.

As previously announced by the Iranian deputy transport minister, 10.8 million tons of commodities were transited through the country in the past Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20).

Shahriyar Afandizadeh also announced that Iran registered a new record high with the transit of 8.3 million tons of non-oil goods in 1401, adding that 2.5 million tons of oil products were also transited via the country in the previous year.

"Considering the transit of 7.5 million tons of non-oil goods in 1400, we have seen a 10.7-percent growth in the transit of this type of goods in 1401 compared to the previous year", the official said. "In 1401, we witnessed important developments and achievements in the strategic and operational areas of the country's transit, whose definitive effects will be seen gradually and steadily on the growth of transit from the country in 1402 and the coming years", the deputy transport minister further highlighted.

Afandizadeh then explained: "In line with the activation and development of the North-South International Transport Corridor, in a tripartite meeting in last September between the high-ranking officials of our country and the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan in Baku, while aiming to achieve the transit of 15 million tons of goods through this corridor by 2030, agreements were reached in the field of strengthening the cooperation of the three countries in joint investment and financing, the completion and development of key infrastructures and their exploitation, especially the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway line, facilitating cross-border traffic of goods and increasing the quality and quantity of this traffic", adding that the implementation of these agreements is being followed up.



## Shareholders Express Satisfaction and Hailing Performance of Chadormalu

# Distribution of 171,325b Rials of Profits

## Among Shareholders



According to our reporter, during the annual general assembly of the shareholders of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company which was held on Wednesday, June 28 at Talash Hall of the company with the presence of more than 88% of the shareholders, legal and real shareholders expressed their satisfaction over the performance of the company and hailed directors and personnel of the company.

In this meeting, after the selection of Mr. Mohammad Ebrahim Raei Ezabadi, representative of Omid Investment Management Group, as the chairman of the assembly and supervisors, Mr. Ghaemi Rad, representative of Mines and Metals Development Investment Company, and Salahshuri, representative of Equity Investment Companies, Khalilzadeh, the representative of the Securities and Exchange Organization and the legal inspector of the company, the CEO of Chadormalu Company Eng. Taherzadeh, as the secretary of the assembly, briefed the participants of the performance and executive plans, including the operations of extraction, production and sale of products and plans and programs of the current year of the company.

In the opening speech of this meeting, the CEO of Chadormalu evaluated the performance of the board of directors in 1401 as successful and said the company achieved success beyond the plan and production records, the effects of which were explained in detail in the financial statements, the performance report of the board of directors and the interpretive report of the management for the respected shareholders.

He said: We are thankful that once again God has granted us the success of serving in the shade of his grace, so that we can put all our strength in accordance with sincerity and in line with the development of industry and mining and the prosperity of our dear Iran's economy, relying on the support of you, the shareholders. Honorable, we have taken great steps. He added: In the past year, despite some problems caused by the drop in global prices and steel value chain products, and the restrictions caused by electricity and gas cuts for steelmaking units and the lack of liquidity resulting from this incident, we were able to achieve operating revenues of 437,736,422 million Rials and a net profit of 228,874,148 million Rials, and while achieving a basic profit per share of 1,191 Rials, to adhere to our operational plan. Engineer Taherzadeh highlighted the most important results of the performance of Chadormalu Mineral and Industrial Group (public shares) in the year as follows:

- Obtaining the first place in the country in the production of iron concentrate (dry) among the companies producing this product in the amount of 11,042,266 tons.
- Achieving record production in the sponge iron and steel sector since the beginning of the factories' operation.
- 105% coverage of the production plan (106% coverage of concentrate production, 103% coverage of pellet production, 104% coverage of sponge iron production and 113% coverage of steel ingot production),
- Production of 17,705,578 tons of products in 1401
- Realization of income from the sale of products of the main company in 1401 in the amount of 409,787,584 million Rials and the (consolidated) group in the amount of 476,762,448 million Rials.
- Earning more than 212,787,410 million Rials operating profit in the main company in 1401 and 194,469,085 million Rials operating profit in the group.
- Realization of the net profit of the main company in 1401 in the amount of 228,874,148 million Rials and the (consolidated) group in the amount of 240,032,370 million.
- \*Registering the increase of the company's capital from the amount of 119,000,000 million Rials to the amount of 192,500,000 million Rials with the aim of participating in increasing the capital of investable companies, purchasing capital assets and advancing development projects.
- Using the tax savings resulting from the capital increase from the accumulated profit according to the capacity of the budget law of 1401, as well as a 10% exemption from the amount of capital increase from the usufruct right of mining exploitation license.
- Maintaining the position of the company in the capital market in terms of market value in the sixth rank at the end of 1401 compared to the end of 1400.
- The position of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company in the chain of main steel producing companies in the country in 1401
- CONCENTRATE
- 23.70% share
- Main companies of the country: 46,594,453

- Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company: 11,042,266
- The first place in the country of pellet
- 7.78% share
- Main companies of the country: 48,421,191
- Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company: 3,767,937
- Sixth place in the country
- Direct Reduced Iron
- 5.43 percent share
- Main companies of the country: 29,750,045
- Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company: 1,615,015
- The fifth place in the country of steel ingots
- 5.22% share
- Main companies of the country: 22,667,119
- Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company: 1,184,278
- Seventh place in the country
- Future plans of the company:
- The board of directors of the company aims to achieve the development and progress of the country, with the guidance and support of you, dear shareholders, while maintaining and promoting the fundamental values of the company, to achieve the following targeted strategies:
- Short term goals:
- Production above the nominal capacity of iron ore concentrate (similar to previous years), production of pellets, sponge iron, steel and electricity production according to the plan approved in 1401
- The start of executive operations for the construction of pellet factory No. "2"
- The start of construction of a combined cycle power plant with a capacity of 546 megawatts in Ardakan city
- The start of operations for the construction of Chadormalu ferroalloy complex plant using the electric arc furnace method for at least 65 thousand tons (30 thousand tons of ferrosilico-manganese, 20 thousand tons of high-carbon ferro-manganese and 15 thousand tons of ferrosilicon
- Continuation of executive operations of detailed explorations of anomalous mineral zone D19
- Completing the participation in the capital increase of investable companies for the start of executive operations of development plans in the form of participation in the capital increase
- Long-Term Goals:
- Regarding the future plans and plans of this company in the current perspective and the next 3 to 5 years, the following activities are being planned and implemented:
- A) Chadormalu's internal plans and programs
- Construction plan of Megamodule sponge iron factory with a capacity of 2.2 million tons per year
- Oxygen plant construction plan
- The construction plan of the factory for the production of refractory bricks and furnace refractory objects with a 140,000 tons of capacity, processed raw materials 310 thousand tons and special parts 50 thousand pieces per year
- Ardakan 546 MW combined cycle power plant construction plan
- Construction plan of Bahabad 546 MW combined cycle power plant by BOT method
- Management plan, operation, completion of infrastructure and development of Meibod steel factory
- Construction plan for hot rolling sheet production factory in Ardakan
- Construction of a 100 MW solar power plant
- Participation in the capital of investable companies in accordance with the capital increase program and in accordance with the progress of the projects of subsidiary and affiliated companies.
- b) Plans and programs with the participation of subsidiary companies, affiliated with Chadormalu
- Preparing and carrying out preliminary and detailed exploration and carrying out tailing operations to obtain the mineral mass in the D19 mine with the support and participation of the Central Iron and Steel Company of Iran (BAFQ).
- Construction plan of 2 units of 10 megawatt solar power plant of the company in Bahabad and Ardakan region in the form of CPG Pars Company.
- Design of a membrane factory with a production capacity of 50,000 units per year in the form of CPG Pars Company
- Construction of smelting, coiling and sponge iron factories with a capacity of 600,000 tons, 450,000 tons and 1.2 million tons, respectively, in the form of Sarmad Abarkooh Steel Company.
- Construction of a concentrate factory with a capacity of 1 million tons in the form of Asr Novin Bahabad Company.
- Construction of sponge iron factories in Oghlid, Ardabil, Bakhtegan cities with the participation of investment companies.
- Processing of iron ore tailings of Chaharbough mining complex
- Participating in rail transportation to provide infrastructure for transporting raw materials and products in the form of partnerships with investment companies
- Participation in exploration and mining projects in the region and outside the region in order to access sustainable mineral resources

- Proposals of the Board of Directors to the Assembly
- In conclusion, the board of directors of the company, while appreciating and thanking you for your presence, dear shareholders, the independent auditor and the company's legal inspector, the respected representative of the Stock Exchange and the company's employees, requests the honorable assembly to approve the following proposals for the company as in previous years. To help achieve the set goals:
- Listening to the activity report of the board of directors regarding the performance of the financial year ending on 1401/12/29
- Listening to the report of the independent auditor and legal inspector of the company for the performance of the financial year ending on March 29, 1401
- Reviewing and approving the financial statements of the company for the financial year ending on March 29, 1401
- Making a decision regarding the distribution of dividends for the financial year ending on March 29, 1401
- Selection of independent auditor and legal auditor (main and substitute) and determination of their fees for the fiscal year ending on March 29, 1402
- Selection of board members
- Determining the right to attend non-compulsory members of the board of directors and the fees of specialized committees under the supervision of the board of directors for the financial year ending on March 29, 1402
- Determining a widely published newspaper in order to insert the company's advertisements
- Determining the remuneration of the members of the board of directors for the performance of the financial year ending on March 29, 1401
- Other matters whose decision is within the competence of the ordinary general meeting.
- At the end of this assembly, the following decisions were made and approved.

