

Oil Minister Is to Attend the 8th OPEC Int'l Seminar and Deliver a Speech at the Second Ministerial Meeting of This Event Entitled "Investment, Financial Issues and Strategies of Oil Inclusive Growth"

IRAN NEWS

The Capacity for Production of Petrochemicals in Iran Will Increase From 92 to 131.5m Metric Tons (mt) Per Year by the End of Iran's Seventh National Development Plan in Early 2027

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Iran Soon to Become Hub Of Radiopharmaceuticals Production



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Iran, Russia, India Meet on INSTC



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Palestinians Cannot Fight Off Israel Except Through Use of Force

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has asserted that Palestinians could achieve their goals against Israel only through the use of force, as the regime continues its unabated onslaught on the occupied West Bank city of Jenin.

Iran's mission to the United Nations told Newsweek that Tehran is ready to help Palestinians win over the regime through use of "force."

"Based on Iran's assessment, Palestinians cannot regain their seized rights from the Israeli regime through negotiation, as the Israeli regime only responds to force," the mission said.

"Therefore, Iran supports any request for assistance from the Palestinian resistance," it added.

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Iran Officially Gains Full SCO Membership



بیست و سومین اجلاس سران کشورهای عضو سازمان همکاری شانگهای
۱۳ تیر ۱۴۰۲
MEETING OF THE SCO COUNCIL OF HEADS OF STATE

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) officially approved Iran's full-fledged membership in the world's largest regional organization in terms of geographic scope and population.

Iran became a SCO member during the 23rd virtual summit of the bloc which started on Tuesday with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as its chairperson.

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

The SCO, which has its headquarters in China, is a diplomatic organization with eight members, namely

Russia, India, Pakistan, and the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

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

Addressing the 23rd virtual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), President Ebrahim Raisi warned against the dominance of the dollar in global exchanges, saying de-dollarization is a pivotal necessity to form a just international system.

He said cooperation among the SCO member states in the economic fields can "open a clear vision of a just regional order" to the eyes of world nations.

Based on the past decades' experience, he said, militarism and the dominance of the dollar form the bases of the Western domination system.

"Therefore any attempt to shape a fair international system requires the removal of this instrument of dominance in intra-regional relations," the Iranian president pointed out.

He noted that civilization is the greatest capacity of the SCO member countries to build unity and peace.

He stressed the importance of promoting a civilization in this "ancient" continent based on ethics, spirituality, justice, rationality, and respect for human dignity.

"The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is a symbol of this 'great family of civilizations', is now standing in a position that can establish new horizons of regional convergence and security-building cooperation," Raisi stated.

Pointing to the desecration of the Holy Qur'an in some European countries, he emphasized the need to respect the "values and sanctities of the nations" as a "unifying principle".

The Iranian president said the desecration of the Holy Qur'an caused hatred and spread insecurity, which should be dealt with by displaying unity among civilized nations.

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

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

Addressing the summit, the Indian prime minister said the Shanghai Cooperation Organization should join hands to fight terrorism and not hesitate to condemn countries that support terror.

Modi also called on leaders of the Eurasian political and security grouping to work for the welfare of Afghanistan and provide humanitarian aid to Kabul.

He also congratulated Iran on becoming a full member of the alliance and conveyed his "best wishes to President Ebrahim Raisi and the people of Iran."

Chinese President Xi Jinping called on the SCO leaders to work to "protect regional peace and ensure security."

He said the SCO member states should "follow the right direction and enhance their solidarity and mutual trust".

He stressed the importance of focusing on pragmatic cooperation and accelerating economic recovery, and pledged to work with SCO member states to "oppose protectionism."

China would "persist in the correct direction of economic globalization, oppose protectionism, unilateral sanctions and extension of national security concept," Xi said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin also reiterated his country's opposition to Western sanctions and said Moscow would counter "all these external sanctions and pressures" and continue to "develop as never before".

Putin also backed trade accords between SCO nations in local currencies in an attempt to blunt sanctions.

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NATO Readies Military Plans to Defend Against Russia



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8 SPORT

Rublev Says Wimbledon Wrong to Ban Russians



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Iran Natural Gas Exports Hit Nearly 19 bcm in 2022

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Figures by the Energy Institute (EI) show that Iran exported nearly 19 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas in 2022.

A Tuesday report by the IRNA cited data from EI's 72nd edition of the Statistical Review of World Energy which showed that the Islamic Republic had exported 18.9 bcm of natural gas in 2022. The figure, which equals to 51.8 million cubic meters per day of exports, accounted for 2.5% of the world's natural gas trade through pipeline last year.

Iran's natural gas exports rose 9% year on year in 2022, said the report.

The figure is more than 4 times the average growth rate in the global trade of natural gas, added the EI.

Iran exports around 19 bcm of natural gas in 2022: Data Iran had exported 17.3 bcm of natural gas in 2021, said the report.

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Russian Firms Urged to Use Opportunity to Invest in North-South Corridor Projects

TEHRAN (IRNA) - First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber in a meeting met with Igor Levitin, aide to the President of the Russian Federation, in Tehran on Monday stressed the need for following up on and operationalization of Tehran-Moscow agreements.

Referring to the importance of the North-South Corridor, the Iranian first vice president said, "Russian companies should use the opportunity to invest in the coasts of Makran in south and southeast Iran and implementation of port infrastructure projects and logistics centers in the North-South Corridor, which is welcomed and pursued by some neighboring countries and other countries beyond the region."

"The speed of decision-making is of fundamental importance," he added.

Stressing the need to pursue and put into operation the agreements between Tehran and Moscow as soon as possible, the Iranian first vice president said that, "The barriers to the construction of power plants, the implementation of the memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on joint energy cooperation and the development of oil fields should be removed through orders and follow-ups, and there has to be an acceleration in the implementation of joint projects and contracts."

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Kuwait Urges Iran Border Talks as Gas Row Flares Anew

KUWAIT CITY (Dispatches) - Kuwait re-invited Iran to talks on their sea borders after Tehran said it was ready to start drilling in a disputed gas field in the resource-rich Persian Gulf.

Kuwait insisted it held "exclusive rights" to the maritime field along with Saudi Arabia, after the neighboring countries agreed to jointly develop it last year.

The field, known as Arash in Iran and Dorra in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, is also claimed by Tehran in a dispute which dates back several decades.

"The State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia... alone have exclusive rights to the natural wealth in the Al-Dorra field," a Kuwaiti foreign ministry statement said.

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Announcement

Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Company
(Public Joint Stock)



Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Co.

First Announcement

Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Company intends to identify all commercial companies that are able to purchase iron ore pellets with the average FE 65% as FAS (INCOTERMS 2020) as deliver it to the customer's warehouse in Bandar Abbas to sell this product in foreign markets such as China, Turkey, India, Oman, etc. Therefore, all the capable companies which have exported more than 500 thousand metric tons of mineral products in the last two years are invited to submit the original letter of representative from the foreign producer company (End user), in addition to all necessary financial and commercial documents of their Iranian and foreign companies, through the official email of the mother company to the electronic address to read as commercial-dep@goharzamin.com until 22 July 2023. Also, that company should make the necessary arrangements to hold a meeting with the presence of the senior managers of the mother company (end user) and visiting the relevant plants.

It is obvious that the presentation of these documents does not create any rights for the participants in this announcement, and Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Company is completely authorized in her investigation and responding to the participants.

For more information, you are asked to call 021-57623 Ext. 1673 and Cellphone number 09124604691.

Website: www.goharzamin.com

Over 1m Health Tourists Visit Iran Annually

TEHRAN (IRNA) - More than one million health tourists visit Iran each year, according to the director general of the Health Ministry's International Cooperation section.

"We are in talks to develop health tourism protocols with other countries so that we can make use of the existing facilities to the maximum extent," Mohammad-Hossein Niknam said during a meeting on examining the obstacles and solutions for the development of tourism diplomacy in the post-coronavirus era.

"The capacity of our country in attracting health tourists is high thanks to its experienced medical staff, lower treatment costs compared to other countries, high-quality medical services, and well-equipped specialized hospitals, in addition to tourist attractions," he said, adding that special attention should be paid to this kind of tourism. During the meeting, the deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy said the economic dividends of attracting health tourists are distributed among a huge number of people working in this field.

Iran Soon to Become Hub of Radiopharmaceuticals Production

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Referring to the recent achievements and the existing capacities, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said that Iran will soon become the hub of production and export of radiopharmaceuticals.

Iran has taken positive steps in the past 16 months in developing various areas including plasma technology, and radiation technology in the fields of medicine and agriculture, Mohammad Eslami said on Tuesday.

He went on to say that the country is now able to produce high-quality heavy water and has achieved a good status in the world in this regard, adding that Tehran can also export this important product to other states.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Eslami hailed the support of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to the country's nuclear industry.

In mid-June, Eslami said the agency recorded 159 achievements in the past Persian calendar year (ending on March 20) in defiance of US sanctions as well as hurdles created by the West. "Last year, we had 159 achievements. It was important for us to speed up the time needed to get results and ... turn an idea into a product," he said.

The nuclear achievements were made by young Iranian experts in different fields, including irradiation systems, microwaves, radiopharmaceuticals, and plasma technology, according to him.



Eslami emphasized that the achievements were made despite US sanctions targeting Iranian radiopharmaceutical companies and not allowing them to send or receive any consignments.

The Iranian nuclear program has been a focus of Western attention since the 2000s. Western governments claim that Iran has been pursuing the development of an atomic bomb. Tehran denies that claim and says its nuclear program is meant for peaceful purposes only.

Iran reached a nuclear deal with the United States and five other countries back in 2015. But the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the deal and the imposition of numerous sanctions on Tehran stonewalled its proper implementation.

Culture Minister in Moscow

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance arrived in Moscow to sit down with his Russian counterpart and participate in Iran's Cultural Week in Russia.

Mohammad Mehdi Esmaeili, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, arrived at the Vnukovo international airport on Monday afternoon and was welcomed by the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Moscow, Kazem Jalali and the Deputy Minister of Culture of Russia, Andrey Malyshev.

Esmaeili is about to meet with his Russian counterpart and participate in the programs of Iran's cultural week in Russia.

Iranian Culture Week was opened on Tuesday with the participation of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation.

Moscow and St. Petersburg will host the program after a four-year break due to the COVID pandemic.

On the sidelines of Iran's cultural week in Russia, Iranian Minister Esmaeili will discuss the boosting cultural ties between Iran and Russia with his Russian counterpart.

Iran's cultural week in Russia includes an exhibition of Iran's fine arts and handicrafts in the VDNKH complex, located in the Ostankinsky District of Moscow, traditional music with the presence of 19 Iranian and 16 Russian musicians, two joint performances in the form of Iran's National Orchestra and the Russian National Youth Symphony Orchestra (RNYSO) using Iranian instruments in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Judiciary Spokesman Lambasted Sweden for Cremating Quran

TEHRAN (IP) Judiciary Spokesman on Tuesday strongly condemned Sweden for cremating the holy Quran.

