

Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Ezzatollah Zarghami Says That 550,000 Foreigners Arrived in Iran for Tourism Purposes in the First Quarter of the Current Iranian Calendar Year

IRAN NEWS

Secretary-General of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Has Said Establishing an Independent International Fact-Finding Mission On the Islamic Republic of Iran Is An Unreasonable Politically Motivated Action

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2 DOMESTIC

Last Year Riots Hybrid War Against Iran



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran Needs U.S. License for Changing Its Freed Resources Into Dollar in Iraq



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Russia Claims It Foiled Ukrainian Drone Attack On Moscow



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Alcaraz Launches Wimbledon Bid in Style



> SEE PAGE 8

Iran Interactions With IAEA Based on Safeguards Agreement, NPT

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has rejected claims that the organization has breached the law concerning its cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog, saying the relationship is restricted to the safeguards agreement and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"Our relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are based on the safeguards agreement and the NPT, nothing more or less," Mohammad Eslami told a cabinet meeting in Tehran.

He also dismissed accusations that the AEOI has violated a 2020 anti-sanction law in its March deal with the IAEA on bilateral engagements.

The law, or the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, was approved by the Iranian parliament in December 2020 in a bid to counter illegal sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States and its Western allies. It required the Iranian administration to restrict the IAEA inspections and accelerate the development of the country's nuclear program beyond the limits set under the 2015 US-abandoned nuclear deal.

See Page 7

Europe Urged to Confront Islamophobia Seriously, Effectively

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Following the recent desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has called on Europe to effectively confront Islamophobia.

The top Iranian diplomat made the remarks, speaking on the phone with the European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

The conversation came less than a week after two men stood outside the Swedish capital of Stockholm's central mosque and burned a copy of the holy book following a go-ahead given to them by a Swedish court.

The repeated and state-authorized instance of sacrilege against the Muslim holy book was made to coincide with the Muslim festivity of Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice), which marks the conclusion of the annual Hajj pilgrimage that is partaken by millions of Muslims from across the world.

Iran has repeatedly declared its vehement denunciation of the act of desecration, summoning Sweden's chargé d'affaires on one occasion to convey the Islamic Republic's protest against the heinous insult.

See Page 7

Palestinian Youth Slapped Israel in the Face



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the Palestinian youth slapped "miserable" Israel in the face during its military aggression on the West Bank city of Jenin.

Brigadier General Esmail Qaani made the remarks in a ceremony at the Islamic Azad University in Tehran on Wednesday, following Israel's deadly aerial and ground offensive against Jenin and its refugee camp.

"The Palestinians were never as powerful and strong as they are today. On the contrary, the criminal Israelis were never in trouble, division, and misery like they are now. The Palestinians learned the way to live and fight with dignity from [Iran's] Islamic Revolution," he said.

"The Zionist regime deployed all its forces to the Jenin camp, but the Palestinian youth slapped it in the face. In some days, Palestinians carried out more than 30 operations in the West Bank against the Zionist regime."

On Tuesday, the Israeli military withdrew its troops from Jenin, ending its two-day raid that killed at least 12 Palestinians and injured some 100 others. The aggression drew a wave of condemnations from across the world.

The Jenin incursion was launched amid already elevated tensions across the West Bank, with the Israeli military conducting near-nightly raids against the Palestinian towns and the Palestinian people conducting retaliatory operations. Also in his remarks, the IRGC commander highlighted the correct path of resistance that led to Syria's success in a foreign-backed conflict.

"Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei emphasizes that the cost of compromise is more than that of resistance, it is really true. Today, resistance has proven itself in the defense field... Over 70 countries joined hands against Syria, but the resistance brought our president to Syria, where he put a golden seal in the book of resistance," he asserted, referring to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Syria in May.

Iran was the first country to rush to Syria's aid following the 2011 outbreak of the campaign of militancy and destruction. In 2017, military advisory assistance provided by the Islamic Republic helped the Arab nation score a monumental victory over the Daesh terrorist group.

General Qaani also said that the Islamic Republic has exercised resistance in the political and economic fields and that it is teaching its successful experience to other countries.

The enemies are so "upset" and "helpless that they assassinate the first person in the fight against terrorism," he added, referring to the US assassination of top Iranian anti-terror commander General Qassem Soleimani in January 2020.

"Today, the Islamic Republic is among the most decisive in the region," the commander noted, comparing Iran's position to that of the US, which "spent 7 trillion dollars in the region over the past 20 years, but achieved nothing and instead lost something every day."

Int'l Bodies Urged to Hold Israel Accountable Over Abduction of 4 Iranian Diplomats

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has called on international organizations to hold Israel accountable for the fate of four Iranian diplomats kidnapped in Lebanon in 1982 and pave the way for punishing the perpetrators of the crime.

Foreign Ministry expressed sympathy with the families of its missing diplomats in a statement on Wednesday, commemorating the 41st anniversary of their abduction.

"Based on the 1949 Geneva Conventions..., the Islamic Republic of Iran holds the Zionist regime and its supporters responsible for all aspects of the kidnapping and the terrorist act given the fact that the incident took place during the occupation of Lebanon by Israel."

Iran also "requests relevant international and human rights organizations to accept their legal and humanitarian responsibilities in this regard, take necessary measures to exert pressure on the Zionist regime, ... ensure its maximum cooperation towards shedding light on the fate of our loved ones, and provide the grounds for punishing those behind the crime and the violation of international law."

On July 4, 1982, the year Israel invaded Lebanon, Ahmad Motevasselian, Seyyed Mohsen Mousavi, Taqi Rastegar Moqaddam and Kazem Akhavan were kidnapped by a group of Israel-backed gunmen at an inspection post in northern Lebanon.

Iran says the diplomats were abducted by Phalange militiamen and handed over to Israel.

In the past years, there were conflicting reports about their fate. While some claimed they had been killed by the militia group, others believed they were still alive, languishing in Israeli jails.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry expressed dismay that despite the extensive political and legal efforts by the Lebanese government and international rights bodies, the attempts aimed at determining the fate of the four diplomats have been "inconclusive."

See Page 7

ViewPoint Jenin, Another Scene For Zionists' Bloodshed

For decades the Islamic Republic of Iran and many freedom-loving people or nations have urged the international bodies to take action to stop the bloodshed of the Zionist regime but they have remained passive and let Israel continue its crime and now what is going in Jenin is another sign of crimes of the Zionist regime.

On Monday, the Tel Aviv regime launched a major aerial and ground offensive in Jenin and its refugee camp, killing at least ten Palestinians and injuring dozens, some of them listed in critical or serious condition. The attacks continued on Tuesday.

The Israeli regime pressed ahead with its unabated onslaught on the occupied West Bank city of Jenin and its refugee camp.

The military assault appeared to be the largest attack in the occupied West Bank in around two decades as the regime deployed armed drones and hundreds of troops against the innocent Palestinians.

Israeli troops also forced hundreds of families in the Jenin camp to leave their homes in preparation for demolishing them in order to reach the resistance fighters. The regime's inhumane moves drew widespread condemnations from Muslim countries.

Reacting to this crime, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman expressed deep concern over the latest Israeli onslaught on the occupied West Bank city of Jenin and its refugee camp, calling on the international community to take immediate action to stop the occupying regime's reckless crimes.

Nasser Kanaani made the remarks on Tuesday, as he strongly condemned the barbaric raid on the city and its adjacent refugee camp.

The senior Iranian diplomat went on to say the continuous attacks of the Israeli military on different areas of the West Bank will fail to restore the regime's "lost power," emphasizing on the Palestinian nation's "legitimate right" to self-defense in the face of the occupying regime forces' acts of aggression.

Kanaani added that not only the Palestinians but also the Israeli settlers no longer believe in "the fake grandeur" of the occupying regime.

He also noted that such "terrorist actions" are "vain attempts" by the apartheid Israeli regime aimed at consolidating its hallucination of power.

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

See Page 7

Sanctions Impede Country Development

TEHRAN (IP) - Ali Salajegheh, Vice President of Iran and Head of Iran's Department of Environment, spoke at a meeting in Havana, Cuba, stating that sanctions hinder the development of countries and a healthy environment.

Salajegheh addressed the ministers of environment, science, and technology from the Group of 77 and China, emphasizing that imposing unilateral and illegitimate sanctions poses a significant obstacle to economic and social development and violates the principles outlined in the UN Charter and international laws. Furthermore, it deprives nations of their right to enjoy a healthy environment.

Highlighting the importance of knowledge exchange and experience sharing among countries and international organizations, Salajegheh praised the international dust conference as a significant step in this direction.

Salajegheh also underscored one of the fundamental challenges faced by developing nations - the unfair governance of the global economy and the unequal distribution of financial resources, knowledge, and technology. In light of this, he called upon the international community to take necessary measures to achieve accelerated balanced development and create an enabling environment for growth based on innovation.

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President Felicitates Algeria on Independence Day

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi, in a letter to his Algerian counterpart, congratulated Abdelmadjid Tebboune on the Algerian Independence Day.

In his message to Tebboune, President Raisi said that Algeria's independence was a blessed achievement that not only elevated the people of Algeria to their true position but also became a model for many countries and nations to follow and make their own destinies. In the letter, Raisi expressed hope that the two countries, with their rich cultural-historical support and relying on the diligent efforts of the officials, will take steps to develop bilateral relations that originate from mutual trust, understanding, and cooperation to ensure the interests of the two nations and the Islamic world.

Last Year Riots Hybrid War Against Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's top human rights official has criticized certain member states of the United Nations for their total disregard of the UN Charter, including equality of sovereignty of all nations, maintaining that the riots of last year were a "multifaceted, hybrid war" against Iran.

Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary general of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, made the remarks on Tuesday during a meeting with representatives of the Group of Friends in Defense of the UN Charter.

"The disturbances of the past year constituted a multifaceted, hybrid war against Iran, utilizing all capacities from social media and media to terrorist activities and foreign interference with the aim of changing Iran's political system," he said.

Gharibabadi was referring to the widespread riots that erupted in Iran last fall following the death of a young woman, Mahsa Amini, who collapsed at a police station in Tehran before dying three days later in hospital.