- 1- Regarding the performance of the board of directors, the consolidated financial statements of the group and the main company including profit and loss, statement of financial position, statement of changes in owners' rights, statement of cash flows and explanatory notes attached thereto for the financial year ending 12/29/ 1401 reading and assembly after listening to the explanations of the board of directors and the legal inspector and after discussing and exchanging the opinions of the shareholders regarding the issues raised unanimously while confirming the performance of the board of directors, the financial statements and its attached notes for the financial year ending on 12/29/1402 approved
- 2- Transactions included in Article 129 of the amendment to the Trade Law were approved and implemented.
- 3- In connection with the distribution of the profit of the financial year ending on 12/29/1401, it was decided that out of the amount of 228 thousand 874 billion Rials of the total net profit of the company in 1401, 75% of it is equivalent to 171 thousand 325 billion Rials per share, 890 Rials be divided
- 4- Vania Nik Tadbir Auditing Institute announced the selection and acceptance of their position as the main auditor and auditor and Dash and Associates Auditing Institute as alternate auditors for the financial year ending on 12/29/1402. Determining the auditors' fees was delegated to the board of directors.
- 5- Donyaye Eghtesad and Jahan Sanat newspapers were decided to publish the company's advertisements
- 6- The right to attend and the bonus of the board of directors for the financial year 1401 was determined in the amount of 13 billion rials, which will be paid to the legal entities of the board of directors based on the resolution of the assembly.
- 7- The assembly announced its level of appreciation for the efforts of the board of directors and all employees of the company and appropriately appreciated the efforts of the relevant employees.





## Brazil Court Bars Bolsonaro From Public Office



BRASILIA (Dispatches) - A Brazilian court barred far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro from holding public office for eight years over making unfounded claims against the country's voting system.

Prosecutors blamed Bolsonaro's statements for a violent invasion of the presidential palace, Congress and Supreme Court in January by supporters angry about his electoral loss to leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

In a verdict that stretched over several days, five of the seven judges on Brazil's Superior Electoral Tribunal voted to censure Bolsonaro for alleged abuses of power, while two found in his favor. The tribunal tried Bolsonaro, 68, over a televised meeting he held with foreign diplomats in July 2022, three months before his election defeat to Lula.

## Blinken to Consult on Haiti Force on Caribbean Trip



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet with Haiti's embattled prime minister and Caribbean nations next week on calls for an international force in the crisis-wracked nation, officials said.

Blinken will travel on Wednesday to Trinidad and Tobago for a summit of the Caribbean Community, or CARICOM, and also visit the South American nation of Guyana the following day, the State Department said.

At the summit, Blinken will meet Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry on the multiple overlapping crises in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation.

## France Braces for More Violence After Riots Over Police Shooting



PARIS (Dispatches) - France said the coming hours would be decisive after three nights of riots since a police officer shot dead a teenager at a traffic stop in a working class suburb of Paris.

The violence has plunged President Emmanuel Macron into the gravest crisis of his leadership since the Yellow Vest protests that started in 2018.

Unrest has flared nationwide, including in cities such as Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Strasbourg and Lille as well as Paris where Nahel M., a 17-year-old of Algerian and Moroccan descent, was shot on Tuesday in the Nanterre suburb.

His death, caught on video, has ignited longstanding complaints among poor, racially mixed, urban communities of police violence and racism.

"The next hours will be decisive and I know I can count on your flawless efforts," Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin wrote to firefighters and police officers seeking to quell unrest that has been breaking out after nightfall. He asked local authorities to halt bus and tram traffic from 9 p.m. (1900 GMT) across the whole of France. The government has said all options would be considered to stop the unrest.

With some 40,000 police officers deployed, more than 200 of them were injured and 875 people arrested overnight into Friday, authorities said. Buildings and vehicles were torched, and stores looted.

While so far the worst of the violence has been confined to city suburbs, any sign it is spreading into the centers of France's biggest cities would mark a significant escalation.

Already looters have ransacked shops including an Apple store in the eastern city of Strasbourg on Friday, a local official said. A source told Reuters that several Casino supermarkets had been looted.

In the Chatelet Les Halles shopping mall in central Paris, a Nike shoe store was broken into, and several people were arrested after store windows were smashed along the adjacent Rue de Rivoli shopping street, police said.

Events including two nights of concerts by a French singer at the Stade de France on the outskirts of Paris have been cancelled. Tour de France organisers say they are ready to adapt to any situation when the race enters the country on Monday after starting in the Spanish city of Bilbao.

In the southern city of Marseille, France's second largest, authorities banned demonstrations set for Friday, and encouraged restaurants to close outdoor areas early. They said public transport would stop at 7 p.m.

Macron left a European Union summit in Brussels early to attend a second cabinet crisis meeting in two days. He has asked social media to remove "the most sensitive" footage of rioting and to disclose identities of users fomenting violence.

For Mohamed Jakoubi, who watched Nahel grow up as a child, the rage was fuelled by a sense of injustice in the banlieues after incidents of police violence against minority ethnic communities, many from former French colonies.

"We are fed up, we are French too. We are against violence, we are not scum," he said.

Macron denies there is systemic racism inside law enforcement agencies. Videos on social media showed urban landscapes ablaze. A tram was set alight in the eastern city of Lyon and 12 buses gutted in a depot in Aubervilliers, northern Paris.

In Nanterre on the capital's outskirts, protesters torched cars, barricaded streets and hurled projectiles at police following an earlier peaceful vigil.

## Pullout of UN Peacekeepers From Mali Leaves Security Void



PARIS (Dispatches) - The United Nations mission in Mali was never the leading player in the conflict against jihadists, but its looming withdrawal opens up a security vacuum in the country and wider Sahel region.

The UN Security Council's vote on Friday to end at Bamako's request the decade-old peacekeeping operation, known as Minusma, triggers the departure of more than 13,000 troops, who although they didn't provide offensive roles, contributed to the security of large towns in northern Mali.

Once the departure takes effect, the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) will only have for partners the Russian mercenary group Wagner, described by the ruling junta as "instructors".

The outlook for the land-locked nation is bleak, according to experts interviewed by AFP.

"The security vacuum already exists. But this is the final blow," said Djallil Lounnas of the Al Akhawayn University in Morocco.

"It wasn't Sabre or Barkhane," he said, referring to missions by French forces deployed until 2022, but the blue helmets "covered part of the territory".

## U.S. Rejoins UNESCO, Reversing Trump Withdrawal

PARIS (Dispatches) - The United States rejoined UNESCO on Friday, reversing its withdrawal during the Trump administration, the UN's cultural agency said.

Donald Trump announced in 2017 that he was pulling the United States out of UNESCO, alongside Israel, accusing the body of bias against the Jewish state, a decision that took effect in 2018.

An extraordinary session of the UN body's General Assembly voted overwhelmingly for the return of the United States, an AFP reporter present at the vote said, with around 132 members voting in favour, 10 against and 15 abstentions.

Dissenting voices included Iran, Syria, China, North Korea and Russia, whose delegates appeared to seek to delay the vote through several statements on procedure and suggested amendments.

The United States, a founding member of UNESCO, was a major contributor to its budget until 2011, when the body admitted Palestine as a member state.

That triggered an end to the contributions under US law, leading up to the formal withdrawal announcement six years later.

Audrey Azoulay, a former French culture minister who has headed UNESCO since 2017, made it a priority of her term to bring the US back.

"This is a great day for UNESCO and for multilateralism," Azoulay said on Friday.

"Thanks to the momentum it has recovered these past years, our organisation is again moving towards universalism with the return of the United States," she said.

Until the suspension of its contributions in 2011 -- decided during the Obama administration -- the US paid about 22 percent of UNESCO's budget, or \$75 million.

But the U.S. Congress, then fully controlled by the Democratic Party of current President Joe Biden, in December paved the way for the United States to restore funding, setting aside \$150 million in the budget.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in March that the US absence from UNESCO was letting China write rules on artificial intelligence.

