

**Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji Announced on Monday That the Extraction of Ethane From Nine Refineries in the South Pars (SP) Gas Field Would Generate an Impressive Profit of \$250-\$300m Per Year**

# IRAN NEWS

**TEDPIX, the Main Index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Rose 26,043 Points to 2.183m on Monday, As per report, Over 11.516b Securities Worth 85.958 Trillion Rials (About \$204.6m) Were Traded at the TSE**

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## Iran Serious in Pursuing Terrorists Beyond Its Borders

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Ministry of Intelligence of Iran has stated that the Islamic Republic is committed to actively pursuing terrorists beyond its borders, adding that a number of individuals affiliated with the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) have been arrested in recent months.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the ministry said that the MKO terrorists had intensified their activities within Iran prior to the Albanian police raid on their camp last month.

The ministry highlighted a series of operations conducted in various Iranian cities, resulting in the dismantling of multiple MKO cells and the confiscation of their weapons.

It further commended the Albanian government for taking action against the MKO, years after agreeing to host the group, which has been responsible for numerous terrorist attacks in Iran.

On June 20, Albania's police forces entered the MKO's camp northwest of Tirana, leading to intense clashes with members of the terrorist cult. According to a security source cited by IRNA at the time, at least two terrorists were killed and dozens were injured. **See Page 7**

## Iran-Turkey Annual Trade Up 19% to \$12.7b

TEHRAN (pressTV) - Iran and Turkey experienced a major rise in their bilateral trade over the calendar year to March 20 as shipments rose in value terms despite a fall in volume, according to an analysis of trade figures from the Iranian customs office (IRICA).

The analysis published by the IRIB News on Sunday showed that trade between Iran and Turkey had reached a total of \$12.7 billion in the last Iranian calendar year, up 19% from the year to March 2022.

The report said that Iran-Turkey trade had increased by 115% in terms of the Iranian currency over the period.

That comes as shipments traded between Iran and Turkey fell by nearly 7% in volume terms in year to late March, a sign that businesses in the two countries had opted for trade of commodities with more added value, said the report.

Iran's exports to Turkey rose by 23% year on year to reach \$7.5 billion over the past calendar year, according to IRICA figures which indicated that Turkey was the third largest customer of Iranian exports over the period. **See Page 7**

## Washington Committing Any Crime to Achieve Goals



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani says that the U.S., despite its claims of defending human rights, will not shy away from committing any kind of crime to achieve its illegitimate goals.

Kanaani made the remarks at his weekly press conference speaking about the anniversary of the U.S. attack on the Iranian Air Airbus in 1988 which led to the killing of dozens of passengers.

Referring to the crimes that the U.S. regime committed against the Iranian nation, the senior diplomat stressed that the people of Iran will never forget the US support for the Saddam regime, the illegal cruel sanctions, and other US felonies.

On July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes fired missiles at an Iran Air Airbus A300B2 which was flying over the Strait of Hormuz from the port city of Bandar Abbas to Dubai, carrying 274 passengers and 16 crew members.

Following the attack, the plane disintegrated and crashed into the Persian Gulf waters, killing all 290 onboard, among them 66 children.

U.S. officials claimed that the USS Vincennes had mistaken Iran Air Flight 655 for a warplane. This is while the warship was equipped with highly sophisticated radar systems and electronic battle gear at the time of the attack.

Answering a question regarding the normalization of relations between Tehran and Cairo, Kanaani cited that the Islamic Republic of Iran will welcome any positive developments in this regard.

Tehran will respond to any positive measures taken by the Egyptian government and authorities regarding the ties with Iran, he emphasized.

"Expanding relations with neighboring and Islamic countries in the region is the priority for the [Iranian] government's foreign policy, and in this regard, we welcome any development and positive approach of neighboring and Islamic governments," the foreign ministry spokesman continued.

Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has a mutual benefit for both Iran and the SCO and its members, Kanaani stressed.

He went on to say that this positive development can increase the added value associated with the Shanghai Organization as an important regional organization, adding that Iran's membership will be in line with the interests of all member countries and strengthen the process of regionalism.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday that Iran will be formally approved as a member of the regional Shanghai Cooperation Organization with China, Russia and Central Asian countries.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the senior Iranian diplomat said that the country's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian will participate in the upcoming Non-Aligned Summit in Baku at the invitation of his Azeri counterpart.

The summit is of high importance for Tehran and FM Amir-Abdollahian will attend it at the head of a high-ranking delegation, Kanaani said.

Amirabdollahian will hold a bilateral meeting with his Azeri counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov in Baku, according to him. The Non-Aligned Movement is an international organization that was formed during the Cold War as a response to the major powers, especially in the newly independent and developing countries.

The Islamic Republic of Iran officially joined this movement on 8 June 1979 after announcing its withdrawal from the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

He also said that the atmosphere of relations between Tehran and Baku is positive following the diplomatic measures that were taken.

Referring to the ongoing aggression of the Israeli regime against the Palestinians, Kanaani strongly condemned the Zionists' attacks and stressed Iran's support for the Palestinians regarding their legitimate right to defend themselves.

The senior Iranian diplomat called on the international community to seriously fulfill their responsibility and take effective measures against the crimes of the Israeli regime.

"Crime is institutionalized in the nature of the Zionist regime. The latest crime in Jenin showed once again that peace and compromise cannot deter the regime's war machine and that this regime is neither trustworthy nor seeking peace," he said.

The spokesman also emphasized that the Palestinian nation has not committed any crime except defending its rights in the face of the occupying regime, predicting that the Palestinians will once again defeat the Zionist forces.

"The Palestinian nation's defense of its right and resistance against the Zionists' aggression will not reduce the responsibility of international bodies, including the United Nations and the Security Council, in this respect," Kanaani added.

Kanaani said that Tehran's efforts to pursue and prosecute anti-Iran terrorists are ongoing, slamming certain Western countries for supporting them, especially those affiliated with the Mujahedin-e-Khalq terrorist organization (MKO).

Iran has been pursuing terrorists, both politically and legally, in different ways, he added. "We did not spare any effort to prosecute those who committed terrorist crimes against the Iranian nation," he noted.

Kanaani slammed certain countries that claim to be advocates of human rights but instrumentally use terrorist groups, particularly the MKO, and host its meetings. **See Page 7**

## Iranians Commemorate Anniversary of Passenger Plane Downed by U.S.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iranians have marked the 35th anniversary of the U.S. downing of Iran Air Flight 655 in the Persian Gulf by showering the location of the tragic incident with flowers.

The martyrs of the downed Iranian plane were honored in the ceremony on Monday, when people threw flowers in the water at the site of the crash.

They also chanted slogans such as "Down with USA" and "Down with Israel" to express their hatred and anger over the U.S. crime.

The Iranian passenger plane, an Airbus A300B2 of Iran's flag carrier, Iran Air, was downed by the US cruiser, the USS Vincennes, at 10:17 a.m. local time (UTC 0330) on July 3, 2023.

All 274 passengers and 16 crew members on board were killed when the USS Vincennes fired two SM-2MR surface-to-air missiles at it, one of which hit the plane.

Following the attack, the plane disintegrated and crashed into the Persian Gulf waters, killing all 290 on board, among them 66 children. **See Page 7**

## Iranian Diplomat Denies Claims About Resuming Flights With Egypt

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Ambassador of Iran Muhammad Hussein Sultani denied recent statements regarding a symbolic trip between Tehran and Cairo and the visit of director general of Egyptian tourism to Tehran, stating that they were not made through official channels.

According to what he told the Mehr News Agency, Sultani said that, "We cannot confirm the authenticity of the news."

Media outlets quoted the Syndicate of Air Travel and Tourism Services in Iran as saying that the first batch of Iranian tourists will go to Egypt within the next 45 days, as it indicated that the Director General of the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, will visit Tehran next week.

Spokesperson for the Iranian government Ali Bahadri Jahromi confirmed his country's readiness to strengthen relations with Egypt a day after Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman visited Tehran, which was preceded by his visit to Egypt.

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency quoted Jahromi as saying in a press conference on Tuesday: "As Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said, the government is ready to develop relations with Egypt."

"The President of the Republic, Ibrahim Raisi, instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take the necessary measures, following the statements of the Supreme Leader."

## Iran to Install Hypersonic Missile on Damavand-2 Destroyer

TEHRAN (PressYV) - Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani says a hypersonic missile will be installed on Iran's homegrown Damavand-2 destroyer that will join the Navy in the near future.

On Monday, Irani said the Damavand-2 destroyer will be equipped with "defensive and offensive missiles."

"All defensive equipment installed on Damavand-2 destroyer is completely up-to-date," he stated.

Irani stressed that Damavand is equipped with cutting-edge means in all fields, including the latest reconnaissance and combat systems.

He also announced, "All the equipment installed on all other destroyers will be updated over time."

According to media reports, the Damavand-2 destroyer will join the Navy's northern fleet in the Caspian Sea.

The Damavand-2, which is an advanced type of Jamaran destroyer, is equipped with new radar and missile systems, as well as propulsion and weaponry systems thanks to cooperation between the Defense Ministry, the Iranian Navy, and the knowledge-based companies, the reports added. **See Page 7**

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## Majlis Committee Approves Formation of Ministry of Family

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Cultural Committee of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) has approved the formation of the Ministry of Family, Women and Youth, according to the committee spokesman.

Ahmad Rastineh Hafashjani said on Sunday that the Department of Youth which operates under the Ministry of Sports and the Youth has been proposed to merge with the Department of Women and Family Affairs to form the Ministry of Family, Women and Youth.

As the Iranian population is growing old and the country is expected to face aging challenges in future years, the government is pursuing different plans to encourage childbearing and increase the country's birth rate.

## President Calls for Justice in Payment

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - Emphasizing the importance of creating positive and constructive motivation in administrative staff, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi considered it necessary to establish justice in the payment of salaries and bonuses in offices as one of the most important factors in creating motivation and increasing productivity in offices, and called for more attention to the implementation of the Law on Promotion of Administrative Health and Integrated administrative systems.**

In meeting of the Supreme Administrative Council, Raisi emphasized the importance of creating positive and constructive motivation in administrative employees, and considered justice in the payment of salaries and bonuses in offices as one of the most important factors in creating motivation and increasing productivity in offices.

Referring to the duty and emphasis of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution to create transformation and flexibility in the administrative structure of the country, within the framework of the notification of the general policies of the administrative system, the President considered the adoption of sound decisions and seriousness in their implementation necessary to create transformation in the administrative system.

Raisi also referred to the Law on Promotion of Administrative Health as one of the



very good and sound laws, but neglected in the country's administrative system, and emphasized more efforts to implement it.

The President considered the establishment of integrated administrative systems to be a very useful and effective measure in promoting administrative health, and at the same time, he noted, "In addition to using all the power to complete the smart government as quickly as possible, creating positive and sufficient motivation in employees should also be given special attention".