"Unfortunately, at present, some important provisions of the UN Charter are not implemented and deliberately disregarded," the official said.

He emphasized that principles such as the equality of sovereignty of all nations, peaceful resolution of conflicts, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and



refraining from the use or threat of force were being violated due to unilateral actions by specific countries.

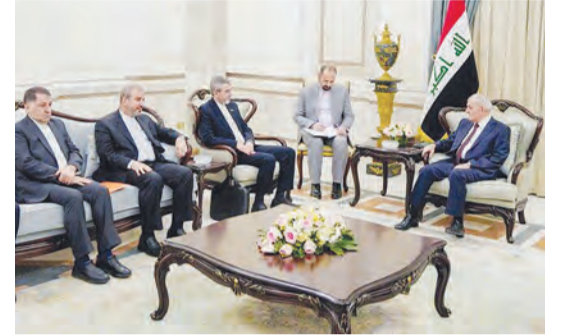
During the meeting, Gharibabadi presented a detailed report outlining the measures taken by the Islamic Republic to promote human rights, which was well-received by the attendees.

Additionally, he provided documented evidence of widespread violations of women's and children's rights in the United States and other Western countries, including France, Germany, and Britain.

He further criticized the silence of the self-proclaimed advocates of human rights regarding France's violent crackdown on ongoing protests over the killing of a teenager of North African descent by police.

Gharibabadi also met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and during the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council.

Iraqi President Calls for Strengthening Ties With Iran



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iraqi President Abdullahi Rashid said that Baghdad attaches great importance to strengthening cooperation with Tehran in the fields of trade and energy.

President Rashid made the remarks in a meeting with visiting Iranian delegation headed by deputy foreign minister, Ali Bagheri Kani.

The Iraqi president extended a cordial welcome to the high-ranking delegation from Iran's Foreign Ministry at the presidential residence in Baghdad.

In the meeting, the Iraqi president lauded the Islamic Republic of Iran's support for Iraq and emphasized the importance of coordination and cooperation between the two countries in areas of mutual interest.

President Rashid hailed the restoration of the Islamic Republic of Iran's ties with the countries of the region and the resumption of relations with Saudi Arabia as a promising prelude to the entrenchment of security and peace in the region.

Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs, for his part, emphasized the importance of developing relations between the two countries and broadening the prospect of cooperation in a way that serves the mutual interests of the two neighboring nations.

Bagheri Kani said, "Iraq and Iran have an outstanding history of joint cooperation. The two countries play a pivotal role in the region in terms of establishing security and stability."

He thanked the President of Iraq for his position on strengthening the relations between the two countries and his strategic view on regional developments.

Enemy Puts Obstacles to Hinder Iran's Empowerment by Nuclear Industry



TEHRAN (IP) - The spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran says the nuclear capability can help Iran's industry and economy, and that is the issue that made the enemies disturbed.

Behrouz Kamalvandi emphasized that the reason behind the enemies' improvising political problems for Iran's nuclear industry is the power that the industry gives to Iran.

Kamalvandi referred to the 20-year document of the Atomic Energy Organization and said: Nuclear energy programs in the world usually have 20 or 50-year periods, as it may take ten to fifteen years to complete a power plant.

He added: Iran's 20-year plan includes seven separate documents, which include power plant, fuel cycle and human fields, which were also unveiled last year. These programs are mainly in the field of radiopharmaceuticals, which is related to people's lives.

Pointing out that Iran needs atomic equipment in the oil industry and refineries (in the wells), Kamalvandi said that an important part of this program is dedicated to these things.

He noted: "we need the media's help to show the impact of nuclear energy on people's lives."

Regarding the effects of nuclear energy on people's lives, Kamalvandi stated that as the Leader of the Islamic Revolution has also pointed out, we must show these effects to the people, but we need the help of the media.

Stating that Iran's nuclear program is more than just enrichment, he said it is the enemy's propaganda that limits Iran's nuclear program to mere enrichment.

He added that if some countries are against the nuclear industry and want to say that it is limited only to enrichment, they are trying to claim that Iran is looking for nuclear weapons. He said the enemies' propaganda against the nuclear industry is because of the fact that it leads to people's better life and their satisfaction.

Kamalvandi stated: "Despite the fact that the sanctions must not include food and medicine, we managed to produce radiopharmaceuticals so that people would not feel worried, but unfortunately, our only radiopharmaceuticals supply company was sanctioned."

"First, we tried to lift the sanction, but after about two years of investigation, they said that the sanction on this company could not be lifted because the company is working with the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran."

Iran, India Need to Use SCO Capacities to Boost Economic Ties

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says Iran and India should make use of the capacities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to boost bilateral economic cooperation.

In a meeting with Deputy National Security Advisor of India Vikram Misri, Amirabdollahian commended New Delhi's support for Iran's full membership in the SCO, which was approved during the 23rd SCO Council of Heads of State hosted by India on Tuesday.

Amirabdollahian also highlighted the significance of a strategic project by India to develop a part of Iran's Chabahar port, saying Tehran and New Delhi face no limitation to expand relations.

He expressed hope that the two countries would open a new chapter in the development of the Chabahar



project and the North-South Corridor.

The Indian official, for his part, welcomed Iran's accession to the SCO as a full-fledged member which would create new opportunities to expand mutual relations.

Misri added that he has held positive talks with his Iranian and Russian counterparts on the development of the North-South Corridor and ways to solve infrastructural and administrative problems.

India has been developing a part of Chabahar on Iran's southeastern coast along the Gulf of Oman in order to expand trade with Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asian nations.

The second batch of equipment supplied by India has reached Chabahar, Iranian and Indian officials say, bringing New Delhi closer to full operation of the two terminals which it is developing in the port.

Iran Urges Russia to Speed Up Implementation of INSTC Project

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali-Akbar Ahmadian has underlined the need for Russia to accelerate the construction of a strategically important International North South Transit Corridor (INSTC).

In a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday with Igor Levitin, an aide to the President of the Russian Federation, Ahmadian also stressed the importance of giving a boost to other agreements signed between Tehran and Moscow, including those on the oil and gas cooperation. He highlighted the significance of an agreement signed by the presidents of the two countries on construction of Rasht-Astara railway, as a main part of the INSTC corridor, adding that construction of this railroad will be a major step in strengthening economic relations between the two neighboring countries.

The Russian official, for his part, congratulated Ahmadian for being appointed as Iran's new SNSC secretary.

He briefed the Iranian top security official on the latest developments in trade and banking relations between Iran and Russia.

Levitin said that Moscow is committed to speedy implementation of the agreements with Tehran and lifting the obstacles on the way of cooperation.

Iran-Russia Ties Positive, Excellent

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian described the relations between Tehran and Moscow as positive and excellent.

Amirabdollahian and Igor Levitin, an aide to the Russian president, held talks in Tehran on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Levitin congratulated the Islamic Republic of Iran's full accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The two officials also exchanged views about the latest state and measures that are afoot to complete the Rasht-Astara railway project and also the



three-way transit MoU between Iran, Russia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Iranian Foreign Ministry's website reported.

During an SCO summit, held via videoconference on Tuesday, Iran formally became a member of the organization.

The SCO is a transcontinental political, economic, and security alliance.

China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, India, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and now Iran are its full members. Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia are observer states.

Historical Monuments Return to Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicraft reported the return of 30 historical monuments from the beginning of the current administration.

Ezzatollah Zarghami told reporters on the sidelines of the cabinet session that the statue of the Sassanid soldier returned to Iran.

The statue entered the UAE in 1988 and left the UAE in 2006. Then it was banned in the UK in 2016. Finally, it returned to Iran in late June 2023.

Meanwhile, he talked about the tourism industry status quo and said: "Despite last year's riots, which had an impact on tourism, the comparison of the first two months of the year with the same period in the previous year shows a 55% increase."

Unrest broke out in Iran in September 2022 under the pretext of a 22-year-old girl named Mahsa Amini and caused the enemies of the Islamic Republic to use the opportunity to interfere with the domestic affairs of Iran and fuel the recent riots. The rioters destroyed public property, even ambulances, and set fire to houses, mosques, and people in the streets. They carried out armed attacks in some cities, including Isfahan, central Iran.

FM Meets Azerbaijani President in Baku



BAKU (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev have held talks in Baku.

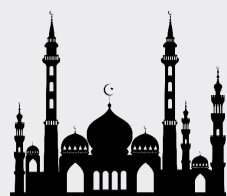
Amirabdollahian and Azerbaijan's Aliyev exchanged views on regional and bilateral issues during a meeting held on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) ministerial meeting on Wednesday.

Amirabdollahian is scheduled to meet with his counterparts from various participating countries.

The NAM ministerial meeting under the theme of "united and steadfast in confronting emerging challenges" started work in the Azerbaijani capital on Wednesday for two days.

Founded in 1961 in Belgrade, NAM has 120 members and 21 observers which have been trying to remain independent from global powers.

During the 23rd SCO summit, which took place virtually and was hosted by India on Tuesday, the Islamic Republic of Iran was officially accepted as the ninth full member of the bloc, the second expansion since the SCO was founded in 2001.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:09
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:44
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:10
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:55

102. When thou (O Messenger, art with them, and standest to lead them in prayer, Let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, Taking their arms with them: When they finish their prostrations, let them Take their position in the rear. And let the other party come up which hath not yet prayed - and let them pray with thee, Taking all precaution, and bearing arms: the Unbelievers wish, if ye were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush. But there is no blame on you if ye put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because ye are ill; but take (every) precaution for yourselves. For the Unbelievers Allah hath prepared a humiliating punishment. Surah 4. Women (102)

Iran Needs U.S. License for Changing Its Freed Resources Into Dollar in Iraq

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Secretary of Iran-Iraq Chamber of Commerce says although Iran's blocked money in Iraq has been unfrozen but Iran needs the U.S. license for changing the sources into dollar.

Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi told ILNA that Iraq has approved its budget for next year and the figure shows 70% growth comparing to the preceding year and over \$150b has been allocated to the developmental and construction sector in this budget which shows multiple rise in this sector in the budget.