## Three Far-Right Parties Enter Greek Parliament

ATHENS (Dispatches) - When leaders of the neo-Nazi group Golden Dawn were jailed in 2020, it was seen as an end to the party -- once the third largest force in the Greek parliament -- and the far-right ideology it had tried to mainstream.

All of that was called into question this week with the election of three far-right parties, including Spartans, backed by former Golden Dawn frontman Ilias Kasidiaris.

Spartans as well as the pro-Russian party Greek Solution and ultra-Orthodox Niki (Victory) scooped up 34 seats out of an available 300 and accounted for more than 12 percent of the vote.

Kasidiaris is serving a 13-year jail sentence for membership in Golden Dawn, now considered a criminal organisation. From prison, he urged his supporters to vote for Spartans after his party, Hellenes, was banned from running.

He regularly broadcasts from jail and attracts tens of thousands of views on his YouTube channel.

Golden Dawn was known for its Nazi salutes and violent street attacks, particularly on refugees and migrants. It was also linked to the murder of rapper Pavlos Fyssas in 2013.

Although the three far-right parties account for a small minority of the political make-up of the parliament, concerns remain about what their views on issues such as abortion, migration and LGBTQ+ rights could mean for Greek politics.

"After the Golden Dawn trial, I think people got a bit complacent about what was going on in that kind of space and thought that that might put a lid on it -- but obviously, that hasn't happened."

said Georgia Nakou, a political and financial analyst focusing on Greece who contributes to the Greek analytical site Macropolis.

Nakou told Al Jazeera that some of this trend could be put down to a shift to the right in the political narrative in Greece. "I think it's a combination of mainstream parties, and particularly New Democracy, legitimising a lot of the right-wing agenda, particularly the anti-immigration stuff," she said.

"Because New Democracy has been worried about losing votes to these parties on the right, they have been adopting some of their policies and their rhetoric, for example, on family values or migration or 'culture wars' issues."

Nakou pointed out that this has not led to any greater election success for the conservative governing party, which won 158 seats in Sunday's elections, but failed to significantly increase its parliamentary majority from the 2019 elections, in which it toppled the left-wing party Syriza party from power.

"Any kind of advantage, that they may have thought they'd gained has been ceded to this fringe space," she said, adding that it would now be important to monitor how rights such as abortion became suddenly up for debate.

"These minor parties are precisely the ones who are going to put it on the agenda," Nakou said.



## Kyiv Claims New Hold On Strategic Initiative



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine's president said on June 30 that he ordered his generals to gird the northern border after the leader of an abortive mutiny in Russia was said to have arrived in Belarus, while a senior defense official claimed Ukrainian troops have wrested the "strategic initiative" from Russia in the 15-month full-scale fight.

In Washington, U.S. Army General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the Ukrainian counteroffensive is making steady progress, although perhaps not as rapidly as many in the West had anticipated.

"That it's going slower than people had predicted doesn't surprise me," Miley told the National Press. "It is advancing steadily, deliberately, working its way through very difficult minefields, et cetera...Slow advances, very deliberate."

He also said it was "too early" to determine whether Russian President Vladimir Putin had been weakened by the aborted armed march on Moscow by the Wagner mercenary group last weekend.

"I don't think we have conclusive evidence either way yet," Milley said. "Too early to tell."

General Valery Zaluzhny, commander-in-chief of Ukraine's armed forces, said Ukraine is being limited in its counteroffensive by a lack of weapons, including fighter jets, and the slow delivery of promised firepower from the West.

"Without being fully supplied, these [counteroffensive] plans are not feasible at all," he told The Washington Post in an interview published on June 30. "But they are being carried out. Yes, maybe not as fast as the participants in the show, the observers, would like, but that is their problem."

Milley said the delivery of ATACMS long-range missiles and F-16s fighter jets to Ukraine remains under consideration but that no decisions have been made.

It is "unrealistic" to believe that Belarus has already begun building a base for Wagner fighters, a military expert said.

Earlier, Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar suggested in televised comments that Ukrainian fighters were advancing in all directions around the long-contested city of Bakhmut, in the eastern region of Donetsk.



## Aspartame Sweetener A Possible Carcinogen



LONDON (Dispatches) - One of the world's most common artificial sweeteners is set to be declared a possible carcinogen next month by a leading global health body, according to two sources with knowledge of the process, pitting it against the food industry and regulators.

Aspartame, used in products from Coca-Cola diet sodas to Mars' Extra chewing gum and some Snapple drinks, will be listed in July as "possibly carcinogenic to humans" for the first time by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the World Health Organization's (WHO) cancer research arm, the sources said.

The IARC ruling, finalised earlier this month after a meeting of the group's external experts, is intended to assess whether something is a potential hazard or not, based on all the published evidence.

It does not take into account how much of a product a person can safely consume. This advice for individuals comes from a separate WHO expert committee on food additives, known as JECFA (the Joint WHO and Food and Agriculture Organization's Expert Committee on Food Additives), alongside determinations from national regulators.

However, similar IARC rulings in the past for different substances have raised concerns among consumers about their use, led to lawsuits, and pressured manufacturers to recreate recipes and swap to alternatives. That has led to criticism that the IARC's assessments can be confusing to the public.

JECFA, the WHO committee on additives, is also reviewing aspartame use this year. Its meeting began at the end of June and it is due to announce its findings on the same day that the IARC makes public its decision - on July 14.

Since 1981, JECFA has said aspartame is safe to consume within accepted daily limits. For example, an adult weighing 60 kg (132 pounds) would have to drink between 12 and 36 cans of diet soda - depending on the amount of aspartame in the beverage - every day to be at risk. Its view has been widely shared by national regulators, including in the United States and Europe.

An IARC spokesperson said both the IARC and JECFA committees' findings were confidential until July, but added they were "complementary", with IARC's conclusion representing "the first fundamental step to understand carcinogenicity". The additives committee "conducts risk assessment, which determines the probability of a specific type of harm (e.g., cancer) to occur under certain conditions and levels of exposure."

However, industry and regulators fear that holding both processes at around the same time could be confusing, according to letters from US and Japanese regulators seen by Reuters.

"We kindly ask both bodies to coordinate their efforts in reviewing aspartame to avoid any confusion or concerns among the public," Nozomi Tomita, an official from Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, wrote in a letter dated March 27 to WHO's deputy director general, Zsuzsanna Jakab.

The letter also called for the conclusions of both bodies to be released on the same day, as is now happening. The Japanese mission in Geneva, where the WHO is based, did not respond to a request for comment.

The IARC's rulings can have huge impact. In 2015, its committee concluded that glyphosate is "probably carcinogenic". Years later, even as other bodies like the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) contested this, companies were still feeling the effects of the decision. Germany's Bayer in 2021 lost its third appeal against US. Court verdicts that awarded damages to customers blaming their cancers on use of its glyphosate-based weed killers.

## Europe's Space Telescope To Target Universe's Dark Mysteries



PARIS (Dispatches) - Europe's Euclid space telescope is scheduled to blast off on the first-ever mission aiming to shed light on two of the universe's greatest mysteries: dark energy and dark matter.

The launch is planned from Cape Canaveral in Florida at 11:11 am local time (1511 GMT) on a Falcon 9 rocket of the US company SpaceX.

The European Space Agency was forced to turn to the rival firm of billionaire Elon Musk to launch the mission after Russia pulled its Soyuz rockets in response to sanctions over the war in Ukraine.

After a month-long journey through space, Euclid will join its fellow space telescope James Webb at a stable hovering spot around 1.5 million kilometres (more than 930,000 miles) from Earth called the second Lagrangian Point.

From there, Euclid will chart the largest-ever map of the universe, encompassing up to two billion galaxies across more than a third of the sky.

By capturing light that has taken 10 billion years to reach Earth, the map will also offer a new view of the 13.8-billion-year-old universe's history.

Scientists hope to use this information to address what the Euclid project manager Giuseppe Racca calls a "cosmic embarrassment": that 95 percent of the universe remains unknown to humanity.

Around 70 percent is thought to be dark energy, the name given to the unknown force that is causing the universe to expand at an accelerated rate.

And 25 percent is dark matter, thought to bind the universe together and make up around 80 percent of its mass.

Euclid consortium member Guadalupe Canas told a press conference that the two-tonne space telescope was a "dark detective" which can reveal more about both elements.

Euclid, which is 4.7 metres (15 feet) tall and 3.5 metres (11 feet) wide, will use two scientific instruments to map the sky.

Its visible light camera will let it measure the shape of galaxies, while its near infrared spectrometer and photometer will allow it to measure how far away they are.

So how will Euclid try to spot things that cannot be seen? By searching for their absence.

The light coming from billions of light years away is slightly distorted by the mass of visible and dark matter along the way, a phenomenon known as weak gravitational lensing.

"By subtracting the visible matter, we can calculate the presence of the dark matter which is in between," Racca told AFP.