Reiterating the importance of the two factors of creating justice in payments and improving administrative health, in improving the efficiency of the country's administrative system and organization, Raisi considered the measures taken to create transformation in the administrative system and improve efficiency in the past two years to be insufficient.

The President also emphasized the necessity of maximum utilization of the capacities of the Administrative and Recruitment Affairs Organization to remove the obstacles and problems facing the development and promotion of productivity in the country's administrative system.

In this meeting, due to the increase in environmental and organizational complexities, the revisions made in the previous regulation of the powers and duties of the governor generals were approved.

## New Ambassador To Turkey Appointed

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Ambassador to Turkey Mohammad Farazmand has announced the completion of his diplomatic mission, Trend reports.

In his post on Twitter, the ambassador extended his gratitude to the colleagues he had the opportunity to work with and conveyed his best wishes for the success of the newly appointed ambassador, Mohammad Hassan Habibollahzadeh.

The newly assigned has previously served as Iran's chargé d'affaires in London and head of the Western Europe First Office at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has also undertaken various assignments in Russia and Switzerland.

## Tehran Opens Monitoring Center To Evaluate Computer Games

TEHRAN (IP) - The opening ceremony of the Computer Games Quality Monitoring Center and the unveiling of the 8th Iran Video Games Champions Cup poster was held on Sunday evening with the presence of Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

Mohammad-Mahdi Esmaili said that today, computer games are considered more than a leisure time activity, noting that last year's survey showed that 34 million in the country play computer games, and 5 million of them are professional players who spend 31 hours a week playing.

Highlighting computer games as an opportunity, Esmaili said: "We must turn the important flow of computer games into an opportunity in cultural governance."

The minister of culture called on the National Foundation of Computer Games officials to focus on this field and emphasized: "At the National Foundation of Computer Games, first of all, we are looking for the production of Iranian computer games."

"Then, we are seriously following the issue of ranking; online systems have been designed for this purpose, so that parents stay up-to-date with the games," he concluded.

## U.S., the Biggest Chemical Weapons User Against Defenseless People

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of Imam Hossein University's study center said that the most horrible producers and users of chemical substances are the US.

Commander Hassan Rastegar-Panah said: "The US used chemical weapons against defenseless people, including the people of Vietnam and Iran, and together with Europe and the West, Iraq and Saddam Hussein used these weapons against innocent people."

He added: "None of the countries protested Saddam's use of chemical weapons against defenseless people."

Also, attending the event, the member of parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Zohreh Elahian said: "Iranians were attacked for their principles and ideals, including the people of Sardasht, a worse than that the international communities have kept silent."

She stated: "Why did those who claimed human rights remain silent in front of the women and children who were victims of the Sardasht chemical bombing?"

Elahian went on to conclude: "Sardasht chemical bombardment has caused very terrible emotional, psychological, and physical dimensions, but still, the international communities have remained silent."

## Iran-Egypt Restoration of Ties to Strengthen Muslim World



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader for International Affairs Ali Akbar Velayati deemed the resumption of relations between Tehran and Cairo important for both countries, as well as the region and the Muslim World.

"The strategic relations between Iran, China, and Russia are gradually taking shape," Velayati told Aljazeera television network in an exclusive interview.

He also said that the resumption will probably lead to a new regional balance with the participation of Saudi Arabia.

Stating that Iran's relations with Russia are strategic, the Iranian official added that differences in some issues do not have a negative impact on them.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Velayati referred to Tehran-Baku relations and expressed hope that the officials of the Republic of Azerbaijan are aware of the depth of the fraternal relations between the two countries.

"We do not accept any tension in the relations between Tehran and Baku," he said.

## Tehran Blasts Paris for Hosting MKO Terrorists' Meeting

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has strongly condemned France for hosting a recent meeting of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq terrorist organization (MKO), warning the French government of the political and legal consequences of its move.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on Sunday that hosting the terrorist cult's recent gathering simultaneous with widespread political and social unrest in France proves the French government's disregard for the demands of its own citizens and its continued political support for terror groups.

"Instead of repeating their past brazen mistakes in supporting the killers of the Iranian people and [instead of] focusing on [finding a] radical solution for their country's profound problems and crisis, and correcting their biased and racist treatment of French citizens, the French authorities pave the way for the meeting of terrorists who have been recently put to shame in Albania," the spokesman said.

Kanaani then warned the French government against the political and legal consequences of its support for and hosting of terrorists and murderers of Iranian citizens and officials.

"Those terrorists, who have betrayed their own country and nation by committing shocking and horrible crimes, will certainly not hesitate to betray their foreign supporters as well. Therefore, those who support terrorists will not only fail to benefit from them, but will be also finally harmed by the [terrorist] moves of these evildoers," he said.

Kanaani concluded his remarks by advising the French politicians to pay more attention to the demands of their own people instead of supporting such terrorist groups, which only foment terrorism and chaos in other countries.

## Gharibabadi Urges Extradition of MKO Members

TEHRAN (IP) - The Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights emphasized the extradition of the members of the terrorist group Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization, known as MKO, to Iran.

Albanian Police seized dozens of computers and electronic devices of the MKO members in its recent attack on the headquarters of the MKO group on June 20; there were clashes between the police forces and the members of the terrorist group.

The Albanian Police emphasized that the operation (attacking MKO headquarter) was carried out to implement laws related to prosecution against corruption and organized crime.

Edi Rama, the Prime Minister of Albania, elaborated on the operation, saying that MKO members have been in the country for years but "should not

use Albanian soil for sabotage," but they have repeatedly violated the agreement.

Kazem Gharibabadi pointed to the Albanian police attack on the MKO headquarters and the possibility of the extradition of the MKO members to Iran and that some legal cases have been filed in European countries against some MKO members.

Gharibabadi complained about the MKO legal cases not being handled well in the judicial system of European countries. He stated that improper handling of MKO legal cases is a measure to support terrorism.

The Iranian Human Rights top official, Gharibabadi, pointed to the verdicts issued in Iran's courts against some MKO members, stating that more intense judicial actions have been taken against MKO members and will be accelerated and intensified.

## Head of DoE Leaves for Cuba

TEHRAN (IP) - The Head of Iran's Department of Environment left the country for Cuba to participate in the Ministers of Science and Technology Meeting of Group 77 and China.

Ali Salajegheh headed a delegation to participate in the Ministers of Science and Technology Group 77 and China meeting, which will be held from July 3 to 7, 2023, in Havana, the capital of Cuba.

Cuba, elected to chair Group of 77 and China in 2023, officially invited Iran to participate in the meeting.

The meeting covers two thematic areas, "Environment and Climate: Challenges of Science and Technology" and "Biological Relationship, Biodiversity, and Shared Responsibility."

The meeting's themes align with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) motto, also known as the 'Earth Summit.'

Seeking sustainable development, the UNCED Conference calls for "new strategies in the future to achieve overall sustainable development

in the 21st century. Its recommendations ranged from new education methods to new ways of preserving natural resources and participating in a sustainable economy."

'The Earth Summit' aims to promote the exchange of views regarding the benefit of science, technology, and innovation as a stimulus for balanced development and confronting environmental crises, strengthening solidarity and cooperation to deal with the challenges, and realizing the plans of the Southern Hemisphere Countries after the recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As with the Raisi administration's approach toward the necessity of promoting environmental diplomacy, Salajegheh will attend the 'The Earth Summit' hosted by Cuba to announce Iran's measures to address environmental issues, negotiate bilateral relations, and invite G77 members to participate in the "International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms," which will be held on September 9 and 10 in Tehran.

## Iran, Lebanon Sign MoU to Expand Labor Cooperation Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Director of Iran's Technical and Vocational Training Organization Gholamhossein Hosseininia and Lebanese Minister of Labor Mustafa Bayram in a meeting in Tehran signed a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) to expand labor cooperation ties.

During the meeting of signing the MoU with the Lebanese Minister of Labor on Monday, Hosseininia said that Iran will share its experiences and achievements in the field of human resource empowerment with Lebanon.

Iran's Deputy Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare added that some 6,500 jobs, 1,000 job standards, and 1,200 knowledge-based standards have been compiled by this organization, which will be shared with Lebanon.

Bayram, for his part, said that Iran's Technical and Vocational Training Organization responds to the educational needs of the country's labor market and provides various skills training services.

"In Lebanon, we need to provide short-term skill training and organize educational standards in the public and private sectors," he added.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:08
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:08
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:54

97. When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: "In what (plight) were ye?" They reply: "Weak and oppressed were we in the earth." They say: "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (From evil)?" Such men will find their abode in Hell,- What an evil refuge! -  
98. Except those who are (really) weak and oppressed - men, women, and children - who have no means in their power, nor (a guide-post) to their way.  
Surah 4. Women (97 - 98)

## Russia Urged to Ease Visa Process for Iranian Businessmen

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Ambassador of Russia to Tehran during his meeting with the board of directors of Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce was urged to ease visa process for Iranian businessmen which can boost the trade between the two countries.**

The meeting was aimed at raising the problems of Iranian businessmen for trade with Russia and resolving the problems and maximum use of existing capacities for improving the level of bilateral trade.

Speaking in the meeting, Hadi Tizhoush Taban, the head of Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce, underlined the need for making use of the potentials of an Iranian trade center in Astrakhan.

He said that the Iranian trade center in Astrakhan is a proper venue where Iranian and Russian businesses can establish connections.

Stressing the need for facilitating issuance of visa for Iranian businesspeople, Tizhoush Taban called for providing conditions so the businesspersons of both sides can make use of the potentials of the embassies.

Easing visa requirements and electronicization of origin certificate issuing systems were two main demands of the Iranian side.

Russian Ambassador to Iran Alexey Dedov said that his country may remove visa requirements for tourist travels by Iranians in the near future.

The Russian ambassador, for his part, said that efforts are underway to remove the obstacles on the way of trade relations between the two countries which he said



require more meetings and consultations between officials from both sides.

Dedov said that his country is likely to remove visa requirements for tourist travels by Iranians in the near future.

Noting that some truck drivers criticize about the conditions surrounding some customs terminals, the ambassador proposed that Iran and Russia should have representatives in customs terminals of each other to help resolve the problems.

Meanwhile in the meeting, vice-chairman of the chamber pointed to the expanded relation between the governments of Iran and Russia and said that despite strong political relations, both sides have not used all capacities in the field of economy to balance economic relation with political relation.

Abdollah Mahaje Darabi then pointed to the interests of northern provinces of Iran for increasing trade relation with Russian cities, adding that Russian Ambassador as the representative of his country can take serious steps for improving the current level of trade and joint investment.

He added that unfortunately there are still concerns about issuing visas for Iranian traders which can be solved but its materialization needs planning.

He announced readiness of the chamber for cooperating with Russian Embassy for resolving the challenges. He reiterated that if the challenges and hurdles are removed, economic activists of both countries can continue the path of growth in trade exchanges and joint cooperation.