He then pointed to the oil revenues and economic stability of the country as well as deployment of strong central government in Iraq, adding that Iraq has now come out of the statelessness condition and the central government is determined to provide the process for reconstruction of the country. He noted that if we put the figures beside each other we find that over 85% of the goods and services for materializing the goals of the budget should be provided beyond the borders and it means now there is a good a suitable market in front of the sectors which export goods and services, skillful work power, transfer of technology and knowhow and business activists can take advantage of it.

Sanjabi added that it seems Iran will not be the supplier of the early needs of Iraq and Iran's exporting pattern to Iraq should be changed and good capacities should be provided for export of ironware, home appliances, construction materials and equipment. He reiterated that increase in the budget of Iraq will have three impacts on its trade with Iran: First, it will lead to growth in goods trade, secondly, in case of



removing some obstacles because of sanctions, Iran can have colorful presence in Iraq's engineering and technical markets like the past decade, and thirdly it will pave the ground for using Iranian workforce and knowhow in Iraq's market.

Touching upon the exit of Iranian workforce and going to Iraq, he said that if the skillful forces of Iran go to Iraq for short time it will be a good opportunity because the local workforce turns into international one and it is not a threat but if they migrate which we fear it will be a serious threat for Iran because billions of dollars have been spent for training those forces and exit of each skillful force means exit of billions of wealth from the country.

On paying Iran's gas and electricity debts by Iraq, he said that the money is in Iraq's national currency which is in an account in TBI Bank of Iraq that Iraq government has paid its debt into this account but Iranians are not able to turn it into dollars unless they get the U.S. license and since the dominant foreign currency in Iraq's market is dollar, it will be difficult for Iran to change its money into dollar.

Jahanbakhsh added that this unfrozen money should be used for humanitarian and non-sanctioned goods and services but it will have positive impact on Iran's forex market, reiterating that the money is around \$10b in dinars in Iraqi bank.

ICCIMA to Hold Forum on Trade Opportunities in Spain

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The international affairs department of Iran chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Trade (ICCIMA) says the chamber will hold a



forum on trade opportunities of Spain on Monday, July 17.

The ICCIMA in collaboration with Iran-Spain Joint Chamber will hold the event on July 17 and the forum will host officials of economic section of Embassy of Spain in Tehran where the participants will get familiar with the demands of Spain's market and advantages of investment in the country as well as knowing the trade regulations in this country.

All economic activists who are keen for trade in Spain can attend the event by registering through contact with the chamber.

Iran Domestic Wheat Purchases Reach 5.4m mt

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Guaranteed wheat purchase from domestic farmers in Iran has reached 5.4 million metric tons (mt), an official in Iran's Ministry of Agriculture Jihad (MAJ) has said.

MAJ's head of wheat farming Sohrab Sohrabi said that the volume of wheat purchased from local farmers since the start of the current Iranian year in March has increased by 27% year-on-year and by 63% compared to the same period in 2021.

Sohrabi said that some 5.9 million hectares of lands have been dedicated to rainfed and irrigated farming for wheat in Iran this year.

The MAJ official estimated that the country's wheat output will reach 12.5 to 13 million mt in the harvest period to July.

UN Hosting Exhibition of Iranian Women Clothing

TEHRAN (IP) - The Islamic Republic of Iran held an exhibition below the UN Human Rights Council of "Iranian Women's Clothes Design."

The exhibition on Iranian Women's Clothes Design was opened with the presence of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UN Geneva), the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations in Geneva, and a group of officials, and those interested in Iranian art and culture.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, appreciated the Permanent Representative of Iran in Geneva for presenting Iranian art at the United Nations and admiring authentic Iranian art.

Valovaya described the Iranian female designers of the exhibition as a manifestation of women's decency which represents the art and abilities of Iranian women.

Pointing to the record of Iranian women's descent clothing, Ali Bahreini, Iranian Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, said that Iranian female dress features modesty, creativity, and beauty.

Bahreini emphasized preserving the cultural identity of Iranian women.

He termed the exhibition a step toward artistic diplomacy that bolstered cultural ties between the world's countries.

ICCIMA President Seeks More Enhanced Relations With Neighboring Countries

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Hossein Selahvarzi says the ICCIMA intends to push the economic diplomacy policy for promotion of relations with neighboring countries which has already begun by the government.

Selahvarzi made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday with Iran's newly-appointed ambassador to Armenia Mehdi Sobhani.

Referring to friendly relations between Iran and Armenia, he said that the volume of exchanges is not satisfactory and has to increase and become more diversified.

Selahvarzi stressed that the chambers of commerce can cooperate with the government to take major steps to help create a leap in the country's foreign trade.

The Iran Chamber of Commerce president called for more efforts to find a solution to banking and transit obstacles on the way of trade between Iran and Armenia.

In the meantime, the Iranian ambassador to Yerevan pointed to Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), noting that Iran has to take advantage of Armenia's access to a 200-million-population market.

Sobhani said that the Iranian embassy in Yerevan plans to further boost cooperation between private sectors of Iran and Armenia.

He stressed that upgrading cooperation between the chambers of commerce of the two countries is a prerequisite for more enhanced trade cooperation.

Iran, Russia Sign Contract to Start Works on Railway Project

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iran and Russia have signed a contract that details the road ahead for construction of a key railway in Iran as part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

The contract signed between senior transportation ministry officials of Iran and Russia comes more than a month after Iranian and Russian presidents oversaw the signing of a deal to finance and build the Rasht-Astara railway.

Iran and Russia have touted the 162 km (100 mile) railway along the Caspian Sea coast as an important link in the INSTC, a corridor that connects India, Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan and other countries via railways and sea and can rival the Suez Canal as a major global trade route.

Experts say the route, which connects Russian ports on the Baltic Sea with Iranian ports in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, could significantly diversify global traffic flows.

The contract signed on Tuesday outlines executive details of the construction process for the Rasht-Astara railway, including a timetable that starts in early 2024 and ends in three to four years.

Iran's transportation ministry said the contract allows Iranian and Russian teams to start works on the project site. Russian presidential aide Igor Levitin who was in Tehran to attend a trilateral meeting with Iranian and Indian authorities on the INSTC said the Rasht-Astara railway will be built through a finance mechanism agreed between Moscow and Tehran.

He said Russia hopes the volume of cargo transit through the INSTC could reach 30 million metric tons per year, adding that Moscow has also earmarked funds for expanding its shipping fleet in the Caspian Sea to help boost trade through the route.

Russians Keen on Iranian Cinema, Jewelry and Carpet

MOSCOW (IRNA) - Russian Culture Minister Olga Lyubimova has said that Russians are keen on Iranian cinema, jewelry, and carpet.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the programs of the Iranian Cultural Week in Russia on Tuesday, Lyubimova said that Russia looks forwards to developing relations with Iran because there are a lot of commonalities between Iran and Russia in all fields.

Referring to the Iranian traditional industries presented in the Vodenkha Moscow Exhibition Center, she underlined that many people in Russia are interested in Iranian cinema, jewelry, and carpet.



Pointing to the plans to perform two Persian classical music concerts in Moscow and St. Petersburg on Tuesday and Thursday, she noted said, "I look forward to participating in the Iranian music concerts tonight."

Nineteen Iranian and sixteen Russian musicians will hold two joint performances in the form of the Iranian National Orchestra and the Russian Youth Orchestra in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Iran Cultural Week in Russia opened in a ceremony attended by Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad Mehdi Esmaeili and his Russian counterpart Olga Lyubimova on Tuesday evening.

Iran Envoy, Armenia FM Discuss Bilateral Relations

TEHRAN (MNA) – Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and the outgoing Iranian ambassador to Armenia Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri discussed the bilateral relations between Tehran and Yerevan in a meeting in the Armenian capital.

During the meeting, Mirzoyan hailed the efforts of the Iranian envoy on enhancing the mutual understanding and developing ties between Tehran and Yeveran.

Badakhshan, for his part, called for continuing the cooperation between the two countries in order to maintain regional stability and security. He also stressed the need for holding high-level political talks between Iran and Armenia.



Mehdi Sobhani, the former ambassador of Tehran to Damascus, is Iran's new ambassador to Yerevan.

The two sides also discussed several other issues including the process of bilateral economic cooperation as well as the political consultations between the Iranian and Armenian foreign ministries.

On Monday, the Iranian ambassador met and held talks with the Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan.

In the meeting, Grigoryan hoped for intensive development of ties with Iran and thanked the Iranian ambassador for his support over the years during his tenure and wished him good luck in his future activities.

Saudi Arabia Denies Iran Rights Over Arash Oil Field

TEHRAN (MNA) – Denying Iran's rights in the Arash oil field, the Saudi Foreign Ministry claimed that this field is jointly owned by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The Saudi foreign ministry in a statement claimed that the field falls under joint ownership between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait, and they alone have full rights.

An informed source in the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs told Saudi Press Agency that the ownership of natural resources in the divided maritime area, including the entire Al-Durra (Arash) field, falls under joint ownership between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait only, and they alone have full sovereign rights to exploit the region.

The source added that Riyadh calls on the Iranian side to start negotiations to demarcate the eastern border of the maritime area divided between the Kingdom and Kuwait in accordance with the provisions of international law.

China Cancels Planned Trip By Europe's Top Diplomat

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has cancelled a trip by European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell scheduled for next week, an EU spokesperson said on Tuesday.

No reasons were given for the cancellation, which comes as Europe seeks to reduce the risks created by its close economic relationship with China, which Brussels has dubbed an "economic competitor and a systemic rival".

"Unfortunately, we were informed by the Chinese counterparts that the envisaged dates next week are no longer possible and we must now look for alternatives," spokesperson Nabila Massrali told Reuters in a written statement on Tuesday.



No New Partygate Probe Against UK's Johnson

LONDON (Dispatches) - Boris Johnson will not face another formal probe into allegations that he broke Covid lockdown laws at the UK prime minister's country residence, police announced.

Officers said in May that they were looking into possible rule-breaking at Chequers involving Johnson, his family and friends, at a time when legal limits on social gatherings were in place.