While this may not reveal the true nature of dark matter, scientists hope it will throw up new clues that will help track it down in the future.

For dark energy, French astrophysicist David Elbaz compared the expansion of the universe to blowing up a balloon with lines drawn on it.

By "seeing how fast it inflates," scientists hope to measure the breath -- or dark energy -- making it expand.

A major difference between Euclid and other space telescopes is its wide field of view, which takes in an area equivalent to two full moons.

Project scientist Rene Laureijs said that this wider view means Euclid will be able to "surf the sky and find exotic objects" like black holes that the Webb telescope can then investigate in greater detail.

## Turkmenistan Unveils \$5b City In Honor of National Leader



ARKADAG (Dispatches) - Turkmenistan inaugurated Arkadag, a \$ 5-billion "smart" city built in honor of former strongman leader Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, cementing one of the most extraordinary personality cults in the world.

Serdar Berdimukhamedov, his son and current president, unveiled the city around 30 kilometres (18 miles) southwest of the capital Ashgabat during a grandiose ceremony attended by AFP journalists.

The ex-Soviet Central Asian nation is one of the most closed countries in the world, and access for foreign media is extremely rare.

The new city built in the foothills of the picturesque Kopet-Dag Mountains is named after Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, who ruled over the country between 2006 and 2022 and now carries the title Hero Arkadag (Protector).

"Glory to Arkadag and Serdar, glory to the Turkmen leader," participants dressed in traditional Turkmen clothes chanted during the ceremony.

The former president, who turned 66 on Thursday, remains the real decision-maker in the country, observers say. The elder Berdimukhamedov was making the hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia and was not present at the ceremony.

Rights groups have accused Turkmenistan of channelling money from its gas profits on lavish projects promoting Berdimukhamedov's personality cult with little benefit for the broader population.

Arkadag, which is in an earthquake zone, will eventually have a population of around 73,000, authorities have said.

## Scientists Hear "Cosmic Hum From Gravitational Waves

LONDON (Dispatches) - Astronomers say they have found the first evidence of a long-theorized form of gravitational waves that create a "background hum" rumbling throughout the universe.

The findings, unveiled on Wednesday, are the product of years of work by hundreds of scientists using radio telescopes in North America, Europe, China, India and Australia, and have been hailed as an important breakthrough that opens a new window into the universe.

First predicted by Albert Einstein more than a century ago, gravitational waves are ripples in the fabric of the universe that travel through everything at the speed of light almost entirely unimpeded.

Their existence was not confirmed until 2015, when observatories in the United States and Italy detected the first gravitational waves created by two black holes colliding. These "high-frequency" waves were the result of a single violent event sending a strong, short burst rippling towards Earth.

But for decades, scientists have also been searching for low-frequency gravitational waves, thought to be constantly rolling through space like background noise.

These slow ripples can take years or even decades to cycle up and down, and probably come from some of the biggest objects in our universe: supermassive black holes billions of times the mass of the Sun.

Joining forces under the banner of the International Pulsar Timing Array consortium, the scientists have finally found strong evidence of these background waves.

US politics, Canada's multiculturalism, South America's geopolitical rise—we bring you the stories that matter.

"We now know that the universe is awash with gravitational waves," Michael Keith of the European Pulsar Timing Array told the AFP news agency. As gravitational waves travel through space, they very subtly squeeze and stretch everything they pass through.

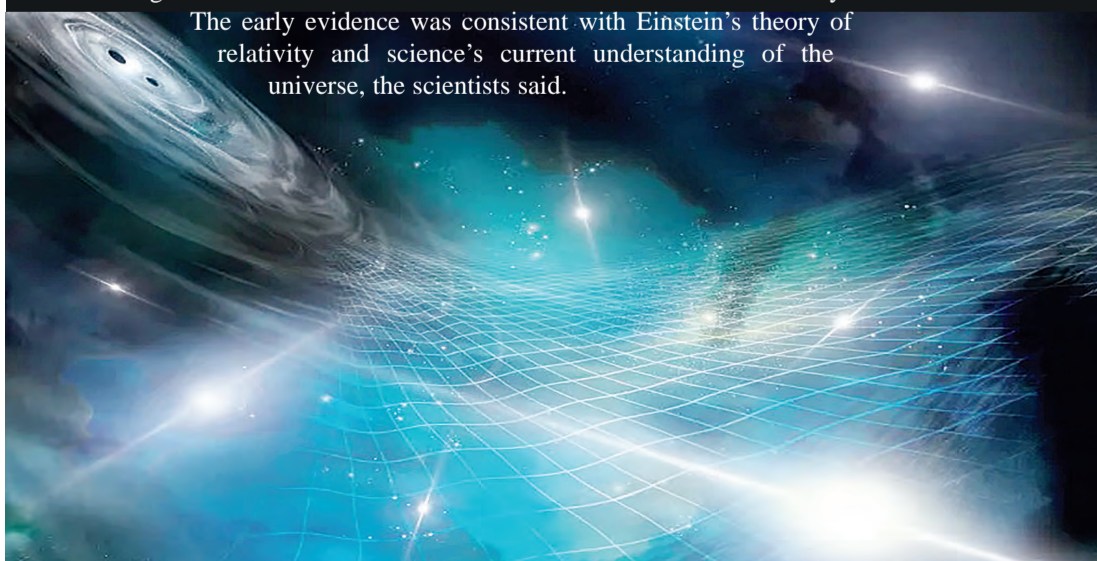
To find evidence of this squeezing and stretching at low frequencies, astronomers looked at pulsars, the dead cores of stars that exploded in a supernova. Some spin hundreds of times a second, flashing beams of radio waves at extremely regular intervals, like cosmic lighthouses.

This means they can act as "a very, very precise clock", Keith said.

For the new research, radio telescopes around the world were aimed at a total of 115 pulsars throughout the Milky Way.

Scientists then measured the incredibly small differences in the timing of the pulses, searching for telltale signs of gravitational waves. French astrophysicist Antoine Petiteau said they were able to "detect changes of less than one-millionth of a second across more than 20 years".

The early evidence was consistent with Einstein's theory of relativity and science's current understanding of the universe, the scientists said.



## How Reading is a Superfood For Young Brains



LONDON (Dispatches) - Fewer and fewer young people read for pleasure. Yet this activity is extremely beneficial to them in cognitive, intellectual and behavioural terms, especially if they get into reading at an early age, a new study reveals.

Researchers in the UK and China have investigated the multiple benefits of "leisure" reading by analysing data from the Adolescent Brain and Cognitive Development cohort, recruited as part of a longitudinal study of over 10,000 young adolescents in North America. The scientists wanted to determine whether reading for pleasure in early childhood contributes to the cerebral and cognitive development of young people.

Indeed, specialists and teachers often insist on the need for kids to immerse themselves in the joys of reading from an early age. That's why they encourage parents to read stories with their children to give them a lasting love of books. But previously, scientists have been unsure whether this activity involves cognitive and brain mechanisms that could benefit youngsters as they grow older.

To test this hypothesis, researchers from the Universities of Cambridge, Warwick and Fudan analysed a wide range of data, including clinical interviews, cognitive tests, mental and behavioural assessments, and brain scans. They involved teenagers who began reading for pleasure at a relatively early age (between 2 and 9), and others who took up reading later, or not at all.

Nearly half of the participants (48 per cent) in this the study — published in the journal *Psychology of Medicine* — had read little for pleasure or had only started to do so later in their childhood. The other half of the group had spent between three and ten years reading for pleasure.



## UBS to Cut 35,000 Jobs After Credit Suisse Rescue

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Swiss banking group UBS plans to cut 35,000 jobs at Credit Suisse -- more than half its workforce -- as part of the emergency rescue takeover of its rival in March, according to a report by Bloomberg News. Credit Suisse had a staff of around 45,000 before it nearly collapsed on investor fears about its solvency, which prompted a massive bailout orchestrated by the Swiss government. Analysts had warned that huge job losses were likely because of the overlapping activities at two of the world's most important banks. UBS declined to comment on the reported job cuts when contacted by AFP. Combined, the two groups had around 120,000 employees at the end of last year, with 37,000 of them in Switzerland.



## China Will Take Steps to Boost Demand, Accelerate Green Transition

TIANJIN (Dispatches) - Chinese Premier Li Qiang said China will take steps to boost demand, invigorate markets, promote development while accelerating the green transition and opening "high level" parts of its economy to the outside world. Addressing a World Economic Forum summit in Tianjin, Li did not elaborate on China's plans, leaving investors hanging on for concrete details of the government's stimulus policies.

China's economic growth in the second quarter will be higher than the first and is expected to reach the annual economic growth target of around 5%, Li said.

China's GDP grew 4.5% year-on-year in the first three months of the year, but momentum has faded sharply since.