Meanwhile a member of the board of directors of the chamber blamed lack of enough acquaintance of economic activists and companies of the capacities of both countries is a serious challenge for boosting bilateral tie and reiterated that holding specialized exhibition is the best solution for this problem.

## Annual Ethane Output To Reach 5m Tons

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) has said the country's annual ethane production is expected to reach five million tons in the near future.

Majid Chegeni made the remarks on Monday, in the signing ceremony of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for increasing the ethane production of nine refineries at the country's South Pars Gas Complex.

"With the implementation of this project, in addition to increasing production, part of the possible shortage of this valuable product will be compensated in the coming years," Chegeni said.

He put the country's current annual ethane production at 4.2 million tons, saying that the country has the capacity to produce more than 7.2 million tons of the mentioned gas every year.

Ethane is an organic chemical compound that is isolated on an industrial scale from natural gas and as a petrochemical by-product of petroleum refining. Its main use is as feedstock for ethylene production.

## TCCIMA Holds Digital Marketing Forum For China Market



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Taking part in Tehran Chamber of commerce digital marketing forum, a delegation from a Chinese big company considered the ways to cooperate with Iranian partners for digital marketing in Chinese market TCCIMA's public relations reported.

A business conference to familiarize with the strategies of entering the Chinese market through digital platforms was held in the Tehran Chamber of Commerce with the presence of ANEXT China company managers, and economic activists from the private sector of Iran.

The event was focused on digital marketing capabilities and services that can be provided on popular social networks in China, including Duin and Tik tok

ANEXT's officials in talk with Iranian economic activists explained conditions and capacities of digital networks in China and presented the ways of digital marketing for Iranian goods in Chinese market.

## Tehran Province Records Lowest Inflation Rate

TEHRAN (MNA) - A review of the data released by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) shows that Tehran province with 43.9 percent recorded the lowest inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on June 21, which marks the end of the third Iranian calendar month Khordad.

The highest 12-month inflation rate is related to Yazd province with 58.8 percent, based on the SCI's statistics.

The SCI has put the country's average inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on June 21 at 28.5 percent, falling 0.6 percent from the figure for the twelve-month ended to the second month.

The center put the point-to-point inflation rate at 42.6 percent in the third month, which means families have paid an average of 42.6 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the preceding year.

The Statistical Center of Iran has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on March 20, 2023, which marks the end of the past Iranian calendar year 1401, at 45.8 percent.

The center had put the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on March 20, 2022 (the end of the Iranian calendar year 1400) at 40.2 percent and that of the Iranian calendar year 1399 at 36.4 percent.

## No Problems in Way of Financial Exchanges Between Iran, Iraq



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - There are no problems in the way of financial exchanges between Iran and Iraq, an Iranian official said.

Chairman of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce Yahya Al-e Eshagh made the remarks in a meeting held on Monday with the participation of Iran's commercial envoy to Iraq and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He termed the opportunity for trade and economic relations between Iran and Iraq "strategic" and said their interests will serve the people of the two countries.

Achieving \$20 billion worth of trade is possible between the two countries in the next few years, he said, adding that the current value of trade between Iran and Iraq has crossed \$10 billion.

Al-e Eshagh also highlighted the key role of the private sector and said that Iran's private sector could reach up to \$10 and \$11 billion worth of bilateral trade with Iraq, in fields other than exporting gas, electricity and technical-engineering services.

Iran Exported over \$1 Billion of Technical, Engineering Services to Iraq in 2022: Envoy

Meanwhile in the meeting it was said that Iran's commercial envoy to Iraq said that more than \$1 billion worth of technical and engineering services were exported to neighboring Iraq in 2022.

Speaking in a meeting of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, Abdol-Amir Rabihavi pointed to the traditional trade exchanges with Iraq and stated that the exchange of money with neighboring Iraq is either made through FOREX shops or cash fund transfer.

Iraq can connect the Persian Gulf to Europe in the future, he said, adding that Iran can use the Iraqi route to export its products to Africa and Europe as well.

He further pointed out that Iran managed to export over \$1 billion worth of technical and engineering services to this Arab country in 2022.

He pointed to the construction of industrial towns on borders and added that with the coordination made in this regard, five industrial townships would be set up on the Iran-Iraq borders.

## IranAir Says 7 Grounded Planes To Resume Services Soon

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's flag carrier IranAir says seven of its planes that have remained grounded in recent years because of US sanctions will resume services within the next six months.

IranAir CEO Shamseddin Farzadipour said on Sunday that the planes will be restored to the airline's fleet as part of a comprehensive domestic repair program.

"Our priority is domestic repair and seven planes will become airworthy in the next six months," Farzadi was quoted as saying by ILNA news agency. He said IranAir plans to use the planes in busy travel routes to Iraq which mostly accommodates Iranian pilgrims visiting holy shrines in the Arab country.

Iran has supported a home-grown aircraft repair program in response to US sanctions that have barred the country from accessing spare parts and maintenance services by foreign companies.

The program has expanded to cover planes operated by foreign companies that have suffered because of Western sanctions.

Reports in September showed that nine Russian passenger planes were in Iran to receive maintenance. Several Iranian airlines have already added repaired aircraft to their active fleet.

Qeshm Air announced in February that it had restored an Airbus A320 after 11 years of grounding.

A Boeing 737 returned to the fleet of Iran's third largest carrier Aseman Airlines later that month after a successful test flight. Aseman had earlier restored a Fokker 100 by replacing its engine.

The Iranian government says it has earmarked proper funding to support domestic airlines in their efforts to restore some 100 jetliners that have remained grounded because of parts shortages as a result of US sanctions.

## Iran Toy Exports Stand at \$20m in FY 2022-23

TEHRAN (MNA) - A total of \$20 million worth of toys were exported from Iran in the last Iranian year (ended March 20, 2023), according to the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Iranian Toy Association.

"Currently, Iran has 250 active toy producers with an official brand and if the commercial advisers of our embassies can ease the export regulations to some countries, we can increase the volume of exports in this field," Ehsan Monshi was also quoted as saying by IRIB News.

Iraq, Armenia, Afghanistan, Russia and Oman were the main export destinations for toys made in Iran during the period under review.

"We have cheap raw materials and energy in Iran and we can compete with other countries in the field of toy exports, but certain laws and regulations decrease our ability to compete with other countries," he added.

The official noted that several specialized exhibitions of Iranian toys were held in Armenia and Iraq in fiscal 2022-23, which helped increase exports.

"The main problem of this industry is raising capital because there should be product variety in this field, which requires investment. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to secure financial resources in this area and banks do not cooperate with toy companies," he said, Financial Tribune reported.

According to Monshi's predecessor, Gholamreza Dizaji, the domestic toy market is worth \$300 million, of which the share of domestic producers is around 30-35%.

Dizaji said that in late 2021, about \$160 million worth of toys are legally and illegally imported into Iran every year.

"Although toy production is considered a cultural activity, the sector is subject to both VAT [9%] and income tax," he said.

## Caviar Exports Hit 5.5 Tons in FY 2022-23

TEHRAN (MNA) - A total of 18.5 tons of farmed caviar and 4,600 tons of sturgeon meat were produced in Iran in fiscal 2022-23 (ended March 20), according to an official of the Iran Fisheries Organization.

"The number of caviar farms in the country increased from 16 to 20 from fiscal 2012-13 to fiscal 2021-22 to 195 farms in 22 provinces of Iran in fiscal 2022-23, of which 145-150 have undertaken mass production," Nasser Karami-Rad was also quoted as saying by ILNA.

The major importers of Iranian caviar are EU countries, as well as China, Vietnam, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Australia, Kuwait, UAE, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Lebanon, etc.

## Iran to Train Regional States About Optimal Use of Plasma

TEHRAN (IP) - The General Director of the International Cooperation Office of the Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization (IBTO) says Iran will train regional countries to use plasma optimally.

Shila Ghaffari said: "The Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization (IBTO) and the High Institute for Research and Education in Transfusion Medicine (IRETM), as a partner center of the World Health Organization (WHO), are organizing a training course for the countries of the region on the optimal use of plasma."

Ghaffari added more details on the four-day webinar that will be held in the summer with the member countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO), where the international experts in plasma and its application will give lectures.

Pointing to Iran's successful record in the optimal use of plasma, she said that the joint planning of the WHO with the Iran Blood Transfusion Organization to share experiences by holding the workshop.

"The workshop will be held in the summer to focus on improving the quality of plasma, principles of plasma production, attracting and retaining volunteer donors, screening and other technical points, and controlling the quality of the plasma production process," said added. Plasma is the liquid part of blood. About 55% of the blood is plasma; the remaining 45% are red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets suspended in the plasma.



## Swedish Gov't Condemns 'Islamophobic' Burning of Quran



STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Sweden's government condemned this week's burning of a Koran outside Stockholm's main mosque, calling it an "Islamophobic" act, after an international Islamic body called for measures to avoid future burnings.

"The Swedish Government fully understands that the Islamophobic acts committed by individuals at demonstrations in Sweden can be offensive to Muslims," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"We strongly condemn these acts, which in no way reflect the views of the Swedish government," it added.

The condemnation came in response to a call for collective measures to avoid future Koran burnings from the Saudi-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

## Biden to Travel to UK, NATO Summit, Finland



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden has scheduled a diplomatic trip to Europe this month with stops in the United Kingdom, at the NATO summit in Lithuania and to attend meetings in Finland, the White House said Sunday.

Biden is set to depart July 9 for Britain, where he will meet with the King Charles III and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, the White House said in a statement. He will then continue to the NATO summit in Vilnius on July 11-12, followed by a one-day visit to Helsinki for the US-Nordic Leaders Summit. The announcement comes as the White House prepares to welcome Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in Washington next week to discuss Stockholm's ambitions to join NATO, and after the US said the alliance was nearing a consensus on how to address Ukraine's membership push.

## Russia Launches the First Drone Strike on Kyiv in 12 Days



KYIV (Dispatches) - After a relative lull, Russia launched a drone attack early Sunday on Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, officials said. It was the first such attack of the war in 12 days.

All of the Shahed exploding drones were detected and shot down, according to Serhii Popko, the head of the Kyiv city administration. In addition to the city itself, the surrounding Kyiv region was targeted. Kyiv regional Gov. Ruslan Kravchenko reported that one person was wounded by falling debris from a destroyed drone.

Officials in the Ukrainian capital didn't provide an exact number of drones that attacked the city. But Ukraine's air force said that across the country, eight Shaheds and three Kalibr cruise missiles were launched by the Russians. Ukrainian officials have reported three people killed and 17 others wounded from Russian shelling in the country's east and south.

The head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog is visiting Europe's largest atomic power plant in southern Ukraine. Ukrainian authorities are rushing supplies of drinking water to areas affected by flooding from a collapsed dam in southern Ukraine.