In his press briefing, Masoud Setayeshi said that the act is provocative, unwise, and unacceptable, especially during the Hajj pilgrimage and Muslim Eid al-Adha rituals.

He said: The governments are responsible to act based on international rules and regulations.

The Judiciary Spokesman said everyone is upset, angry, and bored of the U.S. brazen crimes against humanity, such as the assassination of Lt. Gen. Qasem Soleimani and his companions.

Setayeshi said in response to Iran Press: "The US, with various tools, commits crimes against any nation, perpetrates frequent assassinations, nurtures terrorism, and supports terrorist groups like ISIS."

He further said that while the US trumpets human rights, it destroys nations, uses chemical weapons, supports the Israeli regime and Saddam, and loots the resources of the world's nations.

Setayeshi stated: "The U.S. uses scientific, cultural, legal, political, and moral tools against nations, including imposing economic sanctions against our people, women, and patients, and humanity."

New Ambassador to Australia Starts Mission

TEHRAN (IRNA) - New Ambassador to Australia Ahmad Sadeqi has met with Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian before departing Tehran for Canberra to begin his mission in the Oceania country.

During the meeting, Amirabdollahian urged the ambassador to make effort to create an atmosphere of interaction and cooperation between the two countries, IRNA reported on Tuesday. The foreign minister also offered some advice to the



new envoy about adopting effective strategies for the establishment of good space of cooperation between Tehran and Canberra in trade and political areas.

Sadeqi, for his part, presented a report to Amirabdollahian on the latest situation of relations between Iran and Australia.

Sadeqi has already served as a staff member of Iran's embassy in Canada, a permanent representative of the Islamic Republic in New York, and a caretaker of the consulate general of Iran in India.

Revealing U.S. Atrocities at Int'l Conference on American Human Rights

TEHRAN (IP) - The 6th International Conference on American Human Rights, from the perspective of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, on Monday, shedding light on the double standards of the U.S. on human rights.

The conference gathered Muslim and Christian intellectuals, along with esteemed guests from 55 countries worldwide, including the respected families of the martyrs of the terrorist attack on the Holy Shrine of Shah Cheragh, families of martyrs from law enforcement forces, the family of the late martyr General Qasem Soleimani and the family of martyr Mostafa Ahmadi-Roshan.

According to Mohammad Moghimi, the head of the University of Tehran and the secretary of the conference, the secretariat received 240 articles from 17 countries. The meeting coincided with the Disclosure of American Human Rights Week, and a selection of these articles received special recognition.

During the ceremony, Sadegheh Hajazi, an expert on cultural issues, brought attention to the violation of women's rights in the United States, stating, "One out of every four women in America experiences violence, and among them, 325,000 are pregnant women annually."

Mohammad Hosseini, the Vice-President for Parliamentary Affairs, highlighted a significant incident that exposed the true face of American human rights to the world. He referred to July 3, 1988, when an Iranian passenger plane traveling from Bandar Abbas to Dubai was targeted by American naval forces in the Persian Gulf waters near the island of "Hengam." Tragically, more than 290 people, including passengers and crew members of all ages and genders, lost their lives.

He also reflected on the historical roots of American human rights abuses, noting, "The birth of America has been tainted by the brutal massacre of Native Americans."

Zainab Soleimani, the daughter of the late martyr General Qasem Soleimani, expressed her perspective during the conference, highlighting the assassination of freedom-loving individuals as one of America's crimes. She emphasized that the events surrounding the CIA-orchestrated 1953 coup d'état demonstrate that American human rights abuses in Iran extend beyond the Islamic Revolution.

Furthermore, she stated, "The assassination of General Soleimani, a commander who successfully declared the defeat of ISIS terrorist group in the region, and the admission of Americans to this crime, has brought shame upon them on the world stage."

Iran Highlights Achievements in Water, Agriculture at FAO Meeting

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran showcased its remarkable agricultural achievements during the 43rd biennial meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome.

Rasool Zare, the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to FAO, presented a video highlighting Iran's accomplishments in the agricultural sector.

The meeting brought together representatives and ministers from 194 member countries of FAO, and all focused on discussing agriculture and natural resources.

On Monday evening at FAO's headquarters in Rome, Zare read out the speech prepared by Mohammad Ali Nikbakht, Iran's Minister of Agricultural Jihad.

On the sidelines of the event Zare emphasized that Nikbakht's speech centered around effective water resource management. The aim was to improve the quality of life, nutrition, and environmental conditions in order to achieve sustainable development goals.

Iran's participation in this prestigious event serves as a testament to its commitment to advancing agricultural practices and ensuring food security.

Through their notable achievements and dedication to sustainable development, Iran continues to make significant contributions to the global farming community.

The 43rd biennial meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) commenced in Rome last Saturday, bringing together member countries to discuss crucial issues related to agriculture.

During the event, Iran's representative emphasized the need for continued cooperation among FAO member nations, particularly in the field of water.

Furthermore, Iran showcased its notable achievements in water management and agriculture.

In his speech, Zare also talked about the successful reform of irrigation systems, implementation of an efficient agricultural tenure management system, integration of agricultural lands, and adoption of cutting-edge technologies in farming practices.

Zare also emphasized Iran's commitment to implementing a sustainable value chain and a knowledge-based food system.

He expressed Tehran's readiness to collaborate with all countries within the FAO framework, focusing on regional cooperation to enhance overall efficiency.

Preserving water resources for future generations was another critical aspect highlighted by the Iranian envoy in FAO during his address. He stressed the importance of prioritizing water management in agriculture and natural resource preservation. The FAO meeting will continue until Friday as delegates from various nations engage in discussions on critical topics related to global food security and sustainable agricultural practices.

Minister Announces Signing Two Agreements Between Iran, UAE

TEHRAN (IP) - According to the Minister of Economy, two agreements were signed between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates in investment and tax avoidance.

Seyyed Ehsan Khandouzi, Minister of Economy, in a press conference, and in response to his meeting with his Emirati counterpart on the sidelines of the annual meeting of the OPEC Fund, said: Considering that we had a meeting in Jeddah before, the previous agreements were followed.

Khandouzi added that if the Emirati side agrees, these two documents will be implemented this summer.

He added that measures are being taken in investment projects as well as the central bank acts in currency area to increase economic cooperation between Iran and the UAE.

Iran Enjoys Self-Sufficiency in Radar System, Missile Weapons

TEHRAN (MNA) - Commander of the Iranian Army's Air Defense Force has said that Iran's Army enjoys self-sufficiency and optimization of radar systems and missile weapons.

Visiting the operational sections of the Khandab air defense group on Tuesday, Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi-Fard evaluated the combat capability and defense readiness of this group and its subsidiary sites.

During his visit, Brigadier General Sabahi-Fard said that today, the defense complex has achieved a level of knowledge, ability, and authority that modern defense systems are domestically designed, produced, and placed in the operational cycle.

He noted that self-sufficiency and optimization of radar systems and missile weapons are valuable achievements of the army's air defense.

Referring to the deterrence power of Iran's Army, he underlined that Iran's air defense does not allow any foreigner to violate the air territories of the country.

Iran Seeking to Join Int'l Urban Search and Rescue Teams

TEHRAN (MNA) - An official with Tehran Crisis Management Organization has said the country is seeking to become a member of international urban search and rescue (USAR) teams.

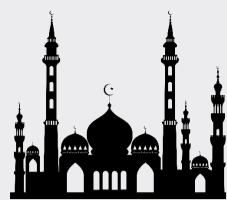
Urban search and rescue teams play a critical role in responding to disasters, and putting together an effective team requires careful planning and preparation.

The concept of USAR originated in the 1960s as a result of the increasing number of high-rise buildings in urban areas.

A coordination meeting was held to assess two urban search and rescue teams in the Tehran metropolis, ISNA quoted Majid Aron as saying.

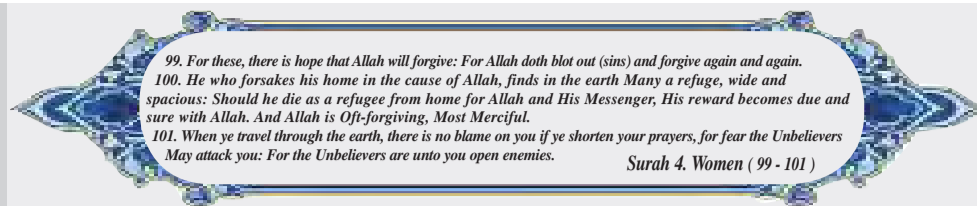
The meeting was attended by the head of the Tehran Crisis Management Organization, representatives of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Iran, the director of the emergency response unit of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Secretariat in Geneva.

Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, firefighting organizations, security services, and the Red Crescent Society were also present in the meeting which was held online.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:08
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:44
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:09
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:54



Iran, Russia, India Meet on INSTC

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Shortly after the Iran-Russia agreement for the construction of the Rasht-Astara Railway, the founding member states of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), including Iran, Russia, and India, gathered in Tehran on Tuesday to discuss the development of this strategic Corridor.

Iran, Russia, and India gathered today in Tehran to discuss the development of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). Geographically, Iran's territory, particularly the only ocean Port of Chabahar, is very strategic for activation of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) in linking India to Russia.

Established in 2000 by Iran, Russia, and India, this 7,200-km-long Corridor works as a multi-modal network of ship, rail, and road routes for moving freight between India, Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe.

The INSTC is a vital transport agenda that is expected to considerably boost the transit and trade of Iran and Russia with the countries of the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf.

Since 2000, there have been numerous efforts and negotiations on the part of member countries to activate this route.

The first train along the INSTC arrived in Iran in July 2022, and later in September, the second train entered Iran through Sarakhs Border from Russia to the destination of India. From Russia, the transit train proceeded through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, passing 4000 km, then entered Iran through Sarakhs Border. Along the eastern part of the INSTC in Iran, the train passes 1600 km to reach Shahid Rajaei Port in Bandar Abbas. The destination for this shipment was India and South Africa by sea, according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Railway Company.

Freight transit through Iran's territory lasts almost a third of the previous route from Russia to India through the Black Sea.

Basically, the most important agendas for Iran and Russia's transport cooperation are the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the completion of the Rasht-Astara Railroad.

Last month in May, the agreement for financing the construction of the Rasht-Astara Railway was signed between Iran and Russia. As per this agreement, Due to the importance of the INSTC for international transit in the region, Russia has been determined to finance this railway project with approximately €1.6 billion in investments. This project is expected to be constructed within 48 months.

The 162-km Rasht-Astara railroad is one of the two missing rail links along the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) its completion is vital for regional rail transit.