Several major banks have cut their 2023 gross domestic product (GDP) forecasts after May industrial output and retail sales data missed forecasts and indicated Beijing would need to take further steps to shore up a shaky post-COVID recovery.

Nomura has cut its 2023 GDP forecast to just 5.1% from 5.5%, adding in a note that its new forecast incorporated the impact of potential policy stimulus measures.

"We will launch more practical and effective measures in expanding the potential of domestic demand, activating market vitality, promoting coordinated development, accelerating green transition, and promoting high-level opening to the outside world," Li said.

Having just returned from visits to Germany and France last week, Li also alluded to the recent negative rhetoric directed towards China by the leading Western democracies.

"Everyone knows some people in the West are hyping up this so-called 'de-risking,' and I think, to some extent, it's a false proposition," Li said, in an apparent reference to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's assessment that Europe should "de-risk" diplomatically and economically from China.

"The invisible barriers put up by some people in recent years are becoming widespread and pushing the world into fragmentation and even confrontation," Li said, turning to the trade tensions between the United States and China.

"We firmly oppose the artificial politicisation of economic and trade issues," the Chinese premier said, adding that effective communication was vital to avoid misunderstandings between nations.

Taking up one of his key themes since being appointed in March, Li said the trend of globalisation remains intact despite some setbacks, and China remains open for business and welcomes foreign investors. Speaking in a separate meeting with Chinese and foreign business leaders, Li sought to reassure them that the government would continue to support foreign firms' presence.

For example, Li said China would improve government procurement policies for medicines and pay close attention foreign firms' concerns over new data management regulations.

Without elaborating, Li said China would not misuse security checks on foreign firms, while also cautioning that some had violated Chinese rules.

## BOJ May Tweak Yield Control Policy in Oct

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The Bank of Japan (BOJ) is likely to move steadily towards phasing out its massive stimulus and may tweak yield curve control as early as October, said former central bank policymaker Makoto Sakurai.

While the central bank is likely to revise up this fiscal year's growth and inflation forecasts at the next rate review in July, it is seen keeping monetary settings unchanged as it awaits more clues on whether wages keep rising, Sakurai said.

"Japan's economy is in quite good shape with capital expenditure strong. But the BOJ probably wants to look at the outcome of summer bonus payments. Uncertainty over the overseas economic outlook is also a good reason to wait," he said.

"The key timing will come around October or December. If the economy is holding up, the BOJ could act" such as by widening the allowance band around its yield target, Sakurai told Reuters in an interview on Tuesday.

Under yield curve control (YCC), the BOJ guides short-term interest rates at -0.1% and 10-year bond yields around 0%. It also sets a band at which it allows the 10-year yield to move up and down 50 basis point each around the 0% target.

Markets are simmering with speculation BOJ Governor Kazuo Ueda will phase out his predecessor's massive stimulus including YCC, which has drawn criticism for distorting market pricing and narrowing financial institutions' margins.

The ultra-low interest rate policy has made the BOJ an outlier among a global wave of central banks tightening policy, and triggered an unwelcome yen fall that boosts import costs.

Sakurai, who as board member was involved in the adoption of YCC in 2016, sees signs suggesting that Ueda will move slowly but steadily towards an exit.

For one, the BOJ's decision in April to remove a pledge to keep interest rates at "current or lower levels" was a first step towards normalising policy, he said.

"The BOJ is gradually moving towards a revision to its ultra-loose policy," said Sakurai, who retains close contact with incumbent policymakers.

The BOJ's eventual goal will likely be to remove the yield cap and shift to a policy guiding short-term interest rates as the sole policy target, he said.

But the BOJ must tread carefully because any abrupt rise in bond yields could inflict huge losses on financial institutions' bond holdings, and boost the cost of financing Japan's huge public debt, Sakurai said.

"The BOJ probably wants to start raising rates. But the pace will be very slow," he said.



## Global Central Banks Post Losses on Reserves in 2022

NEW YORK (Dispatches)- Global central banks experienced losses managing their reserves last year amid bond-heavy allocations that took a major hit in 2022 following aggressive monetary policy tightening around the world, according to the latest survey by a think tank group.

About 40% of reserve managers surveyed said it will take one to two years to recover losses in 2022, while nearly a quarter believe it will take two to five years.

The Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum (OMFIF), an organization that tracks central banking and economic policy, surveyed 75 reserve managers overseeing nearly \$5 trillion in assets, or about a third of total global reserves currently estimated at \$15 trillion. Current reserves are down from a peak of \$15.7 trillion seen in late 2021.

Currency interventions last year by monetary authorities to prop up their financial units against a resurgent dollar have also contributed to portfolio losses on central bank reserves, OMFIF said in the report.

"If you look at it from a 12-month perspective -- from March 2022 to March 2023, they (central banks) were down about 4% in terms of total reserves," Nikhil Sanghani, OMFIF's head of research told Reuters in an interview.

"That's the effect of intervention and the rest would be market losses, we assume, on fixed-income portfolios," he added, noting that about 40% of their portfolios are in government bonds.

For instance, the U.S. bond market, the largest in the world, had the worst-ever year on record in 2022, bond strategists said, as the Federal Reserve undertook multiple 75 basis-point hikes over the last year to curb stubbornly-high inflation, before decelerating its pace.

"The losses on reserves are an unusual situation because of the sharp rise in interest rates," said Sanghani. "Generally speaking over the last five to 10 years, central bank reserve managers have done pretty well because of the low interest rate environment."

Yet despite losses incurred with bond holdings, reserve managers are planning to increase allocation to this market, along with gold over the next two years, turning risk-averse on concerns about a global slowdown, the OMFIF survey showed.

The survey also showed that 32% of reserve managers plan to increase allocation to bonds over the next two years, compared with 5% in 2021, and 10% in 2022.

The fear of stagflation, a scenario characterized by high inflation, as well as sluggish growth and unemployment, is driving that fear to safety, OMFIF said. About 38% of reserve managers expect a global recession over the next 12 months.



## German Business Sentiment Points to Likelihood of Longer Recession

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German business morale worsened for the second consecutive month in June, a survey showed, indicating that Europe's largest economy faces an uphill battle to shake off the recession.

The Ifo Institute said its business climate index fell to 88.5 this month from 91.5 in May. A Reuters analysts' poll predicted a smaller drop to 90.7 in June.

"Sentiment in the German economy has clouded over noticeably," Ifo's president Clemens Fuest said.

Expectations were much more pessimistic, with the related index falling to 83.6 from May's 88.3. Companies also assessed their current situation more poorly, with that index falling to 93.7 from 94.8.

The economy faces the prospect of a long recession as domestic demand and the expectations of exporters have both weakened, Klaus Wohlrabe, head of Ifo surveys, told Reuters in an interview.

"The probability has increased that gross domestic product will also shrink in the second quarter," he said. China's weaker-than-hoped-for economic performance since its reopening from tight COVID-19 lockdowns, a looming U.S. recession and ongoing monetary policy tightening seem to be weighing on German company sentiment, said Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro at ING. "What is clear is that the optimism at the start of the year seems to have given way to more of a sense of reality," Brzeski said.

The decline in Ifo is in line with the drop in the flash purchasing managers index, published on Friday. There was a combination of a slower rise in service sector business activity and a deepening downturn in manufacturing output that report showed.

## Russians Still Top House Buyers in Turkey, Saudis Surge

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Russians continued to lead the housing investments of foreigners in Turkey in the January-May period, while Saudi Arabian citizens rose to 11th place in the list they entered after a long time.

Based on data compiled by Anadolu Agency (AA) from the Turkish Statistical Institute's (TurkStat) housing sales statistics, it was observed that international investors' demand for housing in Turkey experienced a decline in the January-May period compared to the same

period in 2022. Nevertheless, certain countries continued to showcase noteworthy engagement.

Over the course of the first five months, the number of properties purchased by foreigners in Turkey decreased by 38%, amounting to 16,779 units.

During this period, the southern Mediterranean province of Antalya emerged as the province with the highest number of homes sold, reaching a total of 6,446 units, closely followed by Istanbul with 5,329 units.

Since the initiation of the Russia-Ukraine war, Antalya has successfully surpassed Istanbul and claimed the top position on the list. It has maintained its leadership in this sector throughout the remaining months of the year.

In the first five months, a total of 1,231 residences were sold to foreigners in southern Mersin province, followed by 504 in the capital Ankara, 443 in northwestern Bursa, 427 in northwestern Yalova, 373 in western Izmir, 283 in southwestern Mugla, and 240 and 208 in northwestern provinces of Kocaeli and Sakarya.

Mugla, which did not make it to the top 10 last year, secured the eighth position during the January-May period.

The Russians emerged as the leading investors in housing, with the number of residences sold to Russian citizens reaching 5,723, reflecting an increase of 44.4%.