Other "potential breaches" at Downing Street of the laws the government ordered the public to follow were also assessed. But in a joint statement, Thames Valley Police and London's Metropolitan Police said the events, alleged to have taken place between June 2020 and May 2021, "do not meet the retrospective criteria for opening an investigation".



Russia Claims It Foiled Ukrainian Drone Attack on Moscow



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian air defenses foiled a Ukrainian drone attack on Moscow that prompted authorities to briefly close one of the city's international airports, officials said, as a Western analysis said that Russia has managed to slow Kyiv's recently launched counteroffensive.

The drone attack, which follows previous similar raids on the Russian capital, was the first known assault on the city since an abortive mutiny launched 11 days ago by mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin. His Wagner troops marched on Moscow in the biggest — though short-lived — challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin in more than two decades of his rule.

Authorities in Ukraine, which generally avoids commenting on attacks on Russian soil, didn't say whether it launched the drone raid.

President Vladimir Putin says the Russian people are "united as never before," seeking to project confidence in the wake of a short-lived revolt while participating in a meeting of an international organization that offered him a sympathetic audience.

The US embassy says its ambassador to Russia was allowed to visit Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, 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 top NATO military officer says Russia's armed forces are bruised but by no means beaten in the war in Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that four of the five drones were downed by air defenses on the outskirts of Moscow and the fifth was jammed by electronic warfare means and forced down.

There were no casualties or damage, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said.

As with previous drone attacks on Moscow, it was impossible to verify the Russian military's announcement that it downed all of them.

The drone attack prompted authorities to temporarily restrict flights at Moscow's Vnukovo airport and divert flights to two other Moscow main airports. Vnukovo is about 15 kilometers (nine miles) southwest of Moscow.

In May, two daring drone attacks jolted the Russian capital, in what appeared to be Kyiv's deepest strikes into Russia.

Tuesday's raid came as Ukrainian forces have continued probing Russian defenses in the south and the east of their country in the initial stages of a counteroffensive.

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's Security and Defense Council, said that the military was currently focusing on destroying Russian equipment and personnel, and that the past few days of fighting have been particularly "fruitful." He provided no evidence and it wasn't possible to independently verify it.

The Ukrainians are up against minefields, anti-tank ditches and other obstacles, as well as layered defensive lines reportedly up to 20 kilometers (12 miles) deep in some places as they attempt to dislodge Russian occupiers.

The U.K. Defense Ministry said Tuesday the Kremlin's forces have "refined (their) tactics aimed at slowing Ukrainian armored counteroffensive operations in southern Ukraine."

Moscow has placed emphasis on using anti-tank mines to slow the onslaught, the assessment said, leaving the attackers at the mercy of Russian drones, helicopters and artillery.

"Although Russia has achieved some success with this approach in the early stages of Ukraine's counteroffensive, its forces continue to suffer from key weaknesses, especially overstretched units and a shortage of artillery munitions," the assessment said.

France Seeks Answers as Macron Declares Riots Peak Passed

PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron met with hundreds of French officials to begin exploring the "deeper reasons" for the country's plunge into riots after the killing of a teenager at a traffic stop.

The Elysee palace meeting with around 250 mayors, whose municipalities suffered damage over a week of violence, comes as the authorities reported a much calmer night across the country.

"Is it a permanent return to calm? I will be cautious, but the peak that we've seen in previous days has passed," Macron said, according to a participant.

"We all want a lasting, republican order," he said. "That's the absolute priority."

The government has battled riots and looting since 17-year-old Nahel M. was killed by an officer during a traffic stop on Tuesday just outside Paris, rekindling long-standing accusations of systemic racism among security forces.

Overnight violence in French cities had halved in 24 hours, the interior ministry said, with 72 people arrested overnight nationwide. That included 24 arrested in and around Paris, where the riots first broke out.



Fighting Rages in Sudan as Army Tries to Cut RSF Supply Lines

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Fierce battles have broken out across Omdurman, a city across the Nile from Sudan's capital, Khartoum, as the army tries to cut off supply routes used by its paramilitary rivals to bring in reinforcements.

The army launched air strikes and fired heavy artillery on Tuesday, and there were ground battles in several parts of Omdurman, witnesses said.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) said it had shot down a fighter jet, and residents posted footage that appeared to show pilots ejecting from a plane. There was no immediate comment from the army.

The conflict, which erupted between the army and RSF on April 15, has brought daily fighting to the capital, triggered ethnically motivated killings in the western region of Darfur and threatened to drag Sudan into a protracted civil war.

The RSF quickly took control of swathes of Khartoum and has brought in extra fighters from Darfur and Kordofan as the conflict has deepened. It has transferred its reinforcements across bridges from Omdurman to Khartoum and Khartoum North, the three cities that sit at the confluence of the Blue Nile and White Nile and make up the wider capital area.

Residents said Tuesday's fighting in Omdurman was the heaviest for weeks and the army was fending off an RSF attack against a police base as it tried to gain ground.

"There's been very heavy bombardment for hours, air strikes, artillery and bullets. It's the first time for us that there have been continuous strikes at this level from every direction," said Manahel Abbas, a 33-year-old resident of Omdurman's el-Thawra neighbourhood.

The conflict broke out due to disputes between the army and RSF over an internationally backed plan for a transition to civilian rule, four years after the overthrow of long-ruling leader Omar al-Bashir during a popular uprising.

Saudi Arabia and the United States brokered several ceasefires at talks in Jeddah that were suspended last month after both sides continuously violated the truces.

Rash of Mass Shootings Kills 10 In U.S. Ahead of July 4 Holiday

PHILADELPHIA (Dispatches) - Mass shootings in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Fort Worth, Texas, claimed the lives of 10 people ahead of the Fourth of July holiday, officials said, a grim reminder of the United States' decades-long failure to curb gun-fueled violence.

In Fort Worth, three people were killed and eight wounded in a mass shooting following a local festival, police said on Tuesday.

In a separate mass shooting incident in Philadelphia on Monday evening, five people were killed and two were injured when a suspect in a bullet-proof vest opened fire on apparent strangers, according to local police. A toddler and a teenager were among the wounded.

The Monday night shootings came a day after two people were shot dead and 28 others injured, about half of them children, in a hail of gunfire at an outdoor neighborhood block party in Baltimore.

U.S. President Joe Biden condemned the violence and renewed his calls to tighten America's lax gun laws.

"Our nation has once again endured a wave of tragic and senseless shootings," the president said in a statement released on Tuesday. Biden called on Republican lawmakers - who have generally blocked attempts to significantly reform gun safety laws and oppose Biden's push to reinstate a ban on assault weapons - "to come to the table on meaningful, commonsense reforms."

The motives in all three recent shootings weren't immediately clear.

Philadelphia Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw said her force had arrested a suspect, identified as a 40-year-old man who had an assault-style rifle among other weapons, telling a late-night news conference that "we have absolutely no idea why this happened."

Police in Fort Worth said no arrests have been made. "We don't know if this is domestic-related, if it is gang-related. It is too early to tell at this point," said Shawn Murray, a senior police official.

Police have said they are seeking multiple suspects in the Baltimore shooting incident. The latest shootings took place around the anniversary of last year's Highland Park mass shooting near Chicago where seven people were shot dead and 48 others were wounded at an Independence Day parade. A 22-year-old man remains in custody after being indicted on 117 felony charges for the carnage.

The United States has been struggling with a large number of mass shootings and incidents of gun violence. There have been over 340 mass shootings so far in 2023 in the country, according to data collected by the Gun Violence Archive, which defines a mass shooting as an incident in which at least four people are shot, excluding the shooter.

At the pace of the first half of this year, mass shootings over the 2023 calendar year would reach 679 or about double the 336 recorded in 2018. That would mark the second-highest annual total over the last nine years, behind only the 690 recorded in 2021, according to data collected by the nonprofit group that tracks shootings.



Senegal President Rules Out Re-Election Bid After Violent Unrest



DAKAR (Dispatches) - Senegal President Macky Sall will not run for reelection next year, he said in a speech, ending widespread speculation that he would seek a third term his critics said would have been illegal.

Rumours that Sall would try to extend his stay in power have fuelled bouts of unrest since 2021 in which dozens have been killed, shaking Senegal's reputation for calm in a restive region.

"There has been much speculation and commentary on my eventual candidature on this election," Sall said in a televised speech. "The 2019 term was my second and last term."

"My decision, carefully considered... is not to run as a candidate in the upcoming election on Feb. 25, 2024. And this, even though the constitution grants me the right," he said.

Sall's announcement will likely quell fears of a democratic backslide in Senegal.

Some had worried he would follow other regional leaders, including in Ivory Coast and Togo, who used changes to the constitution as an excuse to reset their mandate and extend their hold on power.

Regional leaders including the presidents of Niger, Mohamed Bazoum, Guinea Bissau's Umaro Sissoco Embalo, and the African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, praised Sall's decision, while Bazoum added that it will ease tensions.

Sall's decision will trigger a search for a successor to lead the ruling party just months before the February polls. It is unclear who will run for many of the main parties.

Supporters at his party headquarters in an upscale neighbourhood in the capital were divided on Monday evening after Sall's speech. Some applauded, while others cried.

Jumbo Problem: Sri Lanka's Battle With Plastic Pollution

HORANA (Dispatches) - Heart-wrenching images of revered elephants and cattle eating plastic in Sri Lanka have prompted politicians to toughen pollution laws, but skeptical conservationists warn past bans were repeatedly ignored.

After an estimated 20 elephant deaths and countless other wild animals perishing due to single-use plastics in the past decade, officials say a law banning many such items is expected to come into force within weeks.

Bags, bottles and packaging are also blamed for clogging drains and causing urban flooding, as well as encouraging a surge in potentially deadly dengue — spread by mosquitoes that breed in stagnant water.

"We want to create an awareness about the responsible use of plastics," Anil Jasinghe, the country's top environment official, told AFP.

Jasinghe said regulations to be published soon will outlaw the sale of a string of single-use plastic items, including cutlery, cups, drinking straws and plastic flower garlands.