The INSTC and Chabahar Port are similarly crucial for India. Last year in August, upon the decree of India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Iran, and India's transport Ministers met in Tehran to expand the role of Chabahar Port in regional transit and trade.



Presenting a speech at the meeting, Mehrdad Bazrpash elaborated on Iran Rah (route) initiative in relation to the north-south corridor, which he said included eight fundamental principles:

- Multilateralism, including the economic convergence of corridors and neutralizing unilateralism;
- Participation, that is to ensure the interests of all stakeholders;
- Transit neighborliness, that is, to create logistical and transit opportunities for the neighboring and non-neighboring countries;
- Network-centeredness, that is to synergize all transit infrastructure of all the engaged countries;-Facilitation, that is to ease the confusion of transit, logistics, trade, banking affairs, and regulations;
- Historical memory, that is, recalling the historical relations of the region's countries during the past centuries in global trade;
- Technology that is to strengthen the transmission of knowledge and experience in transit and logistic areas with an emphasis on new innovative technologies;
- Flexibility and resilience, that is, to preserve the quality and efficiency of transport and logistics infrastructure in different conditions;

The Iranian minister said that the mentioned principles could operationalize the capacities of geographical and economic advantages, which aligns with the North-South Corridor's fundamental goals.

Geographically, Iran's territory, particularly the only ocean Port of Chabahar, is very strategic for activation of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) in linking India to Russia.

Meanwhile Indian Deputy National Security Advisor said India is committed to the success of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) project.

Delivering a speech at the INSTC meeting, Vikram Misiri said: "We believe in connectivity as a general interest for countries of the region."

"INSTC is just beyond a connectivity project. It has the potential to galvanize the economy of the entire region. Whether in the middle east, south, and Central Asia," said the Indian official.

The Indian official appreciated Iran and Russia as essential actors in the connectivity and stressed the enormous economic gains for all the participant countries of the corridors.

He also enumerated the hindering factors on the way of the project, classifying them into three separate categories; The one relating to physical infrastructure, such as road, rail, and port; The second group deal with non-physical infrastructure, including procedures, customs affairs, and financing; And the last, which he called the least tangible factor pertaining to issues of perception and assessment.

Iran, Oman Launch Ramsar-Muscat Direct Flight

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Taban Airlines has added Ramsar-Muscat direct flights to its previous ones from Shiraz and Mashhad to Oman's Muscat and Sohar.

Marzieh Jafarzadeh, the public relations manager of Taban Airlines, told IRNA on Tuesday that the first flight from Oman's capital city Muscat to Ramsar, Mazandaran province in northern Iran, was carried out on Monday (July 3) at 15:00 local time.

Jafarzadeh went on to say that in accordance with the planned schedule, the Ramsar-Muscat flight route will carry out routine flights every Monday.

According to the manager, Taban Airlines has decided to use an Airbus A320 with 146 seats, including 14 business and 132 economy class seats, for the Ramsar-Muscat flights.

A provincial official of Mazandaran province earlier said that the follow-ups made by the governor-general of Mazandaran and the approval by the minister of roads and urban development led to the development of the Ramsar Airport, which plays a significant role in attracting foreign tourists, especially from Arab states of the region.

Iran, Uzbekistan to Expand Technological Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Iranian International Science and Technology Interactions Cooperation announced the expansion of cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan in the fields of science and technology.

Amir-Hossein Mirabadi said that the Iranian Technology and Innovation House was opened in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Referring to the exports of Iranian knowledge-based products to Uzbekistan, he said that Iranian Technology and Innovation House in Tashkent is supposed to facilitate and develop infrastructure for more serious cooperation in economic and technological activities in Uzbekistan.

He added that in cooperation with companies from two sides and under the support of the Iranian Technology and Innovation House, a \$10 million technological cooperation agreement was signed in the field of energy between Iran and Uzbekistan.

Cooperation in the field of medical equipment, information technology, and huge data centers was among the main agreements with Uzbekistan, he said, adding that one of the fundamental policies of the incumbent government in Iran is science and technology diplomacy focusing on knowledge-based trade with other countries.

Iran Steel Output up 8.8% In May to 3.3m mt

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran continued to churn out more steel in May despite a decline in the global steel output as the country moved up three places to seventh in the global ranking of large steel producers, according to figures by the World Steel Association (worldsteel).

Worldsteel figures cited in a Monday report by the IRIB News showed that Iran's steel output had reached 3.3 million metric tons (mt) in May, up 8.8% from May 2022.

The figures showed that global steel production had dropped by 5.1% year on year in May to reach 161.6 million mt mainly because of lower prices of steel in the international markets, said the report, adding that the price of Iranian-made slab, a semi-finished steel product, had fallen by an average of 17% in the April-May period.

Iran, Russia, India and Germany, however, were the four notable steel producers who reported growth in production in May, said the report.

Just like Iran, Russia's steel output rose by 8.8% year on year in May while India managed to raise its production by 4.1% and Germany by 0.2% over the period, it added.

Iran trailed India in terms of growth in steel output in January-May with a 2.2% year on year increase in production over the five-month period, according to worldsteel figures.

Iran was the seventh largest steel producer in the world in May, behind South Korea in the sixth position. The IRIB News said the position is a first for Iran as the country normally came 10th in worldsteel ranking in recent years.

The five largest steel producers of the world in May were China, India, Japan, the United States and Russia, said the report.

PTA Significant for Promoting Iran-Indonesia Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Ambassador of Indonesia to Tehran said signing a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) is of paramount importance for the promotion of trade between the two countries.

Indonesia is mulling over the package proposed by Iran, Jakarta's Ambassador to Tehran Ronny Prasetyo Yuliantoro said, expressing hope that the PTA would soon be finalized between the two countries.

He said the agreement is important for accessing the two sides to the lucrative markets of either side.

The Indonesian ambassador to Tehran met with the Caretaker of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) Mehdi Zeyghami at the venue of the organization to discuss bilateral ties and issues of mutual interests.

During the meeting, the Indonesian envoy invited Iranian traders and merchants to attend international exhibitions in Indonesia and stated that Indonesia's largest trade fair will be held in October.

The Iranian deputy minister of industry, for his part, pointed to dispatching and admitting the trade and economic delegations and active presence at exhibitions of the target countries as one of the main priorities of his organization.

Highlighting the all-out relations between Iran and Indonesia established since many years ago, Zeyghami referred to a memorandum of understanding inked in the field of bartering between the two countries and added that the MoU can help develop bilateral trade to a great extent.

PTA, agreements related to the halal food byproducts and customs duties were among the subjects discussed at the meeting.



PTA Significant for Promoting Iran-Indonesia Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Ambassador of Indonesia to Tehran said signing a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) is of paramount importance for the promotion of trade between the two countries.

Indonesia is mulling over the package proposed by Iran, Jakarta's Ambassador to Tehran Ronny Prasetyo Yuliantoro said, expressing hope that the PTA would soon be finalized between the two countries.

He said the agreement is important for accessing the two sides to the lucrative markets of either side.

The Indonesian ambassador to Tehran met with the Caretaker of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) Mehdi Zeyghami at the venue of the organization to discuss bilateral ties and issues of mutual interests.

During the meeting, the Indonesian envoy invited Iranian traders and merchants to attend international exhibitions in Indonesia and stated that Indonesia's largest trade fair will be held in October.

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Tehran to Accelerate Electrification of Transport Fleet

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's ministry of industries (MIMT) has committed to supply some 50,000 electric cars and some 200,000 electric motorbikes to the intracity transportation fleet in the capital Tehran until March.

The commitment was announced in a meeting between MIMT minister Abbas Aliabadi and Tehran Mayor Alirerza Zakani where the two reached an initial agreement on a plan to electrify the transport fleet in Tehran.

The plan will focus in its first phase on Tehran's central and southern regions, including the densely populated districts around the Grand Bazaar, according to a report by the IRNA news agency which said that some 5,000 slow and fast charging stations will be built across the city to provide services to electric taxis and motorbikes. As part of the plan, Tehran's municipality will provide funding for imports and manufacturing of some 150,000 electric motorbikes.

Aliabadi, who took charge of MIMT only last month, said that electrification of Iran's transport system would be a top priority of the ministry under his leadership.

He said the government will increase its support for the electrification project by easing curbs on imports of electric vehicles. Before becoming a minister, Aliabadi supervised a series of transport electrification projects in Iran's largest energy engineering company MAPNA where he served as CEO of the company for nearly 14 years.

"We can proudly say that the movement to electrify Tehran's transport system has started today," he said in the meeting with Tehran municipality officials, adding that Iran's ministries of interior, oil and energy will also contribute to the major project to expand Tehran's transportation fleet until March.

Pope Condemns Quran Burning in Sweden



ROME (Dispatches) - Pope Francis has condemned last week's Quran burning in Sweden, saying he felt "angry and disgusted" to see the Muslim holy book desecrated.

In an interview published on Monday in the United Arab Emirates newspaper Al Ittihad, the pope said: "Any book considered holy should be respected to respect those who believe in it."

"I feel angry and disgusted at these actions." On Wednesday, when many Muslims were celebrating Eid al-Adha, a man in Stockholm tore up and burned a Quran outside a mosque, drawing widespread condemnation, including from the governments of Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Elections in Russian-Controlled Ukraine Could Be Cancelled



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's top election official said that if the situation worsened in four Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine, local elections scheduled there for September would be cancelled.

Russia controls just under one-fifth of Ukraine, including Crimea, which it annexed in 2014, and parts of four other regions that Russian troops have taken control of since the current war began in February 2022. President Vladimir Putin says the regions - Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson - are now part of Russia, after Moscow unilaterally annexed them last year. Ukraine says the annexation is illegal and void, and that it will not rest until every last Russian soldier is ejected from its internationally recognised territory. The front line of the conflict - which Moscow calls a "special military operation" - runs through all four regions.

NATO Readies Military Plans To Defend Against Russia



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Russia's armed forces are bruised but by no means beaten in the war in Ukraine, a top NATO military officer said Monday, as he laid out the biggest revamp to the organization's military plans since the Cold War should Moscow dare to widen the conflict.

"They might not be 11 feet tall, but they are certainly not 2 feet tall," the Chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, told reporters. "So, we should never underestimate the Russians and their ability to bounce back."

U.S. President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts are set to endorse a major shakeup of the alliance's planning system at a summit in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius next week.

The US embassy says its ambassador to Russia was allowed to visit Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gerhovich, who has been behind bars in Russia since March on charges of espionage.

Saudi Arabia and Russia are extending cuts to the amount of oil they pump to the world to try to prop up prices. A week after the mutiny raised the most daunting challenge to President Vladimir Putin's rule in over two decades, key details about the uprising remain shrouded in mystery.

Ukrainian forces are attempting to wear down the Russian army and reshape battle lines to create more favorable conditions for a decisive, eastward counteroffensive.