Concerns around civilian safety have spiked in Ukraine, as officials announced that an inspection had found nearly a quarter of the country's air-raid shelters locked or unusable, just days after Russian missiles allegedly killed a woman in Kyiv as she waited outside a shuttered shelter.

Further south, a 13-year-old boy was wounded in overnight shelling of Ukraine's partially occupied southern Kherson province, said Oleksandr Tolokonnikov, spokesman for the Ukrainian administration of the province.

The child was wounded when the Russian army shelled the village of Mylove on the banks of the Dnieper River in the Beryslav district, Tolokonnikov said.

"The child was hospitalized, there is no threat to his life," Tolokonnikov added," he said on state TV.

Shelling of Kherson province continued Sunday morning, wounding four people in the regional capital, also called Kherson. The regional prosecutor's office said that a residential area of the city was targeted by Russian troops operating in the Russia-occupied part of the Kherson province. "At least four citizens were wounded, two of them due to a targeted strike on a high-rise building," the office wrote on Telegram.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's military reported that the most intense fighting continued in Ukraine's industrial east, with attacks focused around Bakhmut, Marinka and Lyman in the country's Donetsk province, where 46 combat clashes took place.

Ukrainian forces were advancing amid a "massive offensive" on the southern and northern flanks of the destroyed city of Bakhmut, Ukraine's Eastern Group of Forces spokesman Serhii Cherevaty told Ukrainian state television. But he didn't mention how much progress they made. The details, he said, would be disclosed once Ukrainian forces had analyzed the situation and consolidated their positions.

In its regular update Sunday morning, the General Staff said that over the previous 24 hours, Russia had carried out 27 airstrikes, one missile strike and around 80 attacks from multiple rocket launchers, targeting regions in the north, northeast, east and south of the country. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the Black Sea port city of Odesa on Sunday — the day the country honors its navy — to hear a report from the navy commander, discuss prospects for the development of a naval drone and missile program, as well as present awards to service members.

## France Unrest Appears to Be Ebbing But More Than 700 Arrested



PARIS (Dispatches) - Young rioters clashed with police overnight and targeted a mayor's home with a burning car as France faced a fifth night of unrest sparked by the police killing of a teenager of North African descent, but overall violence appeared to lessen compared with previous nights.

Tens of thousands of police were deployed in cities across the country on Saturday after the funeral of Nahel M. in the Paris suburb of Nanterre. Police made more than 700 arrests nationwide in an attempt to quell France's worst social upheaval in years.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said early on Sunday that it had been "a calmer night thanks to the resolute action of the security forces."

However, Mayor Vincent Jeanbrun wrote on Twitter that protesters "rammed a car" into his home, before "setting a fire". "My wife and one of my children were injured," he said.

### UN Chief Calls on World to Make Troubled Haiti Top Priority

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Dispatches) - On a visit to spotlight violence and chaos in Haiti, the UN secretary-general called for a robust international effort to help the country's beleaguered police in fighting rampant criminal gangs.

For months, Antonio Guterres has raised the alarm bell about the situation in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, which has been wracked by spiralling violence, a worsening public health situation and political instability. But he traveled to Port-au-Prince -- his first visit to Haiti as head of the United Nations -- to make his point on the ground.

"We must put Haiti on the international political map, and make the tragedy of the Haitian people the international community's top priority," Guterres told a press conference.

"I met Haitians, and I felt the exhaustion of a population that has been facing a cascade of crises and unbearable living conditions for too long," he said.

"This is not the time to forget about Haiti," Guterres said after meeting with Prime Minister Ariel Henry, and other political and civil society leaders.

Guterres urged the UN Security Council, which is due to discuss the Haiti situation later this month, "to authorize the immediate deployment of a robust international security force."

In October, he relayed Henry's request for a non-UN force to support the overwhelmed national police force.

But the call has gone unheeded. A few countries have indicated their willingness to participate, but none has volunteered to lead an operation in a country where multiple past foreign interventions have become mired.

"I call on those states that have the capacity to provide a robust security force to stop hesitating and be ready to follow a Security Council decision," Guterres said. "Every day counts. If we don't act now, instability and violence will have a lasting impact on generations of Haitians."

UN officials in recent months have offered increasingly grim assessments of the impact of gang shootings, kidnappings and rapes on the Haitian population.

## Thousands in Belgrade Protest Pro-Gov't TV Station

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Thousands of people in Serbia's capital rallied outside a pro-government TV station that protesters say promotes a culture of violence and should be stripped of its broadcasting license after two mass shootings stunned the Balkan nation.

The protest started outside the Serbian parliament building before thousands marched toward the Pink TV building located in a residential area of Belgrade that also hosts foreign embassies and residences. The protesters booed loudly in front of the station's offices, chanted slogans against populist leader Aleksandar Vucic and his government, and threw toilet paper rolls at the building.

"This is a factory of evil that has been spewing poison for years," said opposition politician Radomir Lazovic.

Opponents of Serbia's populist government have blocked the country's main highway as part of weeks-long protests that first started after mass shootings in early May, including the first ever school carnage in the Balkan country.

Kosovo's prime minister is offering to hold new mayoral elections in four Serb-majority municipalities in an effort to defuse tensions with neighboring Serbia that flared anew last month.

A court in Serbia has released three police officers from Kosovo who were detained near the disputed

border between the former war foes.

Serbia has reiterated a threat to intervene militarily in its former province of Kosovo if NATO-led peacekeepers there fail to protect minority Serbs from what Belgrade calls the terrorist threat of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian authorities.

Serbia's populist authorities have rejected any responsibility for the May attacks. The president's opponents, however, say hate speech and intolerance fueled by pro-government media and officials have helped foster violence in a society still reeling after a series of wars in the 1990s.

Protesters have called for measures to be taken against Pink TV and another commercial broadcaster, as well as pro-government tabloids, after the shootings on May 3-4 that left 18 people dead and 20 injured, many of them children.

The anti-government protesters also have demanded the ouster of key security officials and a media monitoring body during the street demonstrations — the biggest in years against Vucic and his government.

Vucic, a former ultranationalist who now says he wants Serbia to join the European Union but who has faced accusations of imposing increasingly autocratic rule, has dismissed the demands. Vucic has accused opposition leaders behind the rallies of exploiting the shooting tragedies to target him.



## Sierra Leone's Main Opposition Not to Take Part in Governance



FREETOWN (Dispatches) - Sierra Leone's main opposition party has said it will not take part in any level of governance in the country, from parliament to local councils, following what it called "fraudulent" presidential election results.

President Julius Maada Bio was re-elected for a second term in the first round of voting with 56.17 percent of the ballots, according to results released by the electoral commission Tuesday, which have been contested by the opposition and local organisations.

International observers noted the "statistical inconsistencies" between the partial results and the final results and condemned "the lack of transparency" in the ballot count, while calling for peaceful dialogue to resolve differences.

The opposition All People's Congress (APC), whose leader Samura Kamara came in second with 41.16 percent of the vote, said late Friday that it would not tolerate "injustice, tyranny and usurpation of power in Sierra Leone".

"The APC declares its non-participation in any level of governance, including the legislature and local councils, as the results have already been tampered with to give the SLPP an unjust majority at all levels," it said, referring to Bio's Sierra Leone People's Party.

"The APC unequivocally rejects the announced results... given the glaring irregularities and violations of established electoral procedures," it said. It issued a series of demands, including the resignation of the electoral commissioners, accusing them of "bias and failure to conduct their duties impartially".

The party also called for an election rerun within six months, saying the vote must be "overseen by credible individuals and institutions who will ensure a fair and transparent process".

It demanded the resignation of several officials, and called on "international partners to impose travel bans on a dozen leading figures in power, including the President".

It called the current government a "dictatorship" that is "usurping power". The APC claims the final results announced do not correspond with the total number cast at each polling station.

The results of the local and legislative elections, which took place on the same day a week ago, are expected this weekend.



## European Telescope Launched to Hunt For Clues to Universe's Darkest Secrets

CAPE CANAVERAL (Dispatches) - A European space telescope blasted off Saturday on a quest to explore the mysterious and invisible realm known as the dark universe.

SpaceX launched the European Space Agency's Euclid observatory toward its ultimate destination 1 million miles (1.5 million kilometers) away, the Webb Space Telescope's neighborhood. It will take a month to get there and another two months before it starts its ambitious six-year survey this fall.

Flight controllers in Germany declared success nearly an hour into the flight, applauding and shouting "Yes!" as the telescope phoned home after a smooth liftoff.

The latest challenge to lithium mining in Nevada in the push for cleaner energy comes from a place where no opposition has arisen before: space.

The influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed again to push for a second launch of a spy satellite.

The sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has accused the United States of "gangster-like" hypocrisy for criticizing her country's failed launch of a military spy satellite and insisted a successful launch will be made soon.

"I'm so thrilled, I'm so excited to see now this mission up in space, knowing it is on its way," the European Space Agency's director general, Josef Aschbacher, said from the Florida launch site.

Named for antiquity's Greek mathematician, Euclid will scour billions of galaxies covering more than one-third of the sky. By pinpointing the location and shape of galaxies up to 10 billion light-years away — almost all the way back to the cosmos-creating Big Bang — scientists hope to glean insight into the dark energy and dark matter that make up most of the universe and keep it expanding.

Scientists understand only 5 percent of the universe: stars, planets, us. The rest is "still a mystery and an enigma, a huge frontier in modern physics that we hope this mission will actually help to push forward," the European Space Agency's science director, Carole Mundell, said just before liftoff.

The telescope's highly anticipated 3D map of the cosmos will span both space and time in a bid to explain how the dark universe evolved and why its expansion is speeding up.

The lead scientist for the \$1.5 billion mission (1.4 billion euros) said Euclid will measure dark energy and dark matter with unprecedented precision.

"It's more than a space telescope, Euclid. It's really a dark energy detector," Rene Laureijs noted. Fifteen feet (4.7 meters) tall and almost as wide, Euclid sports a 1.2-meter (4-foot) telescope and two scientific instruments capable of observing the cosmos in both visible light and the near infrared. A huge sunshield is designed to keep the sensitive systems at the properly frigid temperatures.

NASA, which contributed Euclid's infrared detectors, has its own mission coming up to better understand dark energy and dark matter: the Roman Space Telescope due to launch in 2027. The US-European Webb telescope can also join in this quest, officials said. Euclid was supposed to launch on a Russian rocket from French Guiana in South America, Europe's main spaceport. The European and Russian space agencies cut ties following the invasion of Ukraine last year, and the telescope switched to a SpaceX ride from Cape Canaveral. Waiting for Europe's next-generation, yet-to-fly Ariane rocket would have meant a two-year-plus delay, according to project manager Giuseppe Racca.



## Japan Returns to Human Waste Fertilizer

TOKYO (dispatches) - It's cheap, recycled, and has centuries of tradition: "shimogoe" or "fertiliser from a person's bottom" is finding new favour in Japan as Ukraine's war hikes the price of chemical alternatives.