But it is not Sri Lanka's first attempt to tackle the problem.

Jasinghe admits that implementation has been a problem, noting that a 2006 ban on super-thin plastic bags and food wrapping was openly flouted by manufacturers.

"Of course, we raid them time and again, but by raiding we cannot solve the issue," he said.

"We need to have that environmental literacy, so that you change your production lines to better, more environmentally friendly production."

In 2017, a notorious garbage dump on the edge of the capital Colombo was shut when a mountain of rotting rubbish collapsed, killing more than 30 people and damaging hundreds of homes.

Soon afterwards, Sri Lanka banned all plastic shopping bags — but the rules were once again not strictly enforced.

Similarly, a ban on plastic sachets — popular for small portions of everything from washing powder to shampoo — was sidestepped by manufacturers who increased the volume to just above the legal minimum.

In addition to manufacturers subverting laws, cash-strapped Sri Lanka also struggles to process what it produces.

The island's unprecedented economic crisis that began late in 2021 means there has been a pile-up of trash because of a shortage of fuel for garbage trucks.

The United Nations says Sri Lanka recycles just 3 per cent of the plastic products it consumes, less than half the world average of 7.2 per cent.

Plastic bottles are not included in the ban, but the country's largest recycler of them says it can handle nearly two-thirds more than it is currently processing — if it could collect the refuse.

"We have the capacity to recycle 400 tonnes a month, but currently we do only 250 tonnes," said Prasantha Malimbاده, CEO of recycling at Eco Spindles.

The company is turning throwaway plastic bottles into polythene yarn that goes into the manufacture of clothing by top international brands.

At Eco Spindles' recycling facility south of Colombo, nearly 350 workers sort bottles that are crushed and torn into small plastic flakes, the raw material for yarn.

"Ten bottles go to make a T-shirt and 27 bottles go to make a graduation gown," Malimbاده said.

A 2020 study by the local Centre for Environmental Justice showed single-use plastics such as bags, food wrappers, straws, polystyrene boxes, cups and cutlery made up almost 15 per cent of urban waste.



Indian Clock Tells Story of Most Populous Nation

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India's first population clock, made up of 10 white numbered cards on a large green metal board, attracts curious passersby who watch it record the story of the world's most populous nation.

The clock — manually updated every day according to projected estimates and akin to a cricket scoreboard in appearance — was first erected in 1982 when India was home to more than 684 million people, according to the 1981 government census.

That figure more than doubled in the following decades.

India grew rapidly to overtake China at the top of the population ranks with more than 1.42 billion people, according to a United Nations projection in April.

"An extra slot had already been made in the clock, expecting that we were going to cross one billion," said Professor Chander Shekhar at the International Institute for Population Sciences in Mumbai, where the clock is located.

Overpopulation has long been a concern, with the government establishing a nationwide family planning program in 1952.

But it was a controversial enforced-sterilisation push in the 1970s that sparked public debates and spurred the institute to create the clock, Shekhar said.

Every day, security guards change the numbers using projections of the natural growth rate — the difference between the number of births and the number of deaths per 1,000 a year — derived from government and UN estimates.

"We feel good when we update the board, as passersby can also see the growing population numbers," 56-year-old security supervisor Salunkhe V.V. told AFP.

The current projections estimate that India's population increases by just under 41,000 people a day — one every two seconds — or about 15 million a year.

India's current fertility rate is two births per woman, just under the replacement threshold of 2.1, and down from government estimates of 4.8 in 1981.

The fertility rate varies across the country, with poorer states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar — boasting a combined population of more than 325 million — having the highest rates, according to a 2019 government survey.

In contrast, the two wealthiest states of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have fertility rates of 1.56 and 1.54 respectively, far below the average, according to the survey.

Family planning has largely been left to women, with less than one in 10 men using condoms, while female sterilization was at nearly 38 percent, according to the government's 2019-2021 National Family Health Survey.

Shekhar, 49, was drawn into studying population from a young age, fascinated and "agitated" by large crowds of people everywhere he went.

"I used to hate these numbers," the fertility and social demography expert said.

"But after I got my Master's in Statistics, I thought, 'Let us understand this, is it a problem? Or can it really be solved?'"

Shekhar believes the large numbers don't have to be a ticking time bomb if authorities focus on raising people's quality of life.



Time Appears Five Times Slower In Early Universe



PARIS (Dispatches) - Time appears to run five times slower in the early universe, scientists said on Monday, for the first time using extraordinarily bright cosmic objects called quasars as "clocks" to confirm this strange phenomenon.

Einstein's theory of relativity predicts that because space is expanding, "we should see the distant universe run in slow motion," said Geraint Lewis, an astrophysicist at the University of Sydney and the lead author of a new study.

Researchers had previously used observations of very bright exploding stars called supernovas as cosmic clocks to show that time ran twice as slowly back when the universe was half its current age.

The new study used even brighter quasars to peer further back into the history of the 13.8-billion-year-old universe.

Just over a billion years after the Big Bang, time appeared to flow five times slower, according to the study in the journal Nature Astronomy.

While "everything looks like it's slowed down" from here, Lewis emphasised that the experience of time in these distant places was not different.

"If I could magically transport you back 10 billion years and drop you next to one of these quasars, and you've got a stopwatch, time would just be normal," he told AFP.

"One second would be one second."

Aiming to measure this phenomenon, which is called cosmological time dilation, Lewis and University of Auckland statistician Brendon Brewer analysed data from 190 quasars collected over two decades.

Orchestra-Conducting Robot Wows Audience in Seoul

SEOUL (Dispatches) - A South Korean-made robot made its debut as an orchestra conductor before a sell-out crowd in Seoul, wowing the audience with a flawless performance in place of a human maestro.

Named "EveR 6", the five-foot-ten-inch-tall (1.8m) robot guided more than 60 musicians of the National Orchestra of Korea who were playing traditional Korean instruments.

The robot successfully guided the compositions, both independently and in collaboration with a human maestro who was standing next to it for about half an hour, entertaining the more than 950 audience members who had packed the National Theatre of Korea. The robot was showered with applause when it first appeared from below the stage on a lift and turned to face the audience, bowing in greeting.

Throughout the performance, the robot's blue eyes stared unblinkingly at the musicians, only nodding its head in time to the music.

The rookie performed well on its stage debut, audience members said.

"I came here worried whether this robot could pull this off without a glitch," Kim Ji-min, a 19-year-old college student majoring in music, told AFP.

"But I found it to be in great harmony with the musicians... It felt like a whole new world for me."

While there have been musical performances led by robotic conductors in the past, including a 2017 concert led by the robot YuMi in Italy, this was the first time South Koreans were able to witness a robotic conductor on stage.

EveR 6, developed by the state-run Korea Institute of Industrial Technology, was programmed to replicate the movements of a human conductor through motion capture technology.

The machine is not capable of listening or improvising in real-time, however.

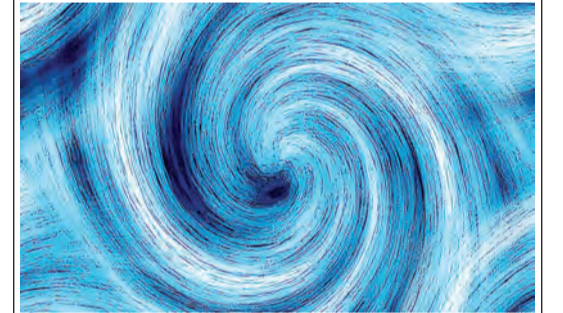
EveR 6's developers are currently working on enabling the robot to make gestures that are not pre-programmed, said Lee Dong-wook, the robot's engineer.

Improvising and communicating with musicians in real-time is the next big step, said Song Joo-ho, a music columnist who came to see the performance.

"It needs to improvise in real-time when musicians make a mistake or things go wrong."



An Isolated Blob Unveils Secrets of Turbulence



LONDON (Dispatches) - Turbulence is hard to control, but a turbulent blob created using vortex rings provides fundamental insights into this elusive state of matter.

Turbulence, a highly irregular fluid motion characterized by chaotic changes in the magnitude and direction of the flow velocity, occurs in a wide array of physical scenarios spanning different scales — from the swirl of air currents encircling the wings of an aircraft to the movement of interstellar gas in galaxies.

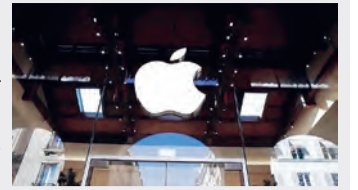
Describing fluid motion analytically is very difficult because any fluctuations that arise in the flow interact with each other, changing their motion and making the overall flow very unpredictable. It has made developing theoretical methods for calculating the properties of turbulent flow very difficult, hindering our ability to study these physical processes effectively. Even the most powerful supercomputers can't accurately simulate the behavior of a turbulent fluid flow.

This has left laboratory experiments as the main approach to studying turbulence, but even here problem arise. In experiments, turbulence often occurs when a fluid interacts with different structures, such as walls, pipes, grids, or spinning plates. This makes it difficult to control the energy, momentum, and rotation created by these boundaries on the turbulent flow. Scientists have therefore recognized the significance of generating turbulence away from the physical boundaries of the experimental apparatus in order to study its properties more accurately.

Apple Makes History as First \$3 Trillion Co.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Apple Inc became the first company in the world to reach a market value of \$3 trillion, buoyed by hopes over its expansion in new markets coupled with expectations of a more moderate approach to interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve.

The iPhone maker's advance was among the most eye catching in a month marked by investor interest in the potential of artificial intelligence, with share buyers also particularly favouring companies with strong balance sheets and cash flows. Apple's most recent quarterly report in May showing its revenue and profits beat analysts' expectations, and its track record of stock buybacks, reinforced its reputation as a safe investment during global economic uncertainty.



U.S. Manufacturing Slump Deepens

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. manufacturing slumped further in June, reaching levels last seen when the nation was reeling from the initial wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, but price pressures at the factory gate continued to deflate, a silver lining for the economy.