NATO, as an organization, does not provide weapons or ammunition to Ukraine. It's sought to avoid being dragged into a wider war with nuclear-armed Russia. At the same time, it is massively reinforcing the security of member countries near Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

Around 40,000 troops are on standby from Estonia in the north down to Romania on the Black Sea. About 100 aircraft take to the skies in that territory each day, and a total of 27 warships are operating in the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas. Those numbers are set to rise.

Under its new plans, NATO aims to have up to 300,000 troops ready to move to its eastern flank within 30 days. The plans divide its territory into three zones - the high north and Atlantic area, a zone north of the Alps, and another in southern Europe. Bauer said that NATO's new planning is based on the strength of the Russian army before President Vladimir Putin launched the war on Ukraine almost 17 months ago. He said the war has depleted Russia's army, but not its navy or air force.

Of Russia's ground forces, around "94% is now engaged in the war in Ukraine," Bauer said.

"What we see in general is that the Russians are careful around NATO. They are not for seeking a conflict with NATO. I think that is a sign that they are very, very busy," he said. "In the land domain, I don't think they have a lot of forces available to do anything to anyone else."

"But we are convinced that the Russians are going to reconstitute," he said. "We will continue to look at them as a serious threat, in the maritime, and in the air especially, and in space, they are still very, very, capable, let alone of course in nuclear."

A revolt by Wagner mercenaries in Russia late last month raised deep security concerns in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland after a deal was reached for their leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, to be allowed to take refuge in Belarus.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said that neighboring countries would face a heightened danger if the Wagner Group deploys its "serial killers" just over their border.

Night of Relative Calm But Tensions Persist



PARIS (Dispatches) - Defiant gatherings were held outside town halls across France following a wave of rioting triggered by the fatal police shooting of a teenager of north African descent.

Police made fewer than 160 arrests overnight, offering some relief for President Emmanuel Macron in his fight to reimpose order, just months after rolling protests over an unpopular pension reform and a year out from hosting the Olympics.

The death of Nahel, a 17-year-old with Algerian and Moroccan parents, has tapped a deep vein of anti-police resentment in the poor and racially mixed suburbs of major French cities -- known as banlieues -- where Muslim communities of North African descent in particular have long accused police of racial profiling and violent tactics.

Since he was shot last Tuesday, rioters have torched cars, looted stores and targeted town halls, state schools and state-owned properties. Paris suburbs and Marseille in the south have been flashpoints.

What started as an uprising in the banlieues' high-rise estates morphed into a broader outpouring of hate and anger toward the state and opportunistic violence.

The unrest, though, has not prompted the kind of government soul-searching on race which followed turmoil over similar incidents in other Western countries, such as Black Lives Matter protests in the United States or race riots at times in Britain. Instead, the French government points to underprivilege in low-income urban neighbourhoods and juvenile delinquency, a reflection of the state's belief that citizens are united under a single French identity, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin took aim at families who had allowed children to wreak havoc on the streets, saying the average of those arrested was 17 with some as young as 12. "It's not up to the national police or the gendarmerie or the mayor or the state to solve the problem of a 12-year-old setting fire to a school. It's a question of parental authority," Darmanin said during a visit to Reims.

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China's Deadly Weather From Heat To Hailstorms Take a Toll

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Torrential rain triggered flash floods in northern China killing one person and sweeping away two, state media reported, the latest victims of weeks of extreme weather that has brought misery to many and shows no sign of ending.

The heavy rain, heat and recent hail have been damaging infrastructure, crops and endangering livestock across the country. It has also been testing the patience of many of China's 1.4 billion people and raising fears of climate change.

Rain in the Inner Mongolia region caused flash floods on Sunday killing one person and leaving two missing, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Since Friday, rescue workers in various parts of southern China, including the southwestern province of Guizhou, have been moving people and livestock to safety from floods and landslides, the CGTN state media outlet reported.

Intense rain lashed parts of Yunnan province over the weekend, sweeping cars down streets that looked like rivers, media reported. Mudslides in Sichuan province, also in the southwest, killed several people last week.

The rain-soaked Xiangxi area of southern Hunan province had suffered economic losses of about 575 million yuan (\$79 million), with 95,399 people and 6,648.34 hectares of crops affected, its emergency bureau said in a statement.

Meanwhile, northern China remains in the grip of unusually hot weather that set in earlier than normal and over larger areas, state media reported, citing the National Climate Center.

The hot weather is expected to last for another 10 days, state media said, as exasperated people posted their frustration on social media.

"I'm sick of seeing the term hot temperature," one person posted.

"I can't even cry as my tears evaporate," said another. For weeks, weather forecasters have also warned of strong convective weather, which often brings thunderstorms.

Hailstorms on Saturday in Heilongjiang province in the northeast shattered windows, according to videos posted on social media.

The extreme weather comes as John Kerry, the U.S. climate envoy, is expected in China soon for talks.



Medvedev Says Standoff With West to Last Decades



LONDON (Dispatches) - Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's former president, has warned that Moscow's confrontation with the West will last decades and that its conflict with Ukraine could become permanent.

Medvedev, once seen in the West as a liberal modernizer, has emerged as one of Russia's most outspoken hawks since Moscow launched what it called a "special military operation" in Ukraine last year.

Now deputy head of the Security Council, his views reflect some of the thinking at the Kremlin's top level, according to Russian officials.

In an article for the government's Rossiiskaya Gazeta newspaper, he said tensions between Russia and the West were "much worse" than during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when the world teetered on the edge of a nuclear conflagration.

A nuclear war was "quite probable" but was unlikely to have any winners, said Medvedev, who has repeatedly said Western support for Ukraine increases the chances of nuclear conflict.

He cited sharp differences over Ukraine, the direction of humankind, and the way the world order was structured.

"One thing that politicians of all stripes do not like to admit: such an Apocalypse is not only possible, but also quite probable," wrote Medvedev.

Western analysts cast what they say is Medvedev's "nuclear sabre-rattling" as a tactic aimed at frightening the West to reduce military support for Ukraine and to instead lean on Kyiv to start peace talks with Moscow.

Many countries in the West, which say they are helping Ukraine defend itself from a brutal colonial war of conquest, have promised to stand by Kyiv for as long as it takes. The United States, Ukraine's biggest financial and military backer, has said it does not want to engage in a direct conflict with Russia to avoid the risk of a nuclear war.

Ukraine says it won't negotiate until it has driven every Russian soldier from its territory.

Medvedev said Moscow was still committed to stopping Ukraine join NATO. "Our goal is simple - to eliminate the threat of Ukraine's membership in NATO. And we will achieve it. One way or another," he said.

Electric Car Revolution Is a Disaster Before It's Begun

LONDON (Dispatches) - The electric car revolution is stalling, of that there can no longer be any doubt. It has left the big global carmakers floundering, uncertain of how to proceed in a race they reluctantly entered in the first place.

Electrification was initially met with fierce resistance. But once politicians held a gun to the heads of company bosses with a series of cliff-edge deadlines for phasing out the combustion engine, carmakers had little choice but to go all-in.

Century-old business models were declared dead and ambitious plans hurriedly drawn up to electrify entire portfolios from small city run-arounds to family saloons and SUVs, at astronomical cost. Even Ferrari has embraced the movement – much to the consternation of petrolheads everywhere.

But with electrification barely off the starting grid, one by one the big carmakers are already pulling back as demand badly falters.

Volkswagen is so concerned about flagging sales that it has taken the extraordinary decision of halting electric vehicle production at one of its biggest plants. Assembly lines for electric models will be paused for six weeks at the Emden factory in northwest Germany and 300 of its 1,500 staff laid off after sales fell 30pc short of forecasts.

This means production of the new VW ID.7 electric model, which had been due to commence in July will be pushed back until the end of the year. The ID.4 electric SUV and the upcoming ID.7 electric sedan will also be delayed.

“We are experiencing strong customer reluctance in the electric vehicle sector,” plant boss Manfred Wulff said.

That is remarkably plain language from the largest car manufacturer on the planet, and a company that recently announced plans to invest €120bn (£103bn) over the next five years in “electrification and digitalisation”.

It comes months after Ford poured cold water on the shift to electric with thousands of job losses in Europe. Electric vehicle production is unable to support anything like the same number of jobs that petrol and diesel models are able to sustain, it said. Boss Jim Farley estimates that 40pc fewer staff will be needed to develop battery versions.

A generation of pure electric vehicle makers has hardly fared any better. On Tuesday, Lordstown Motors, the US electric truck specialist that Donald Trump once heralded as the saviour of a depressed Ohio town, filed for bankruptcy protection.

Even Elon Musk has been forced to repeatedly cut the price of Teslas in a desperate effort to prop up demand and protect market share. But it's the setback at VW that stands out, raising serious questions about whether politicians are making the catastrophic mistake of forcing electric cars on a public that doesn't want them. Indeed, the decision to impose strict deadlines for the phase out of petrol cars could turn out to be one of the most ruinous policy decisions of our lifetimes.

Think about it for a second: an entire industry not only forced to abandon a product that the vast majority of people still want and use, but also bullied into channelling all its resources into making something on a colossal level that there simply isn't the market for – at least not within the horrendously short timeframe that is being imposed on car manufacturers.

It's industrial self-sabotage and a commercial, economic and social catastrophe in the making. But what's worse is that the damage risks being far greater in the UK than anywhere else in the Western world thanks to the Government's myopic obsession with arbitrary net zero targets.



A Heat-Resistant Drone That Can Fly Into Fires

LONDON (Dispatches)- FireDrone could be sent in ahead to find trapped people, assess layouts and unexpected hazards to allow responders to prepare accordingly and save more lives

A building is on fire, with flames billowing out of the windows. As the firefighters arrive at the scene, no one knows who is left inside, the layout of the building, and which areas are still safe. To go in blind puts firefighter lives at risk, however, no remote information-gathering robot or drone can function at the extreme temperatures inside the building.

Enter FireDrone, a new drone inspired by nature and designed to withstand extreme hot and cold temperatures, as described in a recent study published in Advanced Intelligent Systems.

“Until they enter the danger zone, firefighters can't be certain of what or who they'll find, and what challenges they'll encounter,” said the study's principal investigator, Mirko Kovac, professor of aerial robotics at Imperial College London and Empa. “FireDrone could be sent in ahead to gather crucial information — noting trapped people, building layouts, unexpected hazards — so that responders can prepare accordingly to keep themselves safe and potentially save more lives.”

If you've ever left your phone in the sun and got that warning “your phone needs to cool down before you can use it”, you know that most electronics only function in a relatively small temperature range.

This applies to robots as well, with batteries and circuitry that warp or malfunction above and below normal temperatures, limiting where drones can be used. For flying machines, there is the additional consideration of weight — heat resistant metals, for example, might add significantly to the heft of a drone.