As in several parts of the world, the use of "night soil" to fertilize crops was once common in Japan. However, the advent of sewage systems and treatment facilities, as well as chemical fertilizers, saw it fall out of fashion.

About a decade ago, Japanese treatment facilities wondered if they could revive interest to avoid sewage sludge disposal — a costly and potentially environmentally damaging process.

But enthusiasm was limited until Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent the cost of chemical fertilizers soaring. That has been a bonanza for a facility in northern Japan's Tome, where sales of shimogoe were up 160 per cent year-on-year by March 2023.

For the first time since the city began producing the fertilizer in 2010, it has sold out.

The demand is easy to explain, said facility vice president Toshiaki Kato.

"Our fertilizer is popular because it is cheap, and it is helping farmers cut soaring costs," he told AFP. "It is also good for the environment."

Made of a combination of treated sewage sludge from septic tanks and human waste from cesspits, the fertilizer goes for ¥160 per 15 kilos.

That's about a tenth of the price of products made from imported raw materials.

In southwestern Japan's Saga too, officials report sales are up two to three times.

And dozens of tour groups from municipalities elsewhere in the country have visited, eager to replicate their program.

Shimogoe was a key fertilizer in Japan's pre-modern Edo era, said Arata Kobayashi, a fertiliser specialist who has written journal articles on the subject.

In the early 18th century, the one million residents of Tokyo — then called Edo — "produced" an estimated 500,000 tons of fertilizer a year. It was big business, involving gatherers, transporters and farmers, "and all of them benefited from the recycling system," Kobayashi said.

They "didn't create a recycling system on purpose... it was the result of everyone pursuing profit."

Japan's government has encouraged the revival, citing environmental benefits, and concerns about food security since Russia's invasion.

The ministry of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries hopes to double animal manure and human waste use by 2030, with a goal of them accounting for 40 percent of all fertilizer use in Japan.

In Miura outside Tokyo, vacuum trucks carrying human waste arrive one after another at a treatment facility. Water is removed and then bacteria ferment the remaining solids in huge tanks.

Methane produced during the process is burned to supply the facility's hot water and electricity, and the final product is a soil-like powder that can be spread on fields.

"We produce 500 tons of fertilizer annually," said Kenichi Ryose, facility manager at Miura Biomass Centre.

"This fertilizer is particularly good for leaf vegetables, like cabbage," he added.

Ryose said "harmful materials like heavy metals are removed from processed sewage sludge before arriving" at the plant.

In the United States, there have been recent concerns about the levels of so-called forever chemicals (PFAS) in fertilizer made from sewage.



## People With Dementia at Increased Risk During Heat Waves



LONDON (Dispatches) - Heat waves that hit the triple digits, like the ones now gripping many parts of the United States this week, can create dangerous conditions for folks who are vulnerable.

One vulnerable group is people with Alzheimer's disease or dementia, who may not realize they're developing heat illness. But caregivers can take steps to keep them safer.

"Triple-digit temperatures and heat indexes are especially dangerous for someone with a dementia-related illness such as Alzheimer's disease, because the effects of dementia can impair their ability to notice if they are developing heat stroke or dehydration," said Jennifer Reeder, director of educational and social services for the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA). "Taking a few simple steps will go a long way to help caregivers keep their loved one with dementia safe during the heat wave."

The AFA urges caregivers to watch out for wandering in their loved ones. Wandering is common in people with these conditions and they may not know how to get home or to get help.

Extreme heat adds to the danger of wandering because heat stroke can develop in minutes.

To prevent wandering while fulfilling someone's wish to be active, find ways to do this safely, such as creating walking paths around the home with visual cues and stimulating objects, engaging the person in simple tasks or offering activities such as music, crafts and games. Making sure that basic needs are met can also reduce the chances of wandering.

Always keep a recent photo and medical information on hand, along with familiar destinations, to share with emergency responders if your loved one does wander, the foundation recommends.

## Study Suggests Vitamin D May Lower Risk of Heart Attack for Some

LONDON (Dispatches) - Vitamin D supplements might lower the risk of heart attack and other cardiac ills for people over 60 -- especially if they're already taking heart meds, a new study suggests.

"Our results suggest that further exploration of the possible benefit of vitamin D on cardiovascular events, particularly in those at higher risk of having an event, might be warranted," said senior researcher Rachel Neale.

Evidence of benefit was strongest for folks taking cholesterol-lowering statins or other heart medications, said Neale, deputy coordinator of the population health program at the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute in Queensland, Australia.

The large trial found "some evidence of benefit for people who were taking drugs to treat cardiovascular conditions or high cholesterol at baseline, and vitamin D reduced the rate of heart attack," she said.

Other studies have not found a benefit of vitamin D for major cardiovascular events, "but the results of [our] D-Health Trial suggest that it might be beneficial," Neale said.

Still, the findings aren't conclusive. "Overall, we found no statistically significant effect of vitamin D on major cardiovascular events, such as stroke, myocardial infarction [heart attack], or treatment of blocked vessels in the heart," she added.

While not whole-heartedly endorsing D supplementation, Neale said older adults might give it some thought.

"Taking a modest dose of vitamin D is unlikely to be harmful," she said. "People at increased risk of cardiovascular events may like to take vitamin D even if they are not vitamin D-deficient, but they should be informed that the evidence for such a recommendation is relatively weak so that they can make an informed choice about whether they choose to spend money on vitamin D supplements."

One expert said this study is like others in that no strong evidence exists showing a benefit from vitamin D in preventing heart attacks or other cardiovascular events.

"Randomized, placebo-controlled vitamin D supplementation trials have failed to demonstrate a reduction in cardiovascular events, despite being well-powered to detect clinically relevant risk reduction," said Dr. Gregg Fonarow, co-chief of cardiology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

This new trial found no statistically significant difference between vitamin D and placebo, he said. "The totality of currently available evidence suggests that routine vitamin D supplementation does not provide cardiovascular benefits," Fonarow added.

For the study, Neale and her colleagues used data from their D-Health Trial in which they randomly assigned more than 21,000 men and women ages 60 to 84 to receive 60,000 IU of vitamin D or a placebo for five years.

During that time, more than 1,300 participants had a major cardiovascular event, including 7% getting the placebo and 6% receiving vitamin D.

The rate of major cardiovascular events was 9% lower among those taking vitamin D, compared with those taking the placebo -- about 6 fewer events per 1,000 participants, the researchers found.

Among those taking vitamin D, the rate of heart attacks was 19% lower and the rate of coronary revascularization (treatments that restore blood flow to parts of your heart when that flow is limited or blocked) was 11% lower.

However, no difference in the rate of stroke was seen in the two groups, Neale's team reported.

The effect of vitamin D appeared stronger among people who were using statins or other cardiovascular drugs, but this finding was not statistically significant, the researchers note.

Neale calculated that 172 people would need to take vitamin D supplements to prevent one major cardiovascular event.



## Norway's Quest for Black Gold From Used Car Batteries



OSLO (Dispatches) - Wearing a white lab coat and with a gas mask within reach, Ole Jorgen Gronvold measures the humidity of an intriguing dark powder touted as the planet's next "black gold".

But this "black gold" — a term that usually refers to oil — is actually good for the Earth.

In southeastern Norway lies Europe's biggest plant for recycling used or defective electric car batteries, turning them into a powder, or "black mass", made up of nickel, manganese, cobalt, lithium and graphite.

These so-called critical minerals — essential components in many clean energy technologies -- will be reused to make new batteries, key cogs in the transition to a decarbonized economy.

"The higher the quality of the components, the easier it is to use them for recycling," said Gronvold, a laboratory technician at Hydrovolt, a joint venture between Norwegian aluminium giant Norsk Hydro and Swedish electric battery maker Northvolt.

The Hydrovolt plant opened last year in the port city of Fredrikstad.

Within the next few months, the site is expected to be able to process 12,000 tons of lithium-ion battery packs per year, the equivalent of 25,000 electric car batteries.

Industry leader Norway, where electricity is almost exclusively generated by renewable energies, is the uncontested world champion of zero-emission electric cars, with the latter accounting for more than 80 per cent of new car registrations.

Emptied of electricity, the imposing battery packs — they weigh half a ton each — are methodically taken apart to recover up to 95 per cent of the materials.



## Argentina Economic Activity Slumps 4.2% in April

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina's economic slumped 4.2% in April from a year earlier, the country's official INDEC statistics agency said on Friday, the worst drop since October 2020 and far lower than the 1.5% decline forecast by analysts as farming production slid.

The South American nation is the world's top exporter of processed soy, the No. 3 for corn and an important wheat supplier, but the most recent harvest was pummeled by one of the country's worst droughts in history.

Government data showed that agriculture and fishing had the worst results for the month, with the former the main driver of the overall activity decline. The 'EMAE' activity index is a useful early indicator of likely economic growth.



## U.S. Consumer Spending Hits Speed Bump

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. consumer spending fizzled in May as households cut back on purchases of new light trucks and other long-lasting manufactured goods amid higher borrowing costs, suggesting the economy lost some speed in the second quarter.

While the Commerce Department's report showed annual inflation rising last month at its slowest pace in more than two years, underlying price pressures remained too strong to discourage the Federal Reserve from returning to its strategy of raising interest rates in July, economists said. Inflation is by far still outpacing the U.S. central bank's 2% target.

The soft consumer spending took some shine off a raft of upbeat data on the labor and housing markets this month, which had painted a picture of a resilient economy.

"The recent stalling of consumer spending and somewhat better inflation news validate the Fed's decision to skip a meeting this month, though continued stickiness in core prices likely warrant another tap on the brakes in July," said Sal Guatieri, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets in Toronto.

Consumer spending edged up 0.1% last month. Data for April was revised lower to show spending accelerating 0.6% instead of 0.8% as previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of U.S. economic activity, rising 0.2%.

Spending on goods, which are typically bought on credit dropped 0.5%, with motor vehicle outlays plunging 23.3%. Spending on gasoline and other energy goods tumbled 23.4%. Goods spending increased 0.9 in April.

Outlays on services rose 0.4%, lifted by healthcare, transportation, housing and utilities, as well as financial services and insurance. Services outlays gained 0.5% in April.

When adjusted for inflation, consumer spending was unchanged. Data for April was revised lower to show the so-called real consumer spending rising only 0.2% instead of 0.5% as previously reported.

The stagnation in real consumer spending last month and the downward revision to April's data implied that consumer spending growth slowed to around a 1.0% annualized rate in the second quarter, economists estimated, after rising at a 4.2% rate in the January-March period, the fastest in nearly two years.

Robust consumer spending accounted for the economy's 2.0% growth pace last quarter, defying fears of a recession because of the Fed's hefty rate hikes.