Shrinking activity left factories resorting to layoffs, the survey from the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) showed on Monday. ISM Manufacturing Business Survey Committee Chair Timothy Fiore described the practise as happening "to a greater extent than in prior months."

At face value, the ISM survey is consistent with an economy that is in recession. But the so-called hard data such as nonfarm payrolls, first-time applications for unemployment benefits and housing starts, suggest the economy continues to grind along.

Risks of a downturn have, however, increased as businesses and consumers deal with the 500 basis points worth of interest rate increases from the Federal Reserve since March 2022, when the U.S. central bank embarked on its fastest monetary policy tightening campaign in more than 40 years.

"This provides further reason to suspect that a recession is on the horizon," said Andrew Hunter, deputy chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics. "The ISM survey adds to the evidence that core goods prices will start falling again soon."

The ISM's manufacturing PMI dropped to 46.0 last month, the lowest reading since May 2020, from 46.9 in May. That marked the eighth straight month that the PMI stayed below the 50 threshold, which indicates contraction in manufacturing, the longest such stretch since the Great Recession.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index edging up to 47. Manufacturing, which accounts for 11.1% of the economy, contracted at a 5.3% annualized rate in the first quarter, government data showed last week.

Some pockets of strength remain, however, amid solid demand for goods like transportation equipment.

The ISM survey showed that transportation equipment was the only one of the six biggest industries reporting growth last month. But even so, makers of transportation equipment expressed worries that second-quarter sales could decrease and boost inventory levels.

They projected total end-of-year sales "to be about where we were last year."

Apart from the exorbitant borrowing costs, manufacturing is also being undermined by spending shifting to services from goods, which are typically bought on credit. Businesses are also carefully managing inventories in anticipation of weak demand. Economists say the sector has yet to feel the pain from a tightening in credit following financial market turmoil earlier this year.

In addition to transportation equipment, printing, nonmetallic mineral products and primary metals grew in June. The 11 industry groups contracting included wood products, textile mills, electrical equipment, appliances and components, machinery and computer and electronic products.

Stocks on Wall Street ended slightly higher in a shortened session ahead of Tuesday's July 4 holiday. U.S. Treasury prices were mixed. The dollar was steady against a basket of currencies. The ISM survey's forward-looking new orders sub-index climbed to a still-subdued 45.6 from 42.6 in May amid increased caution from businesses and consumers alike.

"Inventory investment has become a drag on activity as factories become increasingly wary of excess stockbuilding," said Jonathan Millar, a senior economist at Barclays in New York. "We continue to see ripening conditions for a downturn in hard data on factory production in the next few quarters."

UK Economy Shrank Slightly Less Than Thought in 2020

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain's economy shrank fractionally less than previously estimated in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the government to require many businesses to stop face-to-face operations, revised data suggested.

The Office for National Statistics said it now estimated that Britain's economy shrank by 10.9% rather than 11.0% in 2020, based on ongoing work for its annual "Blue Book" set of revisions to data, which are published in full on Oct. 31.

British gross domestic product (GDP) still fell more than in any of the other large, advanced economies in the Group of Seven (G7) in 2020, although differences in how public-sector output and other areas were measured during the pandemic mean the figures are not exactly comparable.

Spain, which is not in the G7, recorded an 11.3% fall in GDP in 2020, while G7 member Italy had a 9.0% decline, according to International Monetary Fund data.

Separate ONS data published on Friday showed British economic output in the first quarter of 2023 was still 0.5% lower than in the final quarter of 2019 - alongside Germany, the joint-weakest recovery of any G7 economy.

Revisions were also made to annual growth rates going back to 1998, although only two years in that period saw revisions of more than 0.2 percentage points: 2016, where growth was revised down to 1.9% from 2.2%, and 2001, where growth was revised up to 2.6% from 2.2%.

Britain's average annual growth rate for the period 2010 to 2019 was unchanged at 1.9%, while for the 1998 to 2007 it was revised up to 2.8% from 2.7%.

In March, the British government's Office for Budget Responsibility estimated the country's medium-term potential growth rate was 1.75%.



India Refiners Start Yuan Payments for Russian Oil Imports

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian refiners have begun paying for some oil imports from Russia in Chinese yuan, sources with direct knowledge of the matter said, as Western sanctions force Moscow and its customers to find alternatives to the dollar for settling payments.

Western punishments over Russia's invasion of Ukraine have shifted global trade flows for its top export, with India emerging as the largest buyer of seaborne Russian oil even as it casts about for how to pay for it amid shifting sanctions.

The U.S. dollar has long been the main global oil currency, including for purchases by India, but now the yuan is playing an increasingly important role in Russia's financial system because Moscow has been frozen out of the dollar and euro financial networks by international sanctions.

China has also shifted to the yuan for most of its energy imports from Russia, which overtook Saudi Arabia to become China's top crude supplier in the first quarter this year.

"Some refiners are paying in other currencies like yuan if banks are not willing to settle trade in dollars," said an Indian government source.

Indian Oil Corp, the country's biggest buyer of Russian crude oil, in June became the first state refiner to pay for some Russian purchases in yuan, three sources familiar with the matter said.

At least two of India's three private refiners are also paying for some Russian imports in yuan, two other sources said.

All the sources declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the matter. None of India's private refiners - Reliance Industries Ltd, Russia-backed Nayara Energy and HPCL Mittal Energy Ltd - responded to requests for comment. Indian Oil also did not reply to a request for comment.



Pakistan Inflation Eases for First Time in Seven Months

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan's headline inflation eased for the first time in seven months in June, figures released Monday showed, a bright spot for a beleaguered government that must call an election this year. Year-on-year inflation was 29.4 percent last month, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data showed, compared with a record 38 percent in May.

Years of financial mismanagement have pushed Pakistan's economy to the limit, exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, a global energy crisis and record floods that submerged a third of the country last year.

Pakistan struck a \$3 billion standby deal with the International Monetary Fund on Friday, which could provide temporary relief for the country's ballooning foreign debt.

To meet the demands of the deal -- which will be considered by the IMF's board by mid-July -- Pakistan scrapped popular subsidies on gas and electricity, which had cushioned the cost-of-living crisis.

With elections due in October, campaigning is likely to be driven by promises of development and vows to fix the economy.

The latest data shows poor Pakistanis are still feeling the brunt of the economic turmoil.

Food prices have risen 40 percent over June 2022, while transport costs have increased 20 percent in the same period.

Pakistan's poverty rate is expected to reach 37.2 percent this year, according to a World Bank report released in April.

Saudi Arabia, Russia Deepen Oil Cuts

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia and Russia, the world's biggest oil exporters, deepened oil cuts, sending prices higher despite concerns over a global economic slowdown and possible further interest rate increases from the U.S. Federal Reserve.

OPEC+, which groups the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies led by Russia, has already been cutting supply to boost prices since November last year due to weaker Chinese demand and rising U.S. supply but so far has failed to move them much from a range of \$70-\$80 a barrel.

Saudi Arabia said it would extend its voluntary oil output cut of one million barrels per day (bpd)

for another month to include August, adding that the cut could be extended beyond that month.

Shortly after the Saudi announcement, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said Moscow would cut its oil exports by 500,000 barrels per day in August.

The cuts amount to 1.5% of global supply and bring the total pledged by OPEC+ to 5.16 million bpd.

Later on Monday, Algeria said it would cut oil output by an extra 20,000 barrels from Aug. 1-31 to support efforts by Saudi Arabia and Russia to balance and stabilise oil markets, its energy ministry said.

The voluntary cut will be on top of a 48,000 barrel reduction decided in April, it said.

Libyan Oil Minister Mohamed Oun said his country welcomed the Saudi decision which will have "positive impact on market balance between global producers, consumers, and on global economy".

OPEC+, which pumps around 40% of the world's crude oil, already has in place cuts of 3.66 million bpd, amounting to 3.6% of global demand, including 2 million bpd agreed last year and voluntary cuts of 1.66 million bpd agreed in April and extended to December 2024.

Saudi Arabia, the de-facto leader of OPEC, had pledged earlier this month to make a deep cut to its output in July, on top of the broader OPEC+ deal to limit supply into 2024 as the group sought to boost flagging oil prices.

"The kingdom's production for the month of August 2023 will be approximately 9 million barrels per day," Saudi state news agency SPA quoted an official source from the Ministry of Energy as saying.

"This additional voluntary cut comes to reinforce the precautionary efforts made by OPEC+ countries with the aim of supporting the stability and balance of oil markets," the SPA official source was quoted as saying.

Russia, the world's second largest oil exporter after Saudi Arabia, has already pledged to reduce its output by 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 9.5 million bpd from March until year-end.

It could not immediately be determined how much Russian oil Indian refiners have bought with yuan, although Indian Oil has paid in yuan for multiple cargoes, sources said.

The rise in yuan payments has given a boost to Beijing's efforts to internationalise its currency, with Chinese banks promoting its use specifically for Russian oil trade.

Since the imposition of sanctions on Moscow, Indian refiners have mostly bought Russian crude from Dubai-based traders and Russian oil companies such as Rosneft, the Litasco unit of Russian oil major Lukoil, and Gazprom Neft, according to shipping data compiled by Reuters.

Indian refiners have also settled some non-dollar payments for Russian oil in the United Arab Emirates' dirham, sources have said.

Turkey Pledges to Keep Tightening Until Inflation Outlook Improves



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey will continue its monetary policy U-turn, which began with a sharp post-election rate hike last month, until the inflation outlook improves significantly, the central bank said.

The hawkish policy guidance came as data showed the central bank's net foreign reserves recorded their biggest weekly leap on record as the bank eased off interventions in the currency market to stabilise the lira.

Just over a month after President Tayyip Erdogan won re-election in a tight contest, the country is embracing a more conventional economic policy after years in which interest rates were slashed despite soar

"The monetary tightening process is expected to continue until a significant improvement is achieved in the inflation outlook," the central bank said in minutes of its June monetary policy committee meeting at which it hiked its main interest rate by 650 basis points to 15%.

The bank said the U-turn after a two-year easing cycle was the first step of a process to curb inflation. Annual inflation was near 40% in May after touching a 24-year high above 85% in October last year.