The team looked to nature for inspiration to devise a means of maintaining a functioning internal temperature in extreme conditions. “Deploying robots in extreme environments provides great benefits to reducing risks to human lives, and who better to look to than animals that have evolved their own ways of adapting to these extremes using inspiration from how animals keep cool in heat,” said Kovac.

The team combined three approaches to temperature regulation. Firstly, the drone's thin aluminum coating reflects heat — a reversal, the paper explains, of the way penguins' dark feathers absorb heat. Secondly, canisters of liquid CO2 convert to gas, mimicking the cooling effect of sweat evaporation on our bodies. And finally, like the spittle bug creates a foam layer to insulate itself from the elements, an innovative layer of aerogel tiles protects the flying robot's sensitive innards.

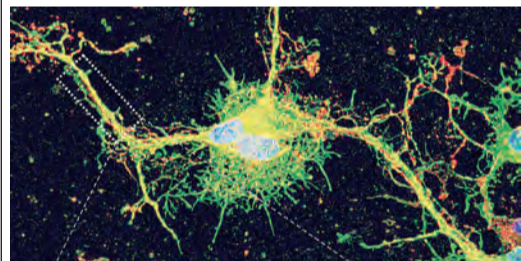
Aerogels are lightweight materials with excellent thermal insulation properties. They are formed of a low-density structure of nanofibers that creates countless pockets of air, which transmit heat poorly, protecting the delicate components from heat (or cold) outside. Reinforced with glass fibers, this creates the ideal strong, light insulation for a flying machine braving extreme conditions.

With the aluminum coating, insulating aerogel, and on-board cooling system in hand, the drone was ready for testing in some very uncomfortable conditions. They flew the drone in temperature-controlled chambers before exposing it to open flames at a firefighter training facility, showing that it could withstand temperatures of up to 200°C for ten minutes.

Cold temperatures can be just as punishing for electronics as hot, so the team took to a glacier tunnel in Switzerland to test performance in an icy environment. The insulation kept the extreme cold from penetrating to the components, while the heat generated by the whirring motors and electronics kept the batteries within their operating range.



Scientists Identify a New Molecular Mechanism for Autism



LONDON (Dispatches) - From a myriad of data obtained from experiments in mouse models, human stem cells, clinical blood samples, and human cell cultures, new research published in the journal Advanced Science suggest that nitric oxide changes the functioning and structure of neurons and leads to autism-like behaviors.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) comprise a vast group of neurodevelopmental conditions united by symptoms such as poor social skills, communication difficulties, repetitive behaviors, and niche hobbies. Several mutations are responsible for the diversity of features associated with ASD, but the mechanisms underlying them are little understood, leaving patients with no available therapies.

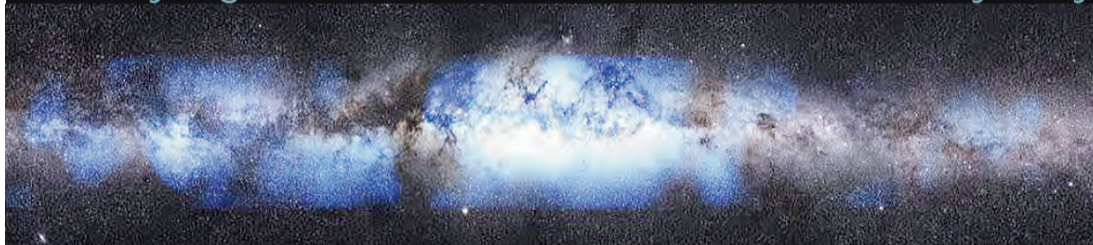
Nitric oxide has also been shown to play a versatile role in various neurological disorders, such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Huntington's diseases, but its role in ASD has remained obscured. Recently, Haitham Amal, a principal investigator and assistant professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in Israel, and colleagues reported finding that mouse models of ASD had significantly high levels of nitric oxide.

“Important to note is that we still don't know if [nitric oxide] leads to ASD as a first source,” said Amal. “We now know that [nitric oxide] is a major pathological factor in ASD. We also know that reducing [nitric oxide] levels reduce ASD phenotypes.”

As part of a new study, Amal's team conducted a series of experiments using cellular and mouse models of ASD as well as biological samples from patients to further characterize the potential role of nitric oxide in the development of autism.

Within the brain, normal levels of nitric oxide are responsible for blood flow, neuronal growth and metabolism, among other functions. But at increased levels, the molecule can be toxic, disrupting cellular processes.

Ghostly Lights Paint a New Portrait of the Milky Way



LONDON (Dispatches) - The universe is filled with infinite mysteries, and scientists are tackling them, one celestial puzzle at a time.

A multitude of experiments were aboard Virgin Galactic's inaugural flight on Thursday. A rocket-powered space plane carried the company's first paying customers on a research-focused mission. During its brief time in zero gravity, the mission monitored how passengers' heart rates behaved during acceleration and measured cosmic radiation in Earth's upper atmosphere.

Meanwhile, the unprecedented capabilities of the James Webb Space Telescope continue to enable astonishing discoveries, including detecting a crucial molecule in space for the first time.

The European Space Agency is aiming to launch the Euclid mission this weekend, with an eye toward unraveling one of the biggest cosmic puzzles of our time — the increasing expansion of the universe — and the enigmatic forces behind it. And that's not all. This week, scientists shared glimpses into invisible aspects of the universe that could alter our understanding of the cosmos.

There is no shortage of scintillating imagery of the Milky Way galaxy — but we've never seen it from this perspective.

Astronomers used a detector sunk deep into the thick ice of Antarctica to trace “ghost particles” that created a new portrait of the Milky Way.

These ghost particles, called neutrinos, can pass through any kind of matter without changing. By tracing their origins across the galaxy, scientists were able to see our celestial neighborhood in a new way that could ultimately reveal the answers to bigger cosmic mysteries.

Another team of scientists detected new gravitational waves that resonate across the universe and “hum” in a celestial choir, like the background noise of the universe.

Thinking of ancient hunter-gatherer societies may call to mind a certain picture of men returning from hunting while women foraged. But new research flips those gender stereotypes upside down.

Archaeological evidence shows that women — young and old — hunted big game with bows and arrows, knives and nets. Sometimes the hunters worked alone, or alongside children and dogs. And these women even shared their knowledge and strategies with others. The research got its start in the Andes Mountains after scientists unearthed a set of 9,000-year-old remains buried with an array of hunting weapons and assumed the skeleton was male. DNA analysis told a different story.

At first glance, you might think you've wandered into the Beatles' mythical “Octopus's Garden.” Scientists were surprised to discover an active octopus nursery on an underwater mountain nearly 2 miles (3,218 meters) down off the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. The research team believes the area may be only the third known example of a brooding site where huge numbers of the creatures cluster together.

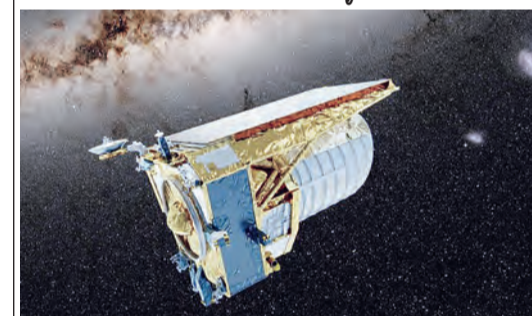
The rare sighting in the ocean's twilight zone was made by an underwater craft during an expedition of the Schmidt Ocean Institute's Falkor research ship.

Researchers captured spectacular footage of hundreds of octopuses hatching babies as well as other deep-ocean life. Summer is here — and so are the mosquitoes. As the world warms due to the climate crisis, the annoying insects are thriving and even appearing in new places.

Rising temperatures allow mosquitoes to grow faster, live longer and even become more infectious. Scientists are still trying to understand the particular factors that may draw mosquitoes to certain people.

But experts agree on some tried-and-true tips to avoid mosquito bites, like using insect repellent and dumping standing water from your yard.

Euclid Telescope Lifts off in Search of Universe's Dark Mysteries



LONDON (Dispatches) - Europe's Euclid space telescope blasted off Saturday, kicking off a first-ever mission to shed light on two of the universe's greatest mysteries: dark energy and dark matter.

“I can tell you, I'm so thrilled, I'm so excited to see this mission up in space,” European Space Agency (ESA) Director General Josef Aschbacher said after the launch.

The telescope successfully took off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, at 11:12 am local time (1512 GMT) on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

Shortly after, once separated from the rocket, it emitted its first signal, as scheduled.

The ESA was forced to turn to billionaire Elon Musk's firm to launch the mission after Russia pulled its Soyuz rockets in response to sanctions over the war in Ukraine.

“The launch was perfect,” said Carole Mundell, ESA's science director. “Now begins that journey.”

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

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

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

“We will unravel the mysteries of the Dark Universe,” Mundell said.

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

Higher Costs Dent Nike Profits

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Nike reported a drop in quarterly profits on June 30 despite higher sales due to the drag from increased costs and the liquidation of unwanted merchandise.

The sports giant reported profits \$1.0 billion for the quarter ending May 31, down 28 percent from the year-ago period. Revenues rose 5 percent to \$12.8 billion. Nike notched lower profit margins in the period, citing factors that included "higher product input costs and elevated freight and logistics costs" and "higher markdowns."

As with giant retailers such as Walmart and Target, Nike has undertaken sales over the last year to discount underselling merchandise in the wake of COVID-19 supply chain difficulties that resulted in delayed shipments.



Turkish Annual Inflation Likely Cooled Further in June

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's annual consumer price inflation is expected to have continued a downward trend in June, according to surveys, but the monthly reading is seen remaining stubbornly high.

This week's data is expected to show that annual inflation eased to around 39.47%, down slightly from 39.59% in May, according to a median estimate in a Reuters poll of 11 economists, with forecasts ranging between 36.30% and 40.30%.

The annual reading recorded more than a 4-point drop in May after Ankara's provision of free natural gas that month offset other price rises, while a measure of inflation that excludes energy prices rose again.

The median estimate in the Reuters poll for the monthly inflation in June was for a rise of 4.84%, with forecasts ranging between 2.50% and 5.50%, driven partly by a steep decline in the Turkish lira.

Other factors that contributed to the monthly rise was a general rise in prices across the board, including hikes to petrol, precious metals, services sector, cars and tobacco, economists said.

Meanwhile, retail prices in Turkey's largest city, Istanbul, rose 3.46% month-over-month in June for an annual increase of 55.19%, the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ITO) said on Saturday.

Wholesale prices in the city, home to around a fifth of Turkey's population of 85 million, increased by 4.32% month-over-month in the same period for an annual rise of 64.27%, ITO said.

Turkey's economic authorities have taken steps since President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was reelected on May 28 to combat inflation, including changing course after two years of monetary easing.

The country's central bank increased its benchmark policy rate by 650 basis points last Thursday, lifting its one-week repo rate to 15%. The monetary authority has also simplified some of the macroprudential measures it had implemented in a drive to boost the lira.