Nevertheless, the economy likely continued to chug along this quarter, with job gains, housing starts, orders for durable goods all strong and the goods trade deficit narrowing in May. Growth estimates for the second quarter range from as low as a 0.5% rate to as high as a 2.3% pace.

Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher. The dollar fell against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices rose. Consumer spending remains underpinned by strong wage gains in a tight labor market. Personal income rose 0.4% last month, with wages increasing 0.5%.

Slowing inflation is raising consumers' purchasing power, with real disposable income rebounding 0.3%. The saving rate climbed to 4.6% from 4.3% in April, which could provide some cushion in the event of a recession.

## Growth Risks to Restrain Oil Prices This Year

LONDON (Dispatches) - Oil prices will struggle for traction this year as global economic headwinds stymie gains that could be fuelled by a rebound in China and OPEC+ cuts, a Reuters poll showed on Friday.

The survey of 37 economists and analysts forecast Brent crude would average \$83.03 a barrel in 2023, versus the \$84.73 consensus in May.

The global benchmark, now trading around \$75 a barrel after having shed about 13% thus far in 2023, was seen averaging \$83.28 in the third quarter before popping above the \$86 mark in the next two quarters.

Forecasts for U.S. crude were also scaled back to \$78.38 a barrel in 2023 from last month's \$79.20.

The third quarter will be a "make-or-break quarter ahead as lofty demand growth expectations from OPEC and IEA need to come to fruition to avoid additional downward pressure on prices," said Ole Hansen, Saxo Bank's head of commodity strategy.

Goldman Sachs said this week that rising interest rates would remain a "persistent drag" on oil.

But while the rising rates and weaker economic readings from China have weighed on oil markets, some analysts saw prices getting a small fillip from stimulus measures and OPEC+ supply curtailments led by Saudi Arabia.

Earlier this month, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said the OPEC+ output deal sharply increases prospects of higher prices, while Saudi Aramco predicted demand from China and India would offset recession risks in developed countries.

## Lebanon Economic Crisis Worsened by Vested Interests

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's financial crisis has been aggravated by vested interests resisting crucial reforms, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said, warning that no action could lead the country "down an unpredictable road".

The nearly four-year economic meltdown has cost the local currency roughly 98% of its value, seen GDP contract by 40%, pushed inflation into triple-digits and drained two-thirds of the central bank's

foreign currency reserves, the IMF said.

The figures came as part of its Article IV report, a comprehensive assessment of Lebanon's finances.

The IMF said the crisis had been compounded "by a failure to take much needed policy action, hampered by a lasting political crisis and resistance from vested interests to reforms."

Lebanon signed an agreement with the IMF in April 2022 but has not met the conditions to secure a full \$3 billion financing program, seen as crucial to a recovery from one of the worst economic collapses in modern history.

The IMF said the steps Lebanon had tried so far, including the 2022 budget and a banking secrecy law fell short of the advice given by IMF staff or the expectations discussed.

Mission chief Ernesto Rigo told reporters that Lebanon's leaders may face a "temptation" to avoid difficult political decisions and may hope the economy stabilises without reforms, but that it would come at a "very high cost."

"The situation is very dire," he said. The report said delayed reforms had led to a decrease in the foreign currency deposits that could eventually be recovered when the banking sector is restructured, with depositors effectively having lost \$10 billion compared to 2020.

Lebanese politicians often say depositors' rights must be preserved in any plan to address losses of some \$70 billion in the financial system.

The IMF said that without reforms, public debt could reach 547% of GDP by 2027. It said current debt levels, above 280% of GDP, were already "unsustainable."

"The continuation of the status quo presents the largest risk to Lebanon's economic and social stability, taking the country down an unpredictable road," the report said, adding the central bank needed new policies on conflicts of interest, more autonomy from government and more accountability.

## OPEC Oil Output Posts Small Drop in June Ahead of Saudi Cut

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC oil output has fallen only slightly in June as increases in Iraq and Nigeria limited the impact of cutbacks by others, despite a wider OPEC+ deal and voluntary cuts by several members to support the market, a Reuters survey found.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries has pumped 28.18 million barrels per day (bpd) this month, the survey found, down 50,000 bpd from May's revised figure. In May, output dropped by 240,000 bpd as the latest cut took effect.

The survey suggests little further progress by OPEC in limiting supply ahead of a further voluntary reduction by Saudi Arabia which takes effect in July, as part of the producers' latest agreement made in June to support the market.

Several members of OPEC+, which includes OPEC and allies such as Russia, had in April pledged voluntary cuts on top of those made in late 2022 as the economic outlook worsened.

For May, six OPEC members agreed to cut output by a further 1.04 million bpd, adding to about 1.27 million bpd of reductions already in place. These curbs remain in place for June.

Month on month, production in June among the OPEC nations that are required to limit output fell by 10,000 bpd, the survey found, as the increases in Iraq and Nigeria limited the impact of cuts by other members.

OPEC's output is still undershooting the targeted amount by almost 1 million bpd partly because Nigeria and Angola lack the capacity to pump as much as their agreed level.

OPEC is hosting a conference next week in Vienna expected to be attended by prominent oil ministers and CEOs.

OPEC's Persian Gulf producers Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have largely implemented their voluntary cuts and continued to show high compliance in June, the survey found.

Saudi Arabia lowered its output by 40,000 bpd, according to the survey, the biggest decline among the nations required to limit output.

OPEC's biggest decline, of 50,000 bpd, was seen in Iran, where exports fell back from an usually strong level in May, the survey found. Iran, along with Libya and Venezuela, is exempt from OPEC cuts.

Iranian supply was revised up by 300,000 bpd in May as its exports were far higher than earlier thought.

Iraqi output edged up because of higher exports from the south of the country. But with exports from the north still shut down, Iraqi production remained well below its allowed level.

Nigeria also posted a further small gain with exports holding strong from key streams, the survey found, although it is pumping much less than allowed under the OPEC+ deal.

## China's PBOC Asks Foreign Banks About Dollar Deposit Rates



SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - China's central bank has surveyed some foreign banks in the past week about the interest rates they offer to their clients for dollar deposits, people familiar with the matter said, as authorities step up efforts to slow the yuan's depreciation.

The central bank also guided one commercial lender to lower such rates, one of the sources said, as recent weakness in the Chinese currency prompts authorities to more closely scrutinize foreign exchange dealings. But the source did not offer more details.

The move could potentially nudge companies, especially exporters, to convert more of their foreign exchange receipts into the yuan, which has weakened to near eight-month lows and lost nearly 5% so far this year.

Total FX deposits in China stood at \$851.8 billion at end-May, data shows.

The People's Bank of China did not immediately respond to Reuters request for comments.

The PBOC said in mid-May that authorities will resolutely curb large fluctuations in the exchange rate and study the strengthening of self-regulation of dollar deposits.

Weeks later, sources told Reuters that a self-regulatory body overseen by the central bank had told major state-owned banks to lower dollar deposit interest rates. Big banks were told to cap them at 4.3%, from the previous ceiling of 5.3%.

Widening bond yield differentials between the world's two largest economies, fuelled by growing monetary policy divergence, have piled downside pressure on the yuan. China is poised to offer more policy support to bolster a sputtering economic recovery, while the U.S. Federal Reserve could keep interest rates higher for longer.

As part of the official measures to prevent the yuan from sinking too fast and too far, the PBOC set stronger-than-expected midpoint fixing guidance rates this week and state banks were spotted selling dollars a few times in both onshore and offshore markets, trading sources said.

## Sri Lanka Parliament Approves Domestic Debt Restructuring Plan

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka's parliament approved a domestic debt restructuring plan that is crucial to continue a \$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The plan passed with a majority of 122 votes in the 225-member parliament.

Sri Lanka tumbled into its worst financial crisis in more than seven decades last year after the country's dollar reserves shrank to record lows, triggering mass protests, a foreign debt default and the resignation of its former president.

To put its debt on a sustainable footing and pass an IMF review, Sri Lanka unveiled a much-anticipated domestic debt restructuring framework last Thursday that seeks to rework part of the island nation's \$42 billion domestic debt.

"This debt restructuring plan is essential for Sri Lanka to meet the target set by the IMF agreement to reduce debt from the current 128% of GDP to 95% of GDP by 2023," State Minister of Finance Shehan Semasinghe told parliament.

"We are doing this while protecting banks, depositors and pensions."

Opposition parties called for more transparency in implementing the plan and stronger protection for pension fund holders.

"This restructuring will disproportionately affect pensioners and that is an extremely unfair move by the government," said opposition leader Sajith Premadasa.

The island's economy improved it secured the \$2.9 billion bailout from the IMF in March, which helped tame inflation, improve dollar inflows and appreciate its currency.

Sri Lanka is asking international bondholders to take a 30% haircut and is seeking similar concessions from investors in its domestic dollar-denominated notes.

Implementing the domestic debt plan is also crucial to push forward negotiations with bondholders and key bilateral creditors China, Japan and India.

Sri Lanka aims to finalise debt restructuring talks by September.





## Army Ground Force Enjoys State-of-the-Art Tech

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Army Commander Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi says that the country's Army Ground Force is equipped with advanced technology.

Iran's top commander made the remarks at a gathering of the commanders of the country's Army Ground Force held in Tehran on Monday. The Force is, presently, dynamic and more sophisticated, Major General Mousavi underlined.

He went on to say that experienced and knowledgeable commanders are prepared to

conduct missions. Iran's Army Ground Force has become a source of pride by carrying out successful missions, the commander underscored.

Earlier on May 23, Deputy Commander of the Iranian Army's Ground Force Brigadier General Nozar Nematy said that the force currently uses the most modern equipment including mechanized and armored brigades, drones, electronic warfare units, rapid response and mobile attack brigades.



## Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan Sidestep Russia With New Trade Partnership

ASTANA (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan has in a fresh effort to ease bottlenecks in a transportation corridor bypassing Russia reached an understanding with Azerbaijan and Georgia to set up a jointly run and owned logistics company.

The agreement was signed last week at the culmination of a trip to the South Caucasus nations by Kazakh Prime Minister Alikhan Smailov.

The goal behind establishing the company will be to simplify the process of handling cargo transportation between China and Europe and to streamline the tariff process.

Pessimistic analyses on the prospects of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, or the Middle Corridor, as it is also known, often cite the fact that cargo is required to cross multiple national borders. The Azerbaijani-Georgian-Kazakh logistics company is envisioned as a way of overcoming that hurdle.

Considerable progress has been made on easing the passage of goods already.

Kazakhstan's Industry and Infrastructure Development Ministry has reported that delivery times for goods being carried from China to Europe across the trans-Caspian route have decreased over the past year from 53 days to just 18-23 days. The goal is to bring that down even further, to 10-15 days.

While the physical volume of goods is relatively modest, the trend is positive. The amount of cargo traffic by weight carried along the route from the beginning of the year through to June exceeded 1 million tons, an increase of 64 percent compared to the same period last year.