Ukrainian citizens continued their housing investments, acquiring a total of 770 units. Notably, they advanced from sixth place last year to fourth place in the first five months of this year.

During this period, Iranians purchased 2,324 residences, Iraqis acquired 809, Kazakhs bought 605, German citizens invested in 564, Kuwaitis acquired 373, Chinese citizens purchased 364, Azerbaijani citizens bought 336, and there were 297 purchases made by U.S. passport holders.

Saudi Arabia, which consistently ranked among the top four countries whose citizens purchased housing in Turkey in previous years, experienced a significant decline in 2020, dropping to the 17th position due to strained relations between the two nations.

## U.S. to Spend \$42b to Make Internet Access Universal by 2030



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The White House divvied up \$42 billion among the nation's 50 states and U.S. territories to make access to high-speed broadband universal by 2030, as it launched a new publicity campaign for President Joe Biden's economic policies.

The funding under the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program was authorized by the \$1 trillion 2021 infrastructure law Biden championed. The spending will be based on a newly released Federal Communications Commission coverage map that details gaps in access.

Texas and California - the two most populous U.S. states - top the funding list at \$3.1 billion and \$1.9 billion, respectively. But other, less populous states like Virginia, Alabama and Louisiana cracked the top 10 list for funding due to lack of broadband access. These states have large rural areas with less internet connectivity than their major cities.

"It's the biggest investment in high-speed internet ever. Because for today's economy to work for everyone, internet access is just as important as electricity, or water, or other basic services," Biden said in a White House address on Monday.

The awards range from \$27 million to U.S. territories like U.S. Virgin Islands to over \$3.3 billion for Texas, with every state receiving a minimum of \$107 million.

The announcement kicks off the second leg of Biden's tour highlighting how legislation passed when his Democratic Party controlled Congress will affect average Americans, as his 2024 re-election bid gears up.

As part of the sales pitch, Biden is also set to give what White House officials describe as a major economic speech on Wednesday in Chicago, laying out so-called "Bidenomics," according to a memo on Monday from senior advisers Anita Dunn and Mike Donilon to congressional Democrats and other allies.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:08
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:07
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:53

93. If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (For ever): And the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him.  
94. O ye who believe! When ye go abroad in the cause of Allah, investigate carefully, and say not to any one who offers you a salutation: "Thou art none of a believer!" Coveting the perishable goods of this life: with Allah are profits and spoils abundant. Even thus were ye yourselves before, till Allah conferred on you His favours: Therefore carefully investigate. For Allah is well aware of all that ye do. Surah 4. Women (93 - 94)

# Slow Post-Covid Recovery for Cuban Tourism

TRINIDAD (Dispatches) - Cuba, which relies heavily on the tourist dollars of visitors to its pristine Caribbean beaches and colorful towns, has experienced a frustrating scarcity of foreigners since the end of the coronavirus pandemic.

The 16th-century town of Trinidad, a major attraction, has been hard hit, with barely enough foot traffic nowadays to sustain its tourist industry.

There is a wide range of causes, depending on who you ask: US sanctions, the Ukraine war, soaring global inflation and high plane ticket prices, as well as domestic shortages of power and fuel.

"Given that there was no tourism, many people were obliged to do other types of work, work in the fields, sell bread in the streets, do other things to make a living," said Norelvis Vegas, who earns an unreliable income transporting tourists through Trinidad's scenic streets on a horse-drawn buggy.

"Here, we have no factory, we have nothing" else to turn to, the 33-year-old told AFP from the driver's seat of his carriage, the passenger compartment empty.

Trinidad, some 350 kilometers (220 miles) southeast of Havana, is a UNESCO heritage site.

Like the majority of the town's 76,000 residents, Vegas depends on tourism to support his family. But for years now, it has been hard.

"We have seen fewer Spanish, Italians, French, Germans -- what used to be a very good market and a strength for Trinidad," said restaurant owner Reinaldo Vivas, 55.

At the restaurant's peak, when American cruise ships docked regularly during a period of political rapprochement under then-US president Barack Obama, Vivas served 250 meals a day, but he has had to halve his seating.

Cuba has been under US sanctions since 1962. In 2019, before the pandemic, tourism was its second-biggest income generator after medical service exports. There are no official statistics for 2022.

"If we had electricity and transportation assured, gasoline basically, business would flow much better and we could make it more comfortable for the clients," said Yami Martinez, 48, who has run a nine-room hostel in Trinidad for the last 10 years.

Cuba battles frequent electricity cuts and people stand in long queues not only for fuel but also medicine, food and other essentials.

Tourists are not always spared the shortages blamed on the US blockade and a lack of foreign exchange.

"Compared to the period before Covid, occupancy is about 25 percent less," said Martinez of her hostel.

This was just enough to pay her workers and most of the utilities, and to carry out essential maintenance.

Cuba attracted a record 4.7 million tourists in 2018, earning some \$3.3 billion in revenue, before Donald Trump put a stop to cruise ships docking at the communist island and ramped up sanctions.

This hard blow to tourism was followed by the Covid pandemic and the war on



Ukraine which shocked economies worldwide.

Official figures show that peak hotel occupancy in 2022 was 15.6 percent. All hotels in Cuba, like most economic sectors, are state-owned.

In other Caribbean destinations, the comparative figure for 2022 was 75.9 percent for Cancun in Mexico, and 70.3 percent in the Dominican Republic, showing much stronger post-Covid rebound.

Tourism Minister Juan Carlos Garcia last month said the mainstay Canadian market -- which represents about 50 percent of all tourists to Cuba -- recovered last year to about 80 percent of its 2019 level.

"But the same cannot be said of the other important market: the European countries," he said.

The one-party government has set a target of 3.5 million visitors for 2023.

In 2022, the target was 2.5 million, of which only 1.6 million came.

To take advantage of warm ties with Russia, now a Western pariah, Cuba is counting on a strengthening of air links with Moscow.

Venezuela's Conviasa airline launched a Caracas-Havana-Moscow connection this month, and direct flights from the Russian capital to the Cuban seaside resort town of Varadero are scheduled to resume in July.

"We see more Russian tourists," affirmed Vivas, the restaurateur.

For her part, painter Vivian Maite Hernandez said she had noted more Turks on the streets of Trinidad, something not seen in the past.

To tap into this new market, souvenir sellers have been updating their inventory: next to the ubiquitous portraits of Che Guevara or Havana's famous American sedans there are now also canvases of the "Hand of Fatima," a Middle Eastern good luck charm.

## Canada Wildfire CO2 Emissions Hit Record High

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - Wildfires raging across Canada, made more intense by global warming, have released more planet-warming carbon dioxide in the first six months of 2023 than in any full year on record, EU scientists said.

Hundreds of forest fires since early May have generated nearly 600 million tonnes of CO2, equivalent to 88 percent of the country's total greenhouse gas emissions from all sources in 2021, the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) reported.

More than half of that carbon pollution went up in smoke in June alone.

"The emissions from these wildfires are now the largest annual emissions for Canada in the 21 years of our dataset," CAMS said in a statement.

The previous record for CO2 cast off by wild fires was just over 500 million tonnes, in 2014.

As of Tuesday, firefighters were battling 494 blazes throughout the country, more than half of them classified as out-of-control, according to the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre.

Fuelled by unusually dry conditions and high temperatures, fires erupted in large numbers starting in early May in the western part of Canada, expanding over the last 50 days eastward to Ontario, Nova Scotia and Quebec.

Globally, forests play a crucial role in curbing global warming by absorbing and stocking excess CO2 -- emitted mainly from burning fossil fuels -- that is overheating the planet.

Vegetation and soil have consistently soaked up about 30 percent of CO2 pollution since 1960, even as those emissions increased by half.

When forests burn, however, all that stored carbon is released into the air.

Fires in eastern Canada have sent huge plumes of particle-filled smoke across the Atlantic Ocean at high altitude, reaching the British Isles and Europe this week.

The long-range transport of smoke by prevailing winds "is not unusual, and not expected to have any significant impact on surface air quality in Europe," said CAMS senior scientist Mark Parrington.

"But it is a clear reflection of the intensity of the fires."

Earlier in June, eye-watering smoke and throat-scraping particle pollution from Canada's fires descended over the US eastern seaboard, including New York City and Philadelphia.

More than 75 million people were under air quality alerts. Air quality in Montreal was ranked among the worst in the world over the last weekend, according to IQAir.

## Debate Sizzles as Meat Eating Hits New Low in Germany

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Florian Busmann used to enjoy sausages and steak on the barbecue in summer, but these days he prefers meat substitutes and grilled vegetables like aubergines and peppers.

"Eating less meat is definitely a contribution to both the environment and animals. And it is also healthy," the 28-year-old local government worker told AFP at the Vegan Summer Festival in Berlin.