The decline in the lira is reflected in domestic prices, stoking inflation in the import-dependent country.

The central bank has promised more "gradual" tightening, adding that indicators indicate a rise in the underlying inflation trend.

The median estimate in the Reuters poll for annual inflation at year-end stood at 51.5%, with the forecasts of eight economists ranging between 38.60% and 55.30%.

The inflation surged in late 2021 amid a depreciation in the Turkish lira that came after the country opted for an easing drive that saw its central bank slash its key policy rate to 8.5% from 19% in 2021. The annual consumer price index (CPI) touched a 24-year high of above 85% in October last year before easing.

Erdoğan reshuffled his economic team after reelection, bringing in Mehmet Şimşek, the respected veteran policymaker, as treasury and finance minister, and Erkan, a former Wall Street banker, as central bank governor.

Asia's Factory Output Slumps as Weak China Demand Weighs

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Asia's factory activity slumped in June, business surveys showed on Monday, as sluggish demand in China and advanced nations clouded the outlook for the region's exporters.

While manufacturing activity expanded marginally in China, it contracted in powerhouses Japan and South Korea as Asia's fragile economic recovery struggled to maintain momentum.

The surveys underscore the toll China's weaker-than-expected rebound from COVID lockdowns is inflicting on Asia, where manufacturers are also bracing for the fallout from aggressive U.S. and European interest rate hikes.

"The worst may have passed for Asian factories but activity lacks momentum because of diminishing prospects for a strong recovery in China's economy," said Toru Nishihama, chief emerging market economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute.

"China is dragging its feet in delivering stimulus. The U.S. economy will likely feel the pain from big rate hikes. These factors all make Asian manufacturers gloomy about the outlook."

China's Caixin/S&P Global manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) eased to 50.5 in June from 50.9 in May, the private survey showed on Monday, staying above the 50-point index mark that separates growth from contraction.

The figure, combined with Friday's official survey that showed factory activity extending declines, adds to evidence the world's No. 2 economy lost steam in the second quarter. The impact is being felt in Japan where the final au Jibun Bank PMI fell to 49.8 in June, returning to a contraction after expanding in May for the first time in seven months.

New orders from overseas customers decreased in June at the fastest rate in four months reflecting feeble demand from China, the Japan PMI survey showed.

South Korea's PMI fell to 47.8 in June, from 48.4 in May, extending its downturn to a record 12th consecutive month on weak demand in Asia and Europe.

Factory activity also contracted in Taiwan, Vietnam and Malaysia, the PMI surveys showed.

There were bright patches among the economic indicators released on Monday with India's manufacturing industry bucking the trend and expanding at a brisk pace in June, albeit slightly slower than in May, supported by robust demand.

The Bank of Japan's closely watched tankan survey also showed Japanese business sentiment improving in the second quarter as raw material costs peaked and the removal of pandemic curbs lifted consumption.



Improving Japan Business Mood Signals Steady Economic Recovery

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese business sentiment improved in the second quarter as raw material costs peaked and removal of pandemic curbs lifted consumption, a central bank survey showed, a sign the economy was on course for a steady recovery.

Companies expect to increase capital expenditure and project inflation to stay above the Bank of Japan's 2% target five years ahead, the quarterly "tankan" showed on Monday, offering policymakers hope that conditions for phasing out their massive monetary stimulus may be gradually falling into place.

"The tankan confirmed our view that Japan's economy is on track for a moderate recovery," said Atsushi Takeda, chief economist at Itochu Economic Research Institute.

"While input prices have declined, output prices continue to rise in a sign companies are being able to pass on costs. That's a good sign for the BOJ's inflation outlook and may prod the bank to tweak its yield control policy later this year."

The headline index measuring big manufacturers' mood stood at plus 5 in June, bouncing back from a two-year low of plus 1 hit in March in a sign firms were recovering from the hit from rising raw material costs and supply disruptions.

The reading, which compared with a median market forecast for plus 3, was the highest since December 2022.

Non-manufacturers' sentiment index improved to plus 23 in June from plus 20 three months ago, increasing for the fifth straight quarter and hitting the highest level since June 2019.

An index gauging the mood among hotels and restaurants hit the highest level on record as removal of COVID curbs boosted tourism demand, the survey showed.

The results helped push up Japan's Nikkei share average on optimism over the economic outlook.

Large firms plan to ramp up capital expenditure by 13.4% in the current fiscal year ending in March 2024, exceeding a median market forecast for a 10.1% rise.

Companies expect the dollar to average 132.43 yen during the current fiscal year ending in March 2024, the survey showed, far lower than recent levels around 144.50 yen.

While the weak yen boosts exporters' profits, it may hurt retailers and service-sector firms vulnerable to the rising cost of food and energy imports.

Big manufacturers expect business conditions to improve three months ahead, while non-manufacturers project a deterioration on worries over high costs, the tankan showed.



Asia Refiners Expect Saudi Arabia to Cut August Crude Prices

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Asian refiners expect Saudi Arabia to lower prices for its crude supply to the region in August, a Reuters survey showed, even as the top oil exporter pledged to deepen production cuts in July as part of a broader OPEC+ deal.

Saudi Arabia in June unexpectedly raised prices for July-loading cargoes, eating into Asian refiners' margins. To support global prices depressed by rising interest rates and recessionary fears, the producer volunteered to cut output by 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in July on top of a broader OPEC+ deal to limit supply into 2024.

State oil company Saudi Aramco is expected to cut the official selling price (OSP) for Arab Light crude in August by about 50 cents a barrel from the prior month, according to a Reuters survey of six refining sources.

The July OSP for the flagship grade hit a six-month high of \$3 a barrel above the average of Dubai and Oman quotes. "Saudi needs to trim prices to reflect the market movements. They have gone a bit too far from the reality in the past few months," said one survey respondent.

Profits at a typical Singapore refinery processing Dubai crude fell to an average of \$3.44 a barrel in June, from \$4.78 a barrel last month.

Also, demand for August-loading cargoes, which would arrive at Asian refineries in September, could fall as some plants are set to shut for maintenance, survey respondents said.

Saudi crude prices typically closely track changes in benchmark Dubai monthly price spreads, but the two have disconnected in recent months.

South Korea Factory Activity Suffers Longest Downturn in at Least 19 Years

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea's factory activity shrank at a steeper pace in June and extended its downturn to a record 12th consecutive month, a survey showed on Monday, underlining the challenges facing the economy as it struggles to mount solid recovery.

The survey result comes in stark contrast to other brighter signs of recoveries in the country's output and exports, suggesting manufacturers' downbeat sentiment and weak

business conditions might take a while longer to turn a corner.

The S&P Global's seasonally adjusted purchasing managers' index (PMI) for South Korean manufacturers fell to 47.8 in June, from 48.4 in May, marking the lowest level and its first fall in three months.

It has remained below the 50-mark that separates expansion from contraction since July 2022, the longest such streak in the survey that began in April 2004.

Output and new orders dropped by the most in eight months and six months, respectively, dragging the headline index lower.

New export orders also suffered the steepest decline in five months, with the survey noting muted demand in key export markets, namely in Asia and Europe.

Asia's fourth largest economy posted slim growth in the first quarter and has struggled to motor on due to weak external demand.

There were some improvements on the inflation and supply chain fronts, but they were mostly due to weaker demand. Input price inflation was the softest in its rising streak that began in July 2020, while suppliers' delivery times shortened by the most since May 2013.

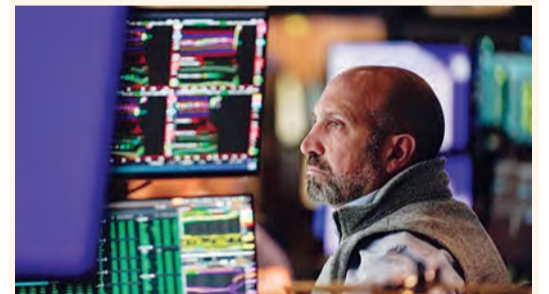
Output prices fell for a second month, as cost pressures eased, though there was also evidence that they were reduced in an effort to stimulate sales.

"PMI survey data for June indicated that operating conditions in the South Korean manufacturing sector remained muted at the midpoint of 2023," said economist Usamah Bhatti at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

"Business confidence eased to the weakest in 2023 to-date amid concerns that the current economic malaise would be more prolonged than previously expected," Bhatti said.

Manufacturers' optimism for future output fell in June to the lowest level since December 2022, a sharp U-turn from hitting a 10-month high in May.

Indian Economy May Slow-Down in H2



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian economy may slowdown in the second half of the year because of a slowdown in the global economy but this will be a positive thing as some slowdown in growth is needed to support macroeconomic and financial stability, said Jahangir Aziz, head of emerging market economics at JP Morgan, in an interview with the Economic Times (ET).

"Our view is that in the second half of the year, growth is going to slow down. And although this might seem odd, some slowdown in growth is needed to support macroeconomic and financial stability," Aziz told ET.

"As much of recent growth in India has been driven by exports, especially of services, with the global economy slowing in the second half of the year, including the US entering a modest recession, India's growth will also slow. But macroeconomic stability should not be impaired given India's large foreign exchange reserves and the government holding to its fiscal deficit target," said Aziz.

Aziz pointed out that aggressive monetary tightening has not damaged consumption and investment as it could have. This signals the US Fed may need to hike interest rates more.

In India, Aziz said the "decline in inflation, because of growth slowing down in the second half of the year, will open up space for the RBI to cut rates."

Aziz, however, added that it is unlikely to be the start of an extended easing cycle, but there may be some easing starting in the fourth quarter of the calendar year.

Talking about El Nino risk, Aziz believes India can withstand any modest impact from El Nino on food inflation, thanks to last year's food stocks and improved food management.

Annual Exports of Technical, Engineering Services to Iraq Exceed \$1b

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran exported more than one billion dollar worth of technical and engineering services to neighboring Iraq in the previous Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20), according to the country's commercial attaché to Iraq.

Speaking in a meeting of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce on Monday, Abdol-Amir Rabihavi said construction projects in Iraq are more profitable than oil projects and it is suggested to enter this sector. There is also the possibility to send labor force to the country to increase non-oil exports, he added.



Culture Wars Put American Companies on the Defensive

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Boycotting a beer, attacking products celebrating the LGBTQ community, and criticizing shareholders for promoting diversity: In the face of growing criticism from conservatives, American companies are backtracking on progressive corporate initiatives.

For Bud Light beer, it was a partnership with a transgender influencer that triggered the ire of right-wing consumers, and calls for a boycott.

Typically, such a protest has little impact, but this time in-store sales have seen a slump, with Bud Light even losing its position as the best-selling beer in the United States to Modelo Especial in recent weeks, according to Bump Williams Consulting.