But while delivery times can be brought down through efficient coordination, volumes cannot be increased without investment in new infrastructure.

As Gaidar Abdikerimov, the secretary-general of the association of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, has explained to Eurasianet, the bottleneck most plaguing the Caspian's transit potential is the South Caucasus. Underdeveloped port infrastructure limits capacity and causes congestion, he has said.

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili acknowledged this problem during his meeting with Smailov.



"We are cooperating to eliminate bottlenecks on the route and make the Middle Corridor even more attractive for the countries of Central Asia, China and other Asian countries in general," Garibashvili said.

He also said that the Georgian authorities are working on the modernization of the railway network and the construction of a new port.

Smailov's tour produced much other business in connectivity besides. One of the 10 bilateral agreements he signed with Azerbaijan will see the number of permitted flights between the two countries rise from a maximum of 32 per week to 42.

Astana says its goal is to ramp up exports to Azerbaijan so as to reach \$1 billion in bilateral trade, up from the \$500 million recorded in 2022.

Among the agreements concluded in Georgia was one on increasing capacity at the Batumi oil terminal, which belongs to Kazakhstan and provides Kazakh oil with an outlet to the Black Sea market. This corridor is seen as a particularly important component of Kazakhstan's strategy to reduce its reliance on Russian territory for export of its oil.

## Twitter Now Requires Users to Sign in to View Tweets



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Twitter will now require users to have an account on the social media platform to view tweets, a move that owner Elon Musk on Friday called a "temporary emergency measure".

Users who try to view content on the platform will be asked to sign up for an account or log into an existing account to see their favorite tweets.

"We were getting data pillaged so much that it was degrading service for normal users!" Musk said in a tweet.

He added that hundreds of organizations or more were scraping Twitter data "extremely aggressively", affecting user experience.

Musk has previously expressed displeasure at artificial intelligence firms like OpenAI, the owner of ChatGPT, using Twitter's data to train their large language models.

"We absolutely will take legal action against those who stole our data & look forward seeing them in court, which is (optimistically) 2 to 3 years from now," he said.

In a letter addressed to Microsoft (MSFT.O) CEO Satya Nadella, Musk's lawyer Alex Spiro in May asked the tech giant to conduct an audit of its use of Twitter's content, alleging the Windows developer violated an agreement over using the social media company's data.

The company has initiated a range of measures to bring back advertisers who left the platform under Musk's ownership and to increase subscription revenue by making verification check marks a part of the Twitter Blue program.

Earlier in the month, Twitter had announced plans to focus on video, creator and commerce partnerships to revitalize the social media company's business beyond digital advertising.

Twitter has also begun charging users to access its application programming interface (API), used by third-party apps and researchers.

## 68% of U.S. Voters Have Worries About Biden's Mental and Physical Health

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Recent national NBC News poll has some decent news for President Joe Biden, despite the survey showing him with an overall approval rating remaining in the low 40s among registered voters.

Biden leads Donald Trump by 4 points nationally in a hypothetical match-up (which is almost identical to his popular vote win in 2020). His fav/unfav rating in the poll (39% positive, 48% negative) is higher than Trump's (34% positive, 56% negative). And just like in 2020, Biden is ahead among independents in his match-up against Trump.

Yet here's the bad news for the president: 68% of all voters say they have concerns about Biden having the necessary mental and physical health to be president, including 55% who say they have "major" concerns.

By comparison, 55% of voters say they have concerns about Trump's mental and physical health, including 44% who have "major" concerns.

What also stands out is how concerns about Biden's mental and physical fitness have grown since we last asked this question in Oct. 2020 — when 51% of voters said they had concerns, with 38% having "major" concerns.

And check out these numbers: In 2020, 21% of Democrats said they had moderate/major concerns about Biden's fitness. Now it's 43% of Dems who say this.

That's almost half of Democratic voters.

That's the share of registered voters in our latest NBC News poll saying that the country is headed in the wrong direction, versus just 20% of voters who say it is on the right track.

That is the largest portion of people to say that the country is headed in the wrong direction since the Aug. 2022 poll, when 74% also said the country is on the wrong track. In May 2022, 75% of people said that the country was on the wrong track.

The last time that over 30% of respondents said that the country was on the right track was in April 2021, when 36% of people said that the country was headed in the right direction. In nine of the last 10 NBC News polls, the "wrong track" share has been at least 70%.

### Other numbers to know:

**84:** The number of potential witnesses Justice Department Special Counsel Jack Smith wanted to keep secret in the prosecution against Donald Trump over classified documents. A federal judge rejected that request Monday.

**Five or six:** The number of Secret Service agents who have testified in front of a grand jury investigating former President Donald Trump's alleged role in the Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the Capitol.

**12%:** The portion of Republican primary voters who chose South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott as their second-choice in the Republican presidential primary in a new NBC News poll, up nine points from April's poll.

**12:** The number of states that have "safe haven" or "shield" laws related to transgender care for minors, following New York's passage of such a law.

**3:** The number of years that eviction moratoria have lasted in some California cities, with mixed reactions as they are finally set to expire.

**21:** The number of Starbucks stores that closed over the weekend due to union strikes over allegations that the company banned LGBTQ pride displays.

**0.5%:** The percentage that rents fell in May compared to a year ago, the first drop since early in the pandemic, the Washington Post reports.

**119 degrees:** The highest temperature in some parts of Texas this week, where the heat is hitting records and not expected to let up before the holiday weekend, the New York Times reports. Both former President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will be in New Hampshire on Tuesday, holding dueling events in the early primary state.

Trump will address the New Hampshire Federation of Republican Women Lilac Luncheon and attend the opening of his campaign's state headquarters, per NBC News' Emily Gold. And DeSantis will hold a town hall.

Former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley and businessman Vivek Ramaswamy will also be holding town hall events Tuesday in the Granite State.

Despite its early primary status, campaigns and outside groups have spent just a fraction of their overall ad spending in New Hampshire, and the pro-DeSantis super PAC Never Back Down has been off the air for more than a month, per AdImpact. But New Hampshire could be a key state for DeSantis as he looks to gain momentum in early states against Trump. "If he wins in the first caucuses in Iowa but then loses in New Hampshire, it will put a significant road bump in his momentum. And if he loses both states, it will raise serious questions about his ability to win the GOP nomination," write NBC News' Natasha Korecki and Henry Gomez.

## Tesla Set to Report Record Quarterly Vehicle Deliveries

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - Tesla is set to report record vehicle deliveries, after the top electric vehicle maker increased discounts and other incentives to boost sales in the face of economic uncertainty and rising competition.

Tesla is expected as early as this weekend to report global deliveries of 445,000 vehicles in April to June, according to the average estimates of nine analysts by Refinitiv. That would be an increase of 5% from 422,875 the preceding quarter.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk's plan to sharply increase sales this year faces challenges from aging and limited product line-ups as competition intensifies especially in China, and demand softens.

Tesla has cut prices aggressively since January, eroding its first-quarter margins. It has avoided major price cuts in the past couple of months but has increased discounts, another form of sales incentive. It raised discounts in the second quarter for vehicles in its inventory to a \$1,600-to-\$7,500 range, and made all of its Model 3s eligible for full federal credits of \$7,500 starting in June in the United States.

Tesla this week sent out an email, "The Most American-Made Cars Are S3XY," offering three months of Supercharging to those who take delivery of a Model 3 by June 30, 2023.

In China, its second-biggest market after the United States, Tesla offered an insurance subsidy of 8,000 yuan (\$1,104) to customers who ordered and completed the delivery of an already-built Model 3 in the inventory from June 16 to June 30. Tesla is set to increase China sales by 13% from the previous quarter to a record number of vehicles, according to an analyst.

"I think China was a little bit better than expected and so there might be room for a little bit of a positive surprise there," said Thomas Martin, senior portfolio manager at Global Investments, which holds Tesla stock.

Tesla also offers discounts in Europe and Tesla appears to have tapped the brakes on a production increase at its Berlin factory, hiring fewer temporary workers and refraining from Saturday shifts.

## Washington Committing...

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking about the negotiations on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal and lifting anti-Iran sanctions, the senior Iranian diplomat cited that Iran continues to follow the path of negotiations and the continuation of consultations with the aim of securing the interests of the Iranian nation.

Kanaani added that the Western side has recently been slightly realistic and has shown constructive policies, but this is not enough for Iran.

Iran negotiates to achieve a final result from the negotiation table, he continued, adding that just as Tehran is ready to resume and conclude the negotiations in compliance with its red lines.

Tehran will continue to follow its balanced foreign policy in developing relations with different countries regardless of the status of the negotiations, Kanaani said.

Referring to the illegal sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran, he noted that Iran has never surrendered to U.S. sanctions and it never will.

"U.S. sanctions are a clear example of a crime against humanity. Iran will take measures to remove and neutralize the sanctions," he concluded.

## Iran Serious in...

FROM PAGE 1

The search operation was authorized by Albania's Special Court against Crime and Corruption due to concerns about the MKO's involvement in acts of terrorism and cyber-attacks.

The Ministry of Intelligence of Iran stated that it had previously warned European countries, particularly Albania, about the MKO's use of their territory to direct terrorist activities against Iran.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is seriously committed to pursuing terrorists outside its borders," the statement said.

Since 2016, Albania has been hosting the MKO after the terrorist cult was expelled from Iraq, where they had been harbored and armed by the former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to carry out attacks against Iran.

The ministry further disclosed that it possesses "reliable information" suggesting that certain "long-standing supporters of terrorism" in Europe and the United States, under the guidance and pressure of the Israeli regime, are seeking to revive the MKO.

## Iran-Turkey...

FROM PAGE 1

Turkey was also the third largest exporter to Iran over the year to late March as shipments rose by 15% against the previous year to reach \$5.2 billion, the customs data showed.

Iran has managed to maintain close ties with its major trade partners in recent years despite restrictions imposed by the United States on the country's access to trade and banking services.

Iran's non-oil exports reached a historic milestone of over \$53 billion in the year to late March with China, Iraq and Turkey being the largest customers of Iranian goods and products over that period.

## Iranians Commemorate...

FROM PAGE 1

U.S. officials claimed that the USS Vincennes had mistaken Iran Air Flight 655 for a warplane. This is while the warship was equipped with highly sophisticated radar systems and electronic battle gear at the time of the attack.

In 1990, the captain of the cruiser, William C. Rogers, was cleared of any wrongdoing, and was even awarded America's Legion of Merit medal by then-US president George Bush for his "outstanding service" during operations in the Persian Gulf.

Each year, Iranians commemorate the incident as an example of U.S. crimes against the nation.

## Iran to Install...

FROM PAGE 1

Damavand-1, a 100-meter-long destroyer weighing more than 1,300 tons, officially joined the Iranian Navy's northern fleet in March 2015.