Despite being known for their love of sausages and schnitzel, Germans have been steadily eating less meat over the past few years.

Figures from the German Agriculture Ministry show that meat consumption dropped to 52 kilogrammes (115 pounds) per person in 2022, the lowest since the calculations began in 1989.

In comparison, the figure stood at around 61 kilogrammes per person just five years ago.

Worries over animal welfare, climate change and higher prices appear to have driven consumers to look for alternatives to meat to fill their plates.

Around 10 percent of Germans are vegetarian, according to the Agriculture Ministry, compared with six percent in 2018.

Since 2021, Germany has even had a vegetarian agriculture minister, the Green party's Cem Ozdemir -- much to the dismay of many in the meat industry.

Despite having made the choice to go veggie as a teenager due to concerns over animal welfare, Ozdemir still sees a role for the meat industry.

For him, the key is to reform meat production as part of measures to tackle climate change.

Animal husbandry is "one of the biggest drivers" of carbon emissions in agriculture, he told AFP, so measures must be taken to make the practice more climate-friendly.

"For example, we will support farmers in keeping fewer animals, but better," he said.

Ozdemir believes Germans eating less meat is a "long-term trend" that has nothing to do with him personally.

"People are concerned about the climate, want better animal welfare and are also paying more attention to their health, which I think is good," he said.

The growing market for meat substitutes has also played a role, according to Sebastian Joy, head of the NGO ProVeg International, which organises the Berlin festival.



"You can still have your burger, your schnitzel, your sausages, but you don't have to kill animals for it," he said.

Ozdemir's ministry is working on a nutrition strategy to help Germans eat more healthily and is planning to present it by the end of 2023.

The plan is to encourage people to follow a "healthy, more plant-based and sustainable diet", according to the ministry.

But not all Germans feel so positive about a future with less meat.

Local media recently reported that the German Nutrition Society (DGE), which advises the government on measures to promote healthy eating, was planning to recommend just 10 grams of meat per day.

The reports caused an uproar, with memes circulating on social media showing the paltry portion of meat being weighed out on scales.

The DGE later said the whole thing had been a misunderstanding, but the debate has shown no signs of cooling down.

A recent survey by the popular Bild daily showed that 57 percent of Germans are firmly against the state taking measures to reduce meat consumption.

"The state should stay away from people's plates," a spokeswoman for the German Meat Industry Association (VDF) told AFP.

"Ninety percent of Germans like to eat meat. Nobody wants to tell a vegetarian to eat meat to get a better supply of vitamins and nutrients. The same must apply in reverse," the spokeswoman said.

The VDF believes declining meat consumption in Germany since 2018 is mainly down to rising prices and pressure on consumers from inflation.

### Iran Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

In late April, the European Union's statistics office Eurostat announced the import of Iranian oil by three European Union (EU) members in 2022, and introduced Bulgaria as the newest customer of Iranian oil in this union.

The information published by Eurostat shows that the European Union imported 4,181 tons of crude oil or oil products from Iran last year.

Although the amount of EU oil imports from Iran is not a significant figure, it indicates the desire of European refineries to ignore the U.S. sanctions against Iran, and the inclusion of these figures in the official European oil import statistics shows the desire of the European authorities to distance themselves from the sanctions, or at least showing their objection to the U.S. sanctions policy against Iran.

### SCO to...

FROM PAGE 1

The July 4 summit will take place in New Delhi via video conference.

Meanwhile on Friday Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said he is confident Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will provide the SCO with a growing capacity.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks in a phone conversation with the SCO Secretary-General Zhang Ming amid reports about the formal approval of Iran's full membership next week.

He said the Iranian parliament and administration, particularly the Foreign Ministry, have made substantial efforts to prepare and approve all the documents pertaining to the country's full membership.

The top Iranian diplomat hailed efforts and cooperation by the SCO secretary-general to complete the process of the full membership.

Amirabdollahian said Iran is ready to take part in the SCO's next meeting, which is scheduled to be held virtually.

He said Iran would officially introduce its coordinator to the organization's secretariat in the coming week.

Iran first applied for membership in the alliance 15 years ago, but it took until 2021 for the request to be approved.

The SCO, which has its headquarters in China, is a diplomatic organization with eight members, namely Russia, India, Pakistan, and Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Set up in 2001, the organization's members work to tackle joint security issues, cooperate militarily and promote internal trade.

### Iranians Made...

FROM PAGE 1

"Enemies believed that Iraq would be overrun in the wake of Daesh's terror campaign, but it was the fatwa (religious edict) by Iraq's top religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, urging Iraqis to take up arms against the terrorists, that foiled the conspiracy.

"Thanks to the fatwa, Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), better known as Hashd al-Sha'abi, were formed. This fostered cooperation and coordination among all Iraqi armed forces and put an end to sectarianism in Iraq," Ameri said.

Daesh began a campaign of terror in the Arab country in 2014 and took control of vast swathes in lightning attacks across the region.

Iraq declared victory over the terrorist group in December 2017 after a three-year counter-terrorism military campaign, in which Hashd al-Sha'abi also played a major role.

However, Daesh's remnants keep staging sporadic attacks across Iraq, attempting to regroup and unleash fresh violence in the Arab country.

The Takfiri terrorist group has managed to intensify its attacks in Iraq, particularly since January 2020, when the United States assassinated General Soleimani and PMU's deputy commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in a drone strike near Baghdad International Airport.

Anti-U.S. sentiments sharply increased in Iraq in the aftermath of the assassination, prompting Iraqi lawmakers to pass a bill -- only two days after the assassination -- that required the Baghdad government to end the presence of all foreign military forces led by Washington.

### U.S. Congress Demands...

FROM PAGE 1

Malley announced earlier that his security clearance was under review, but hoped that the investigation would be resolved "favorably and soon". "In the meantime, I am on leave," he said.

A U.S. official familiar with the matter also said Malley was placed on unpaid leave on Thursday afternoon. Another source said that his security clearance was suspended amid a State Department diplomatic security investigation into the possible mishandling of classified information. The U.S. official told CNN that Malley remained on the job for a period of time following the State Department investigation, but was not allowed to access classified information.

Two sources familiar with the matter also confirmed that the State Department investigation identified an issue with Malley's security clearance.



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**ISSN** 1024-6053  
**P.O. Box:** 15875-8551  
**Address:** No 13, Pajouhesh St.,  
Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran  
Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**printed by:** Omid Nashr Chap Iranian  
**Distributed by:**  
Cities of Iran Cultural and  
Artistic Institute  
**Managing Director:** Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

## Inter Confirm Skriniar

### Departure Ahead of PSG Switch

MILAN (Dispatches) - Slovakia's captain Milan Skriniar will leave Inter Milan as a free agent ahead of a move to Paris Saint-Germain after the Serie A club confirmed his departure.

"Six seasons full of victories and accomplishments: here ends Milan Skriniar's adventure in the Inter shirt," Inter said in a short statement.

Skriniar's Inter contract expires today, after which he will be free to move to French champions PSG.

## French Basketball Star Joins Moscow CSKA

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - French basketball star Amath M'Baye has joined CSKA Moscow until mid 2024, the team announced, a deal that bars him from the French national side over Moscow's intervention in Ukraine.

France's basketball federation ruled after the Kremlin launched large-scale hostilities in Ukraine last year that players who join Russian or Belarusian teams will not be sanctioned to play for the national side.

# Murray to Face Ryan Peniston In All-British Wimbledon Opener

LONDON (Dispatches) - After years of looking up to Andy Murray and then eventually counting him as a friend, the British wildcard Ryan Peniston says he will relish the challenge of facing the 36-year-old as a rival when they play each other in the first round of Wimbledon.

"I think it's going to be a pretty special experience to go out there on to Centre Court, and play against Andy as well," said Peniston. "For my family, I hope they enjoy it as well because they've sacrificed a lot for me to get here. Hopefully it will be a special day and I'm going to do my best to give my best performance and treat it like any other match."

Speaking shortly after the draw ceremony, Peniston said he learned of his fate when he was driving and received a message from his coach: "I was literally just driving from my girlfriend's and I had a text from my coach Mark, which just said: 'Andy!!' It's pretty cool. I almost crashed."

Having failed to secure a seeding after losing in the first round of Queen's last week, Murray can have minimal complaints about his draw. Peniston showed his considerable pedigree on grass last year, but he has compiled a three-four win-loss record during this year's grass season.

Should Murray win, he will face a blockbuster second-round match against either Stefanos Tsitsipas, the No 5 seed, or former US Open champion Dominic Thiem. Despite their talent, neither player performs at their best on grass, with Tsitsipas compiling a one-three record on the surface this year.

Peniston's pathway to a likely Centre Court appearance at Wimbledon is noteworthy.