Anheuser-Busch InBev, Bud Light's parent company, quickly launched a marketing counteroffensive with a more typically patriotic ad featuring American landscapes, followed on Wednesday by a campaign highlighting its employees.

The Target discount retailer, for its part, chose to withdraw certain items marketed for Pride Month due to threats against employees.

And at annual shareholder meetings, the number of resolutions opposing companies' inclusion of environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria -- particularly on diversity -- has more than doubled in the past three years, according to the Sustainable Investment Institute (SII).

While such resolutions usually garner very few votes, they are nevertheless having an impact.

Larry Fink, the head of asset manager BlackRock, which has promoted sustainable investments in recent years, recently told a conference in Colorado that he has stopped using the term "ESG" because it has become too politicized.

This new vigilance extends to the world of sport: after some players voiced reluctance over wearing rainbow symbols, the National Hockey League decided that teams should no longer wear special jerseys supporting LGBTQ rights because they had become a "distraction."

"The tension of navigating between groups of people that think very, very differently has always been there," said Alison Taylor, a specialist in corporate ethics at New York University.

But the situation has changed as political life has become increasingly polarized, she added.

Corporations "got involved in controversial questions in 2017-2018, when there was a lot of organized resistance to Trump -- this seemed like a really good way to attract young people and generate shareholder value," she said.

While the prospect of affecting real change on issues like abortion and gun control no longer seems possible in the political arena, young people have come to believe they can bring pressure to bear via business, according to Taylor.

Unlike their elders, for whom political involvement boils down to the ballot box or



party donations, younger people "are more inclined to bring their politics into how you invest, into how you shop, even into your office," said David Webber, a specialist in investor activism at Boston University.

The sharp reactions to some company initiatives have been amplified by political leaders including Florida governor and 2024 presidential candidate Ron DeSantis, who targeted Disney over some of its progressive positions.

And DeSantis is not alone.

"Conservative organizations," financed in part by companies in the oil and gas sector, "started a campaign to pass legislation in different states to target ESG practices," Webber said.

So far, the results have been mixed.

"Some companies may, at least, back away from some of the rhetoric on ESG. But we've seen very little serious reallocation of assets," he said.

Driven by customers, shareholders and employees, companies have no choice "but to be involved in some political issues," Daniel Korschun, a marketing specialist at Drexel University, told AFP.

However, "people really start to react negatively when they feel like they're being pushed too far," as was the case in the Bud Light controversy, he added.

"There's a very delicate balance between advocating and pushing too hard," he said.

In response, "many managers are pulling back for the moment until they can figure out this new terrain that they're in," he added.

Palestinians Cannot Fight Off...

FROM PAGE 1

The occupation forces assaulted several neighborhoods in Jenin by air and land on Monday as the Palestinian death toll from the latest wave of Israeli aggression has topped 10 since it began in the early hours of the day.

Palestine's Shehab news agency reported that the occupation forces fired gas bombs at the hospital in Jenin, which was followed by Palestinians hurling handmade explosives at Israeli military vehicles in front of the medical facility. In response to the Israeli aggression, the Jenin Brigade, which includes members of the Palestinian resistance groups in the occupied West Bank city, said it had ambushed the occupation forces and detonated a military vehicle with explosive devices.

Iran on Monday condemned the bloody Israeli military aggression against Jenin as an example of "state terrorism" and said the aggression proved that peace with the usurping entity cannot stop its "war machine."

Iran Natural Gas Exports...

FROM PAGE 1

Of Iran's total export of 18.9 bcm in the previous year, some 9.4 bcm were exported to Iraq, another 9.1 bcm to Turkey and some 0.4 bcm to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

According to the EI report, natural gas production in Iran has been on an upward trend since 2011, and the U.S. sanctions have not been able to stop or reverse the growth of gas production in Iran. Between 2012 and 2022, natural gas production in Iran has grown by an average of 5.2 percent annually, which is more than 2.5 times the global average growth. The world's natural gas production has grown by an average of two percent per year during this period.

Most of Iran's natural gas comes from the country's giant South Pars gas field which the Islamic Republic shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf. The huge offshore field covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which are in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters. South Pars is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

Russian Firms Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

Mokhber also highlighted the necessity of developing cooperation between Iran and Russia in various fields, especially industrial, energy, trade and scientific fields, and said that, "In order to use all the transportation and transit potentials, we should try to develop our ports and put combined and multi-faceted transportation on our agenda." He also said that "It is necessary to accelerate the establishment of a joint shipping company and also to develop cooperation in the aviation field."

In the meeting, Igor Levitin expressed his happiness with the deepening and expansion of relations between the two countries and the recent exchanges of visits by the two countries delegations. The Russian official stressed that the negotiations that took place during the visit of the head of Russia's Central Bank to Iran to participate to take part in the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) Summit and also the trip of Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development to Russia have paved the way and were positive steps to remove banking barriers and develop transit lines.

Putin's special aide, for his part, expressed his gratitude and satisfaction with the progress of the implementation of plans and agreements between Tehran and Moscow and emphasized that the Russian government has made its utmost efforts to remove the obstacles and implement the agreements achieved between the two countries as soon as possible.

"The deepening and development of cooperation in the past two years shows the will and closeness of the two nations and governments, and we are determined that the transit, energy, medical and scientific MoUs and agreements will be fully finalized and become operational," Levitin added. The meeting was the sixth meeting of its kind between Mokhber and President Putin's special aide over the past 9 months.

EU Ambassador Regrets Lack of Substantial Progress On Trade Talks With Beijing



LONDON (Dispatches) - The European Union's ambassador to China expressed regret over the lack of "substantial progress" with Beijing on trade talks, as EU countries seek to reduce their economic dependence on the Asian giant.

The European Commission has suspended its efforts to get member states and parliament to ratify an investment agreement reached with China at the end of 2020, after seven years of talks, following differences over human rights in the Muslim-majority region of Xinjiang.

With relations cooling, the EU also decided in May to "readjust" its position towards China to reduce its economic dependence at a time when Beijing is suspected of giving Moscow tacit support for its war in Ukraine.

"I'm sorry to say that we have a dialogue on economic (issues) and trade which has not made any progress, or at least substantial progress, in the last four years," EU Ambassador Jorge Toledano said at a forum in Beijing.

"We want to engage with China, but we need progress, and we need it this year," Toledano said, adding that a high-level economic dialogue between the two sides would be held in September.

For the EU, China is "simultaneously a partner, a competitor and a systemic rival", he said.

The European Commission unveiled a strategy last month to respond more decisively to economic security risks, with China in particular in its sights.

The Commission put forward proposals in March to secure supplies of materials, such as lithium or nickel, needed for the production of key technologies such as batteries and solar panels.

Germany, France and Italy said last week they would cooperate more closely on the procurement of raw materials as Europe aims to reduce its reliance on imports from countries such as China.

One of the most contentious issues between the EU and China relates to Beijing's ambiguous position on Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

While China does not recognise the territories annexed by Russia in Ukraine, it also has not condemned Moscow's invasion.

Coca-Cola to See Less Pain From Looming WHO Decision on Aspartame

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Coca-Cola will only see a limited impact if the world health agency classifies the artificial sweetener used in its Diet Coke, aspartame, as a possible carcinogen, thanks to its scale of production, analysts said.

Such a classification of the popular additive in July by the World Health Organization's cancer research arm could cause consumers, food companies, retailers and restaurants to decide whether to fight back or find alternatives.

But for Coca-Cola, whose low-calorie products accounted for a third of its total volumes sold in 2022, analysts said switching to a natural sweetener could be easier than many other companies that use aspartame.

"Coca-Cola has one of the best production and distribution systems globally... who have successfully navigated plenty of hurdles in the past, like sugar taxes and reformulations associated with that," said Charlie Higgs, an associate partner at Redburn Ltd, a consumer staples research firm.



In the past, beverage makers like Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have tweaked their ingredient composition to comply with evolving policy changes.

The companies had in 2012 altered their manufacturing process of the caramel coloring in their colas to meet the requirements of a California ballot initiative aiming to limit people's exposure to toxic chemicals.

Market Analyst Grzegorz Drozd at investment firm Conotoxia Ltd said the shift from aspartame could hit the short-term profitability of Coca-Cola, but does not see a steep decline in its long-term growth due to its production history.

However, PepsiCo could get an edge over its rival as it had moved away from aspartame to a blend of sucralose and acesulfame potassium earlier, CFRA Research said.

The company first replaced the additive from some U.S. diet sodas in 2015, but brought it back in some products a year later. It again removed aspartame in 2020.

New Advances in Lithium Air Batteries Promise Greener Future

LONDON (Dispatches) - The research paper has been published in the journal Sustainable Energy & Fuels. CoSn(OH)6 (CSO) is an effective oxygen evolution reaction (OER) catalyst, necessary for developing next-generation lithium-air batteries. However, current methods of synthesizing CSO are complicated and slow. Recently, an international research team synthesized CSO in a single step within 20 minutes using solution plasma to generate CSO nanocrystals with excellent OER catalytic properties. Their findings could boost the manufacturing of high energy density batteries.

There is pressure to reduce fossil fuel dependency and switch to alternative green energy sources. The development of electric vehicles is a move towards this direction.

However, electric vehicles require high energy density batteries for their functioning, and conventional lithium-ion batteries are not up to the task. Theoretically, lithium-air batteries provide a higher energy density than lithium-ion batteries. But before they can be put to practical use, these batteries need to be made energy efficient, their cycle characteristics need to be enhanced, and the overpotential needed to charge/discharge the oxygen redox reaction needs to be reduced.

Kuwait Urges Iran Border...

FROM PAGE 1

"The State of Kuwait renews its invitation to the Iranian side to start negotiations on the demarcation of the maritime borders," it added.

Last year, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement to develop the field, despite objections from Tehran which branded the deal as "illegal".

Mohsen Khojsteh Mehr, managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company, said last week that "there is full preparation to start drilling in the joint Arash oil field".

"Considerable resources have been allocated to the board of directors of the National Iranian Oil Company for the implementation of the development plan for this field," he said in remarks carried by Iranian state media. His comments came as Saudi Arabia and Tehran boost cooperation after a shock decision to resume ties, announced in March, ended seven years of enmity between the major Gulf powers.

Kuwait's oil minister, Saad Al-Barrak, said he was "surprised" by the Iranian plans which he claimed "contravene the basic principles of international relations".

"We categorically and totally reject Iran's planned activities around the premises of the Dorra offshore gas field," Barrak added, according to official news agency KUNA.

The row over the Dorra field stretches back to the 1960s, when Iran and Kuwait each awarded an offshore concession, one to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the forerunner to BP, and one to Royal Dutch Shell.

The two concessions overlapped in the northern part of the field, whose recoverable reserves are estimated at some 220 billion cubic metres (seven trillion cubic feet).