The rate hike came in the first policy meeting under new Central Bank Governor Hafize Gaye Erkan.

Before that, the one-week repo rate (TRINT=ECI) had dropped to 8.5% from 19% since 2021, and the bank had used foreign exchange reserves to prop up the lira, which nonetheless plunged to a series of record lows.

The central bank's net reserves rose to \$9.19 billion in the week to June 23, its biggest rise on record. Reserves fell to \$-5.7 billion in the week to June 2, their lowest since the data began being published in 2002.

Tehran to Host 10-km Celebration Party for Eid al-Ghadir

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian capital is preparing to hold a 10-km-long celebration ceremony on the occasion of Eid al-Ghadir. “Eid al-Ghadir” is among the important feasts and happy holidays of Shi’a held on Dhu l-Hijja 18 at the time when, according to reports, the Prophet Muhammad (s) appointed Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) as his caliph and the Imam after himself following an order from God. Muhammad’s prophecy began 613 years after Christ. By promoting monotheistic religion among people who practiced idolatry, he forbade social harm, such as lies, treason, rape, and murder, and invited people to behave in good manners.



Oil Giants Invest in Exploration as Profits Trump Climate

LONDON (Dispatches) - Exploration revival follows pressure from investors to maximise oil and gas profits rather than invest in lower margin renewable energy. Oil and gas companies are reinvesting record profits from the fossil fuel price surge driven by the Ukraine war to intensify the hunt for new deposits despite repeated calls by the United Nations to phase out hydrocarbons to avoid a climate crisis. Data and industry executives found the exploration revival responds to pressure from a majority of investors to maximize their oil and gas profits rather than invest in lower margin renewable energy businesses. The International Energy Agency forecast global upstream oil and gas investments to increase by about 11 percent to \$528bn in 2023, the highest level since 2015. Barclays said it expected the number of offshore projects to get approval this year to reach a 10-year high. The renewed appetite for oil and gas reserves and production – among European majors in particular – comes after Shell and BP slowed down plans to shift away from their legacy business and invest in renewables as part of the energy transition. Upstream oil and gas have historically had returns of 15 to 20 percent while most renewables projects have delivered up to 8 percent. An analysis of data from oil services firm Baker Hughes showed the number of offshore drilling vessels used to explore and produce oil and gas recovered in May to pre-pandemic levels, rising by 45 percent from October 2020 lows. Wood Mackenzie analysts predicted a continued increase in activity, forecasting offshore exploration and drilling activity to grow by 20 percent by 2025. The UK-based research and consultancy group also predicted the commitment of up to \$185bn to develop 27 billion barrels of oil reserves with international oil companies focused on the higher-cost, higher-return deep-water developments. Nambia, which has yet to produce any oil and gas, attracted strong interest after Shell and TotalEnergies made discoveries off the coast of the Southern African country. Meanwhile in China, one of the biggest investors in wind and solar, calls for more coal-fired power plants multiplied after economic growth plunged and shortages caused blackouts and factory shutdowns. While Beijing is forging ahead with plans to expand its use of renewable resources, the country has also been constructing an ever-growing number of coal-fired plants in the past few years.



Rising temperatures

Temperatures have hit new records around the world as the target of keeping long-term global warming within 1.5C (2.7F) moves out of reach. United Nations chief Antonio Guterres has repeatedly warned world leaders that humanity faces a stark choice between working together or “collective suicide” in the battle against global warming. As envoys gathered in Bonn in early June to prepare for this year’s annual climate talks in November, average global surface air temperatures were more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels for several days, the European Union-funded Copernicus Climate Change Service said. Parts of North America were about 10C above the seasonal average this month, and smoke from forest fires blanketed Canada and the United States.

Jenin, Another Scene...

FROM PAGE 1

He also called on international organizations to intervene in order to uphold the Palestinians’ rights. “The Palestinian nation’s defense of its right and resistance against the Zionists’ aggression will not reduce the responsibility of international bodies, including the United Nations and the Security Council, in this respect,” Kanaani added. “The international community bears responsibility for the rights of the Palestinian nation. Namely, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is expected to act seriously and effectively in this regard.” Of course we know well that Israel is not alone in committing such a crime and Western states are supporting the regime directly or indirectly which emboldens Israeli forces to keep committing more crimes against Palestinians or anybody who is opposed this regime. It seems the United States has given the green light to Israel to continue its crimes against the Palestinian people in the wake of the regime’s military aggression against the occupied West Bank city of Jenin. A White House National Security Council spokesperson said on Monday that the U.S. supports “Israel’s security and right to defend its people” against what he called “terrorist groups.” The White House, he added, is “closely monitoring the situation in the West Bank.”



The remarks came hours after the Tel Aviv regime waged a major aerial and ground offensive in Jenin and its refugee camp, killing at least ten Palestinians and injuring dozens, some of them listed in critical or serious condition. In another development on Monday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas suspended all contacts, meetings and security coordination with Israel in protest at the Jenin carnage. The decision came after Abbas held an emergency meeting with other leaders of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah. The Palestinian Authority (PA) also decided to call for the implementation of anti-Israel UN Security Council resolutions and demanded The Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) expedite its proceedings against the occupying entity, it added. Some 190 Palestinians have so far been killed since the start of the year at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces. Since the international bodies do not take action to stop the Zionist regime, the fate of victory and taming the Zionists in the hands of Palestinians themselves. 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. 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. We see if Palestinians do not resist and fight against the Zionists, every day we will witness such a crime by the Zionists, this time in Jenin next time nobody knows where, and these crimes will continue because of Western countries blind support of this killer regime. So Palestinians need an intifada and serious struggle but this time with more determination to tame the Zionists who only know the language of force and retaliation and nothing more.

UK Had Its Hottest June on Record in 2023



LONDON (Dispatches) - The UK this year has seen its hottest June on record, both in terms of mean temperature and the average maximum temperature, the British Meteorological Office said Monday. “The average mean temperature of 15.8 degrees Celsius (60.44 degrees Fahrenheit) for June 2023 in the UK is the highest in a series since 1884,” the Met Office said in a statement. The average temperature in June 2023 was 0.9 degrees higher than a previous joint record of 14.9 degrees registered in June of 1940 and 1976, according to provisional figures. “It’s officially the hottest June on record for the UK,” said the Met Office’s Mark McCarthy. On the hottest day in June, the temperature reached 32.2 degrees Celsius, McCarthy said. “What’s striking is the persistent warmth for much of the month, with temperatures widely into the mid-20s Celsius for many and even into the low 30s at times,” he added. The four countries that make up the UK -- England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland -- also reported “their respective warmest June on record”, the Met Office said. Water use restrictions have been imposed in parts of southeastern England amid record demand for drinking water. Scotland meanwhile has put regions on water scarcity alert as a result of concerns about the water level in its rivers and lochs. Last year England had its joint hottest summer on record, tied with 2018, and the fourth hottest for the whole of the UK, leading to school closures and train cancellations. Temperatures exceeded 40 degrees Celsius for the first time. “Alongside natural variability, the background warming of the Earth’s atmosphere due to human induced climate change has driven up the possibility of reaching record high temperatures,” Paul Davies of the Met Office said. Mel Evans, head of climate at environmental campaign group Greenpeace UK, said temperature records were “falling like domino tiles”, blaming fossil fuels for global warming. Evans criticized UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak for being “asleep at the wheel” and failing to take action on climate change. “If the heatwaves, droughts and wildfires raging around the world aren’t enough to shake Sunak out of his complacency, people will be wondering what on earth will.”

Baltimore Gun Battle Highlights Surge in U.S. Mass Shootings

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A shooting at a holiday block party in Baltimore over the weekend that left two people dead and 28 injured highlights a sustained surge in mass shootings in the United States since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. As of Monday, 340 mass shootings have taken place across the country so far this year. At that pace, the United States will experience 679 mass shootings in 2023, the second most in a calendar year since 2014, according to the Gun Violence Archive. In 2019, the year before the pandemic caused far-reaching changes in the way Americans work, play and interact with one another, the number of mass shootings reached 417, or about 61% fewer than the projected total for 2023. Just after midnight on Sunday, gunfire erupted at the scene of an outdoor neighborhood block party in South Baltimore’s Brooklyn Homes community. Fifteen of the injured victims were between the ages of 13 and 17, and the rest were over 17, Baltimore’s acting police commissioner Richard Worley told reporters on Monday. The two people killed were 18 and 20.



Seven people were still hospitalized on Monday, four of whom were in critical condition, officials said. Investigators have asked for the public’s help in tracking down multiple suspects. Police said they were concerned about retaliation for the shootings. The rise in mass shootings over the last three years is partly due to the impact the pandemic has had on Americans, according to James Alan Fox, a criminologist at Northeastern University. “Lots of people are struggling, financially and emotionally, from the pandemic,” Fox said, adding that gun sales have increased since the beginning of COVID-19. “Then you also have the tremendous divisions now and polarization in our country.” Gun ownership, guaranteed under the second amendment of the Constitution, is widespread in the United States, and it is a contentious political issue that heats up after particularly shocking shootings such as the one that took place in Baltimore. “This is the United States of America. This is our longest standing public health challenge,” Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott said at a Monday news conference, urging more gun control at the national level.

Iran Interactions With...

FROM PAGE 1

Under the legislation, some nuclear surveillance cameras, whose operations were deemed beyond Iran’s obligations under the safeguards agreement, were removed from the country’s nuclear plants. Eslami once again rebuffed the claims about the installation of 100 surveillance cameras at a nuclear plant in the city of Isfahan. “We had no new obligation to the IAEA beyond the safeguard agreement. All of our measures were taken within the framework of the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions,” he noted. Iran has repeatedly voiced its readiness to resolve differences with the IAEA within a framework of constructive and mutual interaction and technical cooperation. The disputes between the two sides have been a sticking point in the talks aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Europe Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

Amirabdollahian repeated Tehran’s strong condemnation of the instance of sacrilege, noting how the insult had bruised the sensitivities of Muslims around the world. Borrell, for his part, said insulting the Noble Qur’an “is not the EU’s position,” adding, “Whatever [act of] insult or [other] measure targeting religions is completely condemned in the eyes of the union.” The Albanian police’s recent raid on the camp hosting the anti-Iran terrorist cult of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) was also discussed during the conversation. Amirabdollahian said the action, although taken rather lately, served as an experience for the European countries that had endangered the security of their own people by supporting the group.