The 27-year-old was diagnosed with cancer at the age of one and he underwent chemotherapy and a major surgery in his youth. Since leaving the University of Memphis and becoming a professional tennis player, he has risen to inside the top 200. He showed last year that he is capable of beating top-100 players on grass, reaching quarter-finals at Queen's and Eastbourne with wins over Casper Ruud and Holger Rune.

Elsewhere, Novak Djokovic remains the heavy favorite to win his eighth Wimbledon title, which would equal Roger Federer's men's record, and his fifth Wimbledon title in a row.

Djokovic will begin his title run against Pedro Cachin of Argentina. With Ruud, Andrey Rublev, Jannik Sinner and Taylor Fritz the highest ranked players in his half, it would take a significant surprise for any player to oust Djokovic on grass.



Fresh off his maiden grass-court title at Queen's, Carlos Alcaraz will begin his tournament against Jérémy Chardy of France as challengers such as Alexander Zverev, Frances Tiafoe and Alex de Minaur will test his level on the surface.

In the women's draw, wildcards Venus Williams and Elina Svitolina will face each other in a fascinating first-round match. In Birmingham last week Williams, who is 43, won her first match since a hamstring tear forced her out of action for five months, defeating the world No 36, Camila Giorgi, in three sets before narrowly losing to the eventual champion, Jelena Ostapenko. Svitolina, who returned to the top 100 after reaching the quarter-finals of the French Open, continues her comeback at her second grand slam tournament since giving birth to her daughter, Skaia.

Meanwhile, Iga Swiatek opted to withdraw before her semi-final match in Bad Homburg after feeling unwell overnight. Should she recover full fitness in the coming days, the world No 1 has been handed a good draw as she continues to adjust to grass courts. The French Open champion will begin against Zhu Lin of China, with Coco Gauff, Daria Kasatkina and Belinda Bencic the highest-ranked players in her half.

In the bottom half, Elena Rybakina and Aryna Sabalenka have been drawn in the same half but both players face tricky draws. Rybakina, who is still recovering from the viral illness she suffered with at the French Open, has been drawn in by far the toughest quarter of the draw, with Ons Jabeur, Ostapenko, Beatriz Haddad Maia and the in-form Petra Kvitova all present.

Sabalenka, the Belarusian world No 2, could face a fourth-round rematch of her French Open semi-final loss against the Czech Republic's Karolina Muchova.

## FIFA Has Ordered Cardiff To Pay Sala Fee



LAUSANNE (Dispatches) - FIFA have ordered Cardiff to pay Nantes the balance of the fee for Emiliano Sala, who died in a plane crash before he could play for the Welsh side, the French club's lawyers said.

The lawyers said FIFA's Football Tribunal had ruled that Cardiff "must pay" just over 11 million euros (12 million dollars, 9.45 million pounds) corresponding to the last two instalments of the 17m-euro fee agreed between the two clubs.

Cardiff will also have to pay interest on the fee and 25,000 dollars in procedural costs, according to the decision, obtained by AFP.

Sala, a 28-year-old Argentine striker, died when the light aircraft taking him to the Welsh capital came down in the Channel on January 21, 2019, two days after he had signed for the then Premier League side.

"FC Nantes is delighted with this latest victory before FIFA. The club's rights have been confirmed. It hopes that, after four years of proceedings, Cardiff City FC will finally respect its financial commitments and stop its relentless litigation", lawyers Jerome Marsaudon and Louis-Marie Absil told AFP.

They said Nantes "is looking forward to bringing the legal aspect of this tragic accident to a definitive close".

Cardiff paid a first instalment of around 6 million euros last January, after an initial decision against it by world football's governing body followed by an unsuccessful appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

## WTA Evaluating Challenging Issue of Tennis in Saudi Arabia

LONDON (Dispatches) - Women's Tennis Association chief executive Steve Simon says his organization are evaluating the "challenging topic" of taking the sport to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has reportedly approached the women's Tour about hosting an event, potentially the prestigious end-of-season Finals.

The WTA has yet to enter any formal discussions with Saudi officials, but Simon accompanied two players and organisation representatives to the Gulf state recently to get a closer look at their plans.

Simon is well aware striking a deal with Saudi Arabia would be controversial given the region's human rights issues and treatment of the LGBTQ+ community.

"It's a very difficult and challenging topic that is being measured by many groups right now," Smith told reporters at a WTA event in London on Friday.

"In February I went to Saudi Arabia to see it for myself. We took a couple of players and some reps as well. We wanted to see what the change was.

"The Saudis are talking to a lot of people and a lot of different sports right now. I think everybody's evaluating what this means and how do you how do you move forward with that?"

As well as the Saudi interest in women's tennis, ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi said the men's Tour has had "positive" discussions with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund about a potential deal.

That announcement drew criticism from tennis legends John McEnroe and Chris Evert, with 'sports-washing' accusations once again aimed at the Saudis.

Women's tennis was played in nearby Qatar from 2008 to 2010 when Doha hosted the WTA Finals.

And Simon believes the sport could prove a change-agent in the region if Saudi authorities continue to adopt a more progressive

"In terms of Saudi we need to look at it very seriously and decide how you take it on and involve them," he said.

"You want them to do what they are talking about right now and advance the opportunities for women in the country, to make it better. You need to support that, you can't walk away from that.

## Djokovic Could Face Kyrgios Again at Wimbledon



Casper Ruud, who he beat in the French Open final earlier this month.

Top seed and world number one Carlos Alcaraz has not been beyond the fourth round at

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic will begin his quest for a record-equalling eighth Wimbledon title against Argentina's Pedro Cachin, with a potential rematch of last year's final against Nick Kyrgios looming in the quarter-finals.

Djokovic could face Andrey Rublev or Felix Auger-Aliassime in the last eight should Kyrgios not make it, with his projected semi-final to come against Jannik Sinner or

Wimbledon in two appearances, but is finding his feet on the grass after winning at Queen's Club last week.

Alcaraz starts against Frenchman Jeremy Chardy, but has a tricky path through to the latter stages with the prospect for a rematch of the Queen's final against Alex de Minaur in the fourth round and world number six Holger Rune in the quarter-finals.

Fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas takes on former US Open champion Dominic Thiem in the tie of the men's first round with the winner potentially facing two-time champion Andy Murray, who takes on wild card Ryan Peniston.

Top seed Iga Swiatek — who had to withdraw from the Bad Homburg semi-finals today due to suspected food poisoning — has been handed the kinder side of the women's draw.

Swiatek begins against China's Zhu Lin and is projected to face Coco Gauff in the quarter-finals and Jessica Pegula or Caroline Garcia in the last four.

## Verstappen Snatches Sixth Pole Position of Season

VIENNA (Dispatches) - World champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull snatched a sixth pole position of the season at his team's home track for the Austrian Grand Prix.

Charles Leclerc will join the world championship leader on the front row ahead of his Ferrari team-mate Carlos Sainz who qualified third-quickest and starts alongside Lando Norris of McLaren on the second row.

"Very happy being on pole," said Verstappen.

"We know that this is a different weekend with the whole format, but very happy with today. At least the car is quick and that's the most important."

For the second time this year after Baku, a sprint race will take place before the Grand Prix. The qualifying sets the starting grid for Sunday, while Saturday's shootout session sets the grid for the sprint in the afternoon.

There will be six sprint races in total this season.

"It was very difficult because of all the track limits," continued the Dutch driver.

"With these speeds and high-speed corners it is very difficult to judge the track limits.

"A lot of people were being caught out, including me. It takes out the joy a little bit but still a very good lap."

Red Bull's Sergio Perez failed to make the top 10 for a fourth straight race as he struggled with track limits.



## PSG Coach Arrested in Discrimination Probe

NICE (Dispatches) - Paris Saint Germain coach Christophe Galtier was held for questioning along with his son as part of a probe into alleged discrimination, the Nice prosecutor told AFP.

The move follows an investigation launched in April, following claims he made racist and Islamophobic remarks about players when he coached Nice in the 2021/22 season.

The prosecutor said they would provide more information on the arrests of Galtier and his son John Valovic-Galtier — a player's agent — via a statement later today.

Galtier is set to be fired by the Qatari owners of PSG after a largely underwhelming season in which PSG suffered 10 defeats in 2023, exiting the Champions League, the team's main objective, in the last 16.

The allegations first surfaced in the French media in April.

The reports — which AFP was unable to verify — alleged that ex-Nice sporting director Julien Fournier had written an email at the end of the 2021/22 season in which he claimed Galtier had made discriminatory remarks at several members of the Nice squad.

"He (Galtier) told me that I should take account of the reality of the city and that in effect we should not have as many blacks and Muslims in the team," claimed Fournier, whose relationship with Galtier was a fraught one.

"He told me he wanted to profoundly change the team's make-up and limit the maximum number of Muslims."