Iran and Kuwait have held unsuccessful talks for many years over their disputed maritime border area, which is rich in natural gas. Saudi Arabia is also a part of the dispute since it shares with Kuwait maritime gas and oil resources in the area.

Iranian drilling of the field in 2001 spurred Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to agree on a maritime border deal which stipulated that they jointly develop the offshore zone.

Brighton Sign Dutch Goalkeeper Verbruggen

LONDON (Dispatches) - Brighton announced the signing of Dutch goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen from Anderlecht. The 20-year-old will reportedly cost the Seagulls £16 million (\$20 million) and has signed a five-year deal with the Premier League club. Verbruggen was named player of the season at Anderlecht last season despite only breaking into the first team in December. He helped the Belgian giants reach the quarter-finals of the Europa Conference League and earned a call-up to the Netherlands senior squad for the first time in March.

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com
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Newcastle Splash Out To Sign Tonali

LONDON (Dispatches) - Newcastle confirmed the signing of AC Milan midfielder Sandro Tonali for a reported £60 million (\$76 million) fee that will make the 23-year-old the most expensive Italian player of all time. Tonali, who joined Milan in 2020 from Brescia, helped the club to their first Serie A title in a decade in 2022 and to the semi-finals of the Champions League last season. But the financial muscle of the Premier League was too good for Milan or Tonali to turn down as Newcastle made their first major move of the transfer window.

Rublev Says Wimbledon Wrong to Ban Russians

LONDON (Dispatches) - Andrey Rublev insisted that Wimbledon was wrong to ban him and his Russian compatriots from the 2022 tournament, claiming the only loser was the All England Club.

Wimbledon banned all Russian players in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Competitors from Belarus, a key ally of Russia, were also banished.

Twelve months on, the sanction has been lifted on condition that players from the two countries sign declarations of neutrality.

However, world number seven Rublev quickly reopened the wounds after becoming the first player into the second round of the men's singles.

"We were talking, and I think we could find the solution," he said.

"If we really want to help or do what is better for tennis and for the people, I think obviously there were better options -- not just to ban.

"Because in the end, there was no difference. They did only worse to themselves."

The men's ATP tour and women's WTA tour refused to award ranking points to Wimbledon last year in response to the player ban.

Both governing bodies also imposed heavy fines.

The All England Club said the decision to lift the ban was made after talks with the UK government, Britain's governing Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and international tennis bodies.

When the decision was made in April, Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba condemned the move as "immoral".

"Now we are here, I'm really happy to be back and to compete," added Rublev after defeating Australia's Max Purcell 6-3, 7-5, 6-4.

The bitter sporting fallout from the war was brought into sharp focus at the French Open.

Ukrainian players such as Elina Svitolina and Marta Kostyuk were jeered by the Paris crowd for refusing to shake hands with Belarus world number two Aryna Sabalenka.

Veronika Kudermetova was also an early Russian winner on Monday, the 12th seed seeing off veteran Kaia Kanepi in straight sets.

The 26-year-old admitted locker room relationships with her Ukraine rivals remain tense.

"I say hi to them. Some people, they reply, some not. I just say 'Here we are, just tennis players.'"



Meanwhile former world number one Victoria Azarenka of Belarus praised the Wimbledon crowd, saying she had enjoyed a warm welcome out on Court 15, where she defeated China's Yuan Yue 6-4, 5-7, 6-4.

"Today to hear people say, 'Let's go, Vika', and cheering me on was also why I play, to play in front of the crowd, to put on a good show. So that felt great," said the 33-year-old.

World number one Iga Swiatek cruised into the Wimbledon second round with a 6-1 6-3 mauling of China's Zhu Lin in a fine start to her quest for a first Grand Slam title on grass.

The 22-year-old Pole, who won the French Open title for the third time last month to make it four Grand Slam crowns, has yet to get past the fourth round of the London major.

Swiatek looked good in her movement on the surface and showed no signs of any effects of the illness that had ruled her out of her Bad Homburg semi-final on Friday.

"I felt really confident. I felt like I did a very good job," said Swiatek, a former junior champion at Wimbledon. "I feel really good after Roland Garros (French Open). After Roland Garros I took some time to appreciate what happened.

"Last year it was my second Grand Slam (at the French Open) and it felt overwhelming. This time I could focus on celebrating and actually at getting back to work with more peace in my head."

Zhu, ranked 34th in the world, earned a break point in the first game but Swiatek won 11 points in a row to sprint into a 3-0 lead.

Another break put Swiatek, a renowned slider on clay and hard courts who has often struggled with her movement on grass, firmly in the driving seat.

Zhu saved two set points at 5-0 but Swiatek sealed the first set a game later with a powerful crosscourt forehand winner. The pair traded breaks early in the second before Swiatek, who pulled out of her Bad Homburg semi-final on Friday due to illness, earned a second one and was 4-3 up when play was interrupted due to rain.



BERLIN (Dispatches) - RB Leipzig defender Josko Gvardiol wants to join treble-winning Manchester City and has informed the club of his desire to leave, Leipzig sports director Max Eberl said.

Eberl said talks with City, who won their first Champions League title last month, were under way for a possible move of the 21-year-old Croatia international.

"Josko and his advisers have submitted the wish to us for a transfer to Manchester City," Eberl told Leipziger Volksnachrichten newspaper.

"We are in talks with Manchester. There is nothing more to say about it at this moment."

The back-to-back German Cup winners have seen several top players leave with Hungarian midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai's move to Liverpool on Sunday being the most recent one.

Defender Konrad Laimer has moved to Bayern Munich while France international Christopher Nkunku has joined Chelsea in the Premier League.

"I can understand the disappointment and concern of the fans," Eberl said. "No club and no coach in this world wants to lose players of this calibre."

"But we have been prepared for this and I can promise that we will have once more a good and exciting team."

Fowler Snaps Four-Year Win Drought

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Rickie Fowler sank a birdie putt from just inside 12 feet yesterday to win a playoff for the PGA Rocket Mortgage Classic title and snap a four-year win drought.

Fowler defeated fellow American Collin Morikawa, a two-time major champion, and Canada's Adam Hadwin to capture his first victory since the 2019 Phoenix Open and his sixth PGA triumph overall.

"It's just nice to have this one out of the way," Fowler said. "I'm obviously going to soak this one in and celebrate a bit. It has just been a long road. I'll get emotional at some point."

Fowler, 34, won the 2017 Players Championship but has struggled in recent years, falling to 185th in the world rankings last year before reviving his form this season with nine top-20 finishes in his past 10 events.

"Had to keep putting the time in, keep grinding, keep pushing," Fowler said. "Then started to see some positive results and to build some confidence and momentum last fall."

Chelsea Plan to Replace Lukaku

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea want to replace Romelu Lukaku this summer, according to multiple reports in Italy.

Lukaku has reportedly turned down a three-year, €40m/year contract from Saudi Arabia as he is unwilling to 'sell his soul to the Devil', but is desperate to leave Chelsea for Inter Milan.

Gazzetta dello Sport, Corriere dello Sport and Tuttosport all claim Lukaku is Inter's priority signing this summer.

They're planning to make an offer to sign Lukaku on loan with an option/obligation to buy for €30m, and although Chelsea would prefer a sale, they also want the Belgium international off their books ahead of next season.

Should the Blues get rid of Lukaku they will push to sign Vlahovic from Juventus, with Football Italia claiming they 'plan to replace' Lukaku with the 23-year-old.

Hodgson to Remain as Crystal Palace Manager



LONDON (Dispatches) - Roy Hodgson has targeted a top-half Premier League finish after Crystal Palace confirmed on Monday he will remain in charge of the Eagles next season.

The former England manager, who will celebrate his 76th birthday in August, returned to Palace in March following the sacking of Patrick Vieira.

Hodgson's arrival inspired an upturn in Palace's form as they pulled away from a relegation battle to finish 11th in the Premier League.

"I am immensely pleased and proud to be extending my time at Crystal Palace and I would like to thank the chairman and sporting director for their continued faith in me," Hodgson told the club's website.

"I know what a fantastic squad we have here. It's a great blend of youth and potential, alongside experienced players with Premier League and international pedigree.

"I have spoken with the chairman at length and we agreed that we must be ambitious in getting the most out of such talent.

"As such, we have set ourselves the target of a top-half finish."

Palace have not finished in the top 10 of the Premier League since 2014/15.

Hodgson took charge of his boyhood club between 2017 and 2021 before seeming to bring his long and illustrious coaching career to an end when he left Palace two years ago.

But he returned to the dugout in a short spell at Watford in 2022 before agreeing to come back to Selhurst Park.

Palace chairman Steve Parish said: "Roy's record as manager speaks for itself.

"His return earlier this year along with Ray Lewington and assisted ably by Paddy McCarthy produced a fantastic return both in results and producing some stylish performances."

Tabata Gets Four-Month Ban

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Palmeiras midfielder Bruno Tabata has been suspended for four months by CONMEBOL after allegations of racism in a 3-0 Copa Libertadores win over Paraguay's Cerro Porteno but has said he was the victim of abuse and his club will appeal the decision.

Tabata and other Palmeiras substitutes drew attention to racist abuse from Cerro Porteno fans during the match, which was played in May. However, CONMEBOL's Disciplinary Tribunal on Friday sanctioned the Brazilian for "unsportsmanlike conduct".

Palmeiras will appeal against the punishment, applied to competitions organised by the South American governing body, for which they collected video footage in order to present the case.

"Completely mistakenly, I was denounced by the Cerro Porteno team for making racist gestures to the fans of the Paraguayan club in our Libertadores away game, acts that I did not commit in any way," Tabata said in a video sent to CONMEBOL.

"What actually happened was that I heard the fans shouting 'monos' (monkeys) at the players who were on the pitch, near the north stand. We don't speak Spanish and we didn't understand what was going on.

"When we understood, I asked them back and wanted to understand if that was it, if they were calling us monkeys."



Bayern Munich Fighting for Tottenham Star

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich are almost set to launch a new bid for Tottenham striker Harry Kane, according to reports.

The England captain has been linked with Manchester United and Bayern Munich over the summer transfer window with the Red Devils pulling out when it was clear that Spurs chairman Daniel Levy had no intention of negotiating a transfer with them.

And that has left Bayern a clear path to a potential deal with Levy slightly more receptive to selling Kane abroad for the right fee, although there had been speculation that the Tottenham striker wanted to remain in England to break Alan Shearer's Premier League goalscoring record.

After having their first offer of £60m plus add-ons - which took the total value of the deal to just shy of £70m - rejected, the Daily Mail claim Bayern Munich are 'poised to make another bid' to Tottenham.

The report adds: "They believe an offer around £80m plus add-ons could get Daniel Levy talking with Kane indicating he would be interested."

It is understood that the Bavarian club's president Uli Hoeness thinks a deal for the 29-year-old is 'too expensive' despite his impressive goalscoring record.