Three years later, however, the frigate collided with a breakwater while docking at the Caspian port of Bandar Anzali and sank there.

It was recovered from the sea and entered the operational cycle, with new pictures showing that it is equipped with an anti-ship cruise missile launcher and a 76mm gun.

Iran's Navy has in recent years achieved self-sufficiency in manufacturing surface and sub-surface vessels.

It has also increased its presence in international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for merchant vessels and tankers.



## Lafay Wins Tour de France Second Stage

PARIS (Dispatches) - French rider Victor Lafay made a late move to break away from the pack and give Cofidis its first Tour de France stage win in 15 years, with Adam Yates keeping the overall lead after the opening two stages in northern Spain.

Lafay took the lead within the final kilometer (0.6 miles) and held on for victory in what was the Tour's longest stage this year. French team Cofidis hadn't won in the Tour since Sylvain Chavanel triumphed in the 19th stage of the 2008 edition.

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## Former Man United Midfielder Cleverley Retires

MANCHESTER (dispatches) - Former Manchester United midfielder Tom Cleverley announced his retirement from soccer at the age of 33, citing lingering injuries.

The ex-England international most recently captained Watford, joining the Championship side on loan from United during the 2009-10 season. Cleverley made 181 appearances, scored 19 times and registered 15 assists during his six-and-a-half-year spell at Watford after joining from Everton on loan for the second time and making the move permanent in 2017.

# Verstappen Takes Austrian Grand Prix to Extend Lead

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Spielberg bei Knittelfeld (Austria) (AFP) - Defending champion Max Verstappen continued his relentless charge towards a third world title when he claimed a record fourth Austrian Grand Prix victory in emphatic style.

The 25-year-old Dutchman finished 5.155 seconds clear of a revived Charles Leclerc of Ferrari, in second, with Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez, showing revitalised form, taking a battling third after starting 15th on the grid.

In a race of attrition, punctuated by Safety Cars and influenced by a high number of drivers' receiving penalties for exceeding track limits, Verstappen's unbroken run of laps led ended on 249, when he pitted.

But it was only a pause in his serene progress to a fifth consecutive victory, seventh in nine races this year to extend his lead ahead of Perez in the title race to 81 points.

It followed the Dutchman's success in Saturday's sprint and with the fastest lap gave him a maximum points haul from the weekend.

"That is the full sweep, classy Max, very very classy," said Red Bull boss Christian Horner over the team radio.

"The car was on fire!" replied Verstappen after his 42nd career win.

Despite a third title being his to lose Verstappen said he preferred to take it one race at a time. "I don't like to think about that yet," he said.

"I am just enjoying driving this car and racing for this team. The sprint weekend can be very stressful so I'm just glad it all went to plan."

His win total lifted him to fifth in the all-time list of winners and clear of Ayrton Senna, with whom he had shared 41 victories since winning in Canada.

Including a triumph in the 2022 Styrian Grand Prix, run during the Covid pandemic, this was Verstappen's fifth win at the Red Bull Ring circuit overall.

Leclerc and Perez were also pleased with their performances.

"We have maximised what we have," he said. "It was just yesterday that I was off it a bit. The upgrades have worked as expected, but there is still a lot of work to do."

Perez said: "It's been a rough patch for me so I hope we are back now and we can keep some consistency."

Leclerc's second place earned Ferrari



their 800th podium finish as team-mate Carlos Sainz finished fourth ahead of McLaren's Lando Norris, two-time champion Fernando Alonso and the Mercedes of Lewis Hamilton and George Russell.

Pierre Gasly was ninth for Alpine and Lance Stroll 10th in the second Aston Martin.

The race was preceded by a minute's silence in memory of Dutch racer Dilano van't Hoff, 18, who was killed racing in heavy rain at Spa-Francorchamps on Saturday.

In warm and dry conditions, Verstappen made a clean start and on lap 25 of the 71, he pitted, handing the lead to Leclerc to end his run of 249 consecutive laps led since lap 48 at the Miami GP.

The Dutchman swiftly regained second, however, and then swept inside Leclerc at Turn Three, on lap 35, to regain the lead before both Norris and Hamilton pitted, the latter serving his penalty, as did Sainz, after taking new hard tyres.

Verstappen pitted again on lap 50, for fresh mediums, retaining his lead, and was followed by team-mate Perez, in a rapid 2.4 seconds that sent him out fifth to chase both Ferraris and Norris over the closing laps.

By then, seven drivers had taken penalties - including Sainz, Ocon, Gasly and Albon - with Tsunoda adding a further 10-second hit for track limits a second time and Hamilton's frustrated fuming prompted a radio rebuke from team boss Toto Wolff.

"Lewis, the car is bad," he said. "We know it. Please drive it."

There were no grumbles from Verstappen who made a late stop in 2.3 seconds for soft tyres and a successful bid to steal fastest lap from Perez - a daring dash that thrilled the vast 'Orange Army' of Dutch fans in a sell-out crowd.



LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - Liverpool confirmed the signing of Dominik Szoboszlai from RB Leipzig after paying the Hungarian's 70-million-euro (£60 million, \$76 million) release clause.

The 22-year-old will further bolster the Reds midfield options after the arrival of Argentine World Cup winner Alexis Mac Allister last month.

"The last three or four days went really long; it was not that easy. But at the end I'm here, I'm happy and I can't wait to get started," Szoboszlai told Liverpool's website.

"A really historic club, really good players, good coach, everything is good. For me it was perfect to make the next step in a club like this. The fans, the stadium, everything is really good."

Liverpool were in the market to refresh their midfield after a fifth-place finish in the Premier League last season saw them miss out on Champions League qualification for the first time in seven years.

Midfielders James Milner, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Naby Keita all left the club when their contracts expired at the end of last season.

Szoboszlai will inherit the number eight jersey vacated by Keita to follow in the footsteps of one of his childhood heroes Steven Gerrard.

"I have a tattoo from Steven Gerrard," he added. "When I was a child, to be honest I didn't watch that much football, but when it was Champions League, I watched and he was one of the biggest."

## Australia Win 2nd Test Against England

LONDON (Dispatches) - Australia took a stranglehold on the Ashes series after beating England by 43 runs in a fiery and controversial second Test in Lord's to take a 2-0 lead in the five-match series.

England captain Ben Stokes hit a stunning 155 after Jonny Bairstow was controversially given out stumped after straying out of his ground on the last day.

But England were bowled out for 327 chasing a stiff target of 371.

Australia captain Pat Cummins led the attack with 3-69.

However it was Bairstow's dismissal shortly before lunch on the last day that lit the blue-touch paper on this match and incited the fury of the usually sedate Lord's crowd.

Bairstow, the last of England's specialist batsmen, fell in bizarre fashion for 10 when he wandered out of his ground after ducking a Cameron Green bouncer and quick-thinking wicketkeeper Alex Carey under-armed the ball onto the stumps.

Bairstow thought he had secured his ground by tapping his bat behind the crease.

Cummins could have withdrawn the appeal but the decision was referred to third umpire Marais Erasmus, who ruled Bairstow had been stumped, with England now 193-6.

Spectators at the 'Home of Cricket' reacted in fury with a chant of "Same old Aussies, always cheating" -- a taunt they repeated for the rest of the day's play.

England were ultimately left to rue not making the most of winning the toss in overcast conditions as Australia made a first-innings 416 built on batting star Steve Smith's 110.

England were well-placed at 188-1 in reply only for several batsmen, including Ben Duckett on 98, to throw their wickets away while succumbing to a blatant hooking trap.

The only occasion when a team have won a Test series from 2-0 down came when the Australia team of 1936/37, inspired by batting great Don Bradman, recovered to win an Ashes 3-2.

# Djokovic Does Nothing Wrong



LONDON (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz summed up the unique challenge of facing Novak Djokovic by insisting his rival "doesn't do anything wrong".

World number one Alcaraz is seen as the only player possible of preventing Djokovic from claiming an eighth Wimbledon title and 24th Grand Slam.

However, at the French Open, he was swept aside by Djokovic in the semi-finals, admitting the cramping he suffered in that Roland Garros duel was caused by the "stress and tension" of seeing the Serb on the other side of the net.

"He does things really, really easy. He moves really well. He hits the ball well, really clearly," said 20-year-old Alcaraz.

"He has clean shot. It's a mix of everything. I would say he doesn't do anything wrong. It's really tough to find some weakness in his game."

US Open champion Alcaraz made the last 16 at Wimbledon in 2022 in only his second appearance at the tournament.

However, he warmed up for the third Grand Slam event of the season by lifting the Queen's grass-court trophy last weekend.

It was his fifth title of 2023 and allowed him to knock Djokovic off the top of the rankings.

"I started Queen's with no expectation to win and I won it," he said.

"I feel great playing such a great level. The confidence grew up a lot. But obviously for me the main favourite here is Djokovic. That's obvious."

Alcaraz starts his Wimbledon campaign on Tuesday against French veteran Jeremy Chardy who will retire after the tournament.

## Fabregas Retires to Take Up Coaching

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Spain, Arsenal, Barcelona and Chelsea midfielder Cesc Fabregas announced his retirement, bringing the curtain down on an illustrious 20-year playing career as he hangs up his boots to take up coaching at Como.

Fabregas announced himself on the scene when he made his Arsenal debut aged 16 after he was signed from Barca, taking over the midfield mantle from Frenchman Patrick Vieira and becoming one of the Premier League's greatest playmakers.

After eight seasons at Arsenal, where he won the FA Cup in 2005, he moved back to his boyhood club Barcelona for three years and won six trophies. He then moved to London, this time with Chelsea where he won two Premier League titles and his second FA Cup.

But his biggest success came with Spain, winning 110 caps and back-to-back European Championships in 2008 and 2012, while providing the assist for the extra-time winner in the 2010 World Cup final against the Netherlands.

"It is with great sadness that the time has come for me to hang up my playing boots," Fabregas wrote on Twitter.



## Sabalenka Cannot Escape Questions on Invasion of Ukraine

LONDON (Dispatches) - Aryna Sabalenka may wish it to be otherwise but there was no getting away from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Elina Svitolina and Venus Williams - who will play each other in round one - made it clear that even if Russian and Belarusian players are allowed to play in this year's Championships, the topic is far from closed.

As the highest-ranked Belarusian (or Russian) player, Sabalenka, the world No 2, has been asked more questions than most about her feelings toward the war and her country's president, Alexander Lukashenko.

For months, she has refused to condemn it and though in Paris last month, she said: "I don't support war, which means I don't support Lukashenko [the Belarus leader] right now", her attitude and her words have been heavily criticised by Svitolina and other Ukrainian players.

Sabalenka began with a mini-statement on Saturday, saying: "Before we continue, I would like to say I'm not going to talk about politics. I'm here to talk about tennis only. Please respect that."

"If you have any kind of political questions, you can ask WTA or the tournament. They can send you the transcript of my answers from the previous tournaments. Thank you."