Int’l Bodies Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

It further blamed the failed pursuit on “the irresponsibility of the Zionist regime and those behind the kidnapping, the loss of many evidence and documents with the passage of time, and the lack of a serious and effective action by relevant international organizations.” Iran, it added, expects the friendly and brotherly Lebanese government to keep up its efforts, both domestically and internationally, to help discover the fate of the missing diplomats. The ministry also reiterated that it will diligently continue its moves meant to follow up on the issue until the fate of its kidnapped diplomats is determined.

Austrian Hutter

Appointed Monaco Coach

MONACO (Dispatches) - Austrian Adi Hutter has been appointed coach of French club Monaco on a two-year contract, the Ligue 1 club announced.

Hutter had been without a club since leaving Bundesliga side Borussia Moenchengladbach after just one season in 2021-22 when the team finished a modest tenth.

At Monaco he replaces Belgian Philippe Clement who stayed a season and a half at the Principality outfit which failed to qualify for a European competition.

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Philipsen Wins Second

Straight Tour de France Stage

NOGARO (Dispatches) - Jasper Philipsen won a second consecutive stage of the Tour de France in a sprint at the Nogaro racetrack marred by three high-speed falls.

The Alpecin rider Philipsen finished at a speed over 67kph and took the overall lead in the sprint points battle after pipping Caleb Ewan and Phil Bauhaus.

British veteran Mark Cavendish came fifth as he continued to face frustration in his quest for a 35th Tour de France win to break the all-time record he shares with Eddy Merckx.

Alcaraz Launches Wimbledon Bid in Style



LONDON (Dispatches) - Top seed Carlos Alcaraz made a flying start to his Wimbledon campaign as defending women's champion Elena Rybakina recovered from a set down to reach the second round.

On a soggy day at the All England Club, most of the action took place on the covered Court One and Centre Court, where the retired Roger Federer was the main attraction.

Tennis's new golden boy Alcaraz raced through the first set against French veteran Jeremy Chardy in just 22 minutes before breaking twice in the second set.

Chardy, who had previously announced that Wimbledon would be the final tournament of his career, drew first blood in the third set to lead 4-2 but Alcaraz hit back strongly, sealing a 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 win with an ace.

"I like to play battles and I am really happy to have played a great level, both of us, in the third set," said the superstar Spaniard.

"I am really happy to get through this first round."

The US Open champion is seen as one of the few credible threats to Novak Djokovic, who is targeting an eighth Wimbledon crown to equal Federer's men's record.

Wimbledon's Centre Court paid tribute to the Swiss great before the start of play as he returned to the scene of his some of his greatest triumphs.

The crowd gave Federer, who retired in September, a prolonged standing ovation interspersed with cheers as he entered the royal box, which threatened to upstage the first match of the championship for Rybakina.

The Kazakh third seed was caught cold in the opening set, double-faulting on her first point on the way to losing her first service game to unseeded American Shelby Rogers but she rallied strongly to win 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

"It was really tough for me today," said Rybakina. "I was pretty nervous, and I can't even hide it."

"The double fault said it all at the beginning of the match. I'm really pleased to get to another round."

Later on Tuesday, two-time champion Andy Murray, who plays with a metal hip, takes on fellow British player Ryan Peniston, 10 years after his career-defining first title win at Wimbledon.

Despite winning two events on the second-tier Challenger Tour last month, the 36-year-old missed out on a seeding for

Wimbledon and has not been beyond the third round of a Grand Slam since 2017.

But the 40th-ranked Murray still believes he has what it takes.

"I do believe I'm one of the best grass-court players in the world, and I'm physically feeling really good," he said. "I prepared well, so there's no reason why I can't have a good tournament."

Tunisia's Ons Jabeur, last year's beaten finalist, is facing Poland's Magdalena Frech.

Sixth seed Jabeur, who became the first Arab woman to reach a Grand Slam women's singles final, said she wanted to learn from her run at the All England Club last year.

As a result of the wet weather, 28 matches were cancelled by mid-afternoon including those featuring third seed Daniil Medvedev and 19th seed Alexander Zverev.

Women's number one Iga Swiatek sailed into the second round on Monday but seventh seed Coco Gauff was shocked by US qualifier Sofia Kenin.

Wimbledon chiefs have downplayed concerns over dampness on Centre Court despite a long delay during Djokovic's first-round match against Pedro Cachin on the opening day of the championships.

Operations director Michelle Dite said there was more moisture in the grass than expected but organizers were not planning to do anything different.

"There was nothing strange," she said. "It was a set of circumstances with the environmental control in the bowl. There is nothing that's broken. There is nothing that means we're not confident in playing today."

Brentford Splash Club Record Fee for Collins

LONDON (Dispatches) - Brentford signed Republic of Ireland defender Nathan Collins from Wolves for a club record £23 million (\$29 million) fee.

Collins agreed a six-year contract with the Premier League club after spending just one season at Molineux.

The 22-year-old, who previously played for Stoke and Burnley, will be the "perfect" Brentford player according to Bees boss Thomas Frank.

"He's a very talented centre-back and still young. He has a lot of very good abilities that we value a lot," Frank said.

"His heading in both boxes is a big thing, both in open play and from set-pieces, which is massive in the Premier League.

"His character is really good. He will fit into our culture, I have no doubt about that."

"I see leadership potential in Nathan. He's a perfect Brentford player, hungry and ambitious with a desire to learn."

Brentford are looking build on their highest-ever league finish after they ended the 2022-23 campaign in ninth place.

"It's a club on the rise and I can see where they want to go. It's exciting to be here," Collins said.

The arrival of Collins comes after Brentford signed goalkeeper Mark Flekken from Freiburg, with Kevin Schade's loan from the Bundesliga side made permanent.

Neymar Fined \$3.5m for Environmental Offense

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Brazilian authorities said on Monday that soccer star Neymar was fined 16 million reais (\$3.33 million) for breaching environmental rules during the construction of his coastal mansion in southeastern Brazil.

The luxury project violated rules regarding the use and movement of freshwater sources, rock and sand, local authorities first alleged late last month and confirmed on Monday.

A spokesperson for Neymar declined to comment on the matter.



Federer Wows Wimbledon Crowd From Royal Box

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wimbledon paid tribute to Roger Federer as the eight-time champion returned to the scene of his some of his greatest triumphs.

The Centre Court crowd gave the Swiss great a prolonged standing ovation interspersed with cheers as he entered the royal box.

Federer, fresh from appearing on stage with Coldplay in Zurich at the weekend, was visibly moved before taking his seat next to Catherine, the Princess of Wales.

The 41-year-old has mostly stayed away from tennis since bowing out in emotional scenes at the Laver Cup in London in September but was similarly honoured at the grass-court event in Halle, Germany, last month.

The celebration under the closed roof of Centre Court threatened to upstage the first match of the championship for Elena Rybakina, the defending women's champion, who started her campaign against US player Shelby Rogers.

Federer, who ended his career with 20 Grand Slam titles, won his first Wimbledon title in 2003 and a record eighth men's crown in 2017.

He played his final match at the All England Club in 2021, losing in the quarter-finals to Poland's Hubert Hurkacz.

Novak Djokovic is the hot favorite to equal Federer's Wimbledon mark this year and secure his 24th Grand Slam title.



Gerrard Appointed Manager of Saudi Side Al-Ettifaq



RIYADH (Dispatches) - Steven Gerrard has been appointed coach of Saudi side Al-Ettifaq, having previously decided against taking up the position, the Saudi Pro League club said.

The former Liverpool and England midfielder said last month he would not be taking up an offer to join the team. However, the 43-year-old has had a change of heart and becomes the latest big name to join the growing league.

"Where legends are found. We're thrilled to announce Steven Gerrard is our new head coach," Al-Ettifaq wrote on Twitter.

"He's no stranger to silverware. A Legend who brings a glorious history and exciting future to Ettifaq," the Saudi team added.

Club president Khalid Al-Dabal expressed his happiness after Gerrard signed a two-year deal.

Al-Dabal described the deal as one of the most famous and influential at the level of the Saudi Pro League.

The 43-year-old guided Rangers to their first Scottish Premiership title in 10 years in 2021 before leaving for Aston Villa, where he was sacked last October.

He follows in the footsteps of his former team mate Robbie Fowler who was appointed coach of Saudi second division team Al-Qadsiah on Thursday.

Former Liverpool captain Gerrard won the Champions League in 2005 but never won the Premier League in his 17-year spell with the Reds.

Gerrard's move is the latest in a number of high-profile deals since Al-Nassr signed Cristiano Ronaldo last December. Former Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema joined Al-Itihad in June.

Al-Ettifaq finished seventh in the top-tier Saudi Pro League last season.

Last week, Al-Hilal reappointed Portuguese Jorge Jesus as their coach on a one-year deal.

Wimbledon Chiefs Play Down Fears Over Damp Grass on Centre Court

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wimbledon chiefs downplayed concerns over dampness on Centre Court despite a long delay during Novak Djokovic's first-round match on the opening day of the championships.

The seven-time champion, chasing a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, defeated Argentina's Pedro Cachin in straight sets yesterday.

But the clash was delayed for nearly 90 minutes after the conclusion of the first set, even though the roof was deployed due to rain, with multiple inspections by officials and players before play resumed.

Defending champion Djokovic at one stage emerged with a towel, which he used to rub the surface of the court, to laughter from the crowd.

Members of the groundstaff then used hand-held leaf blowers to try and dry the surface in farcical scenes on the world-famous court.

"They were also very confused about what's going on," Djokovic said after his match. "I guess they will check that."

"Hopefully they'll fix it because that's one of the only two courts that has a roof. If it starts raining, if you can't play under the roof, that's a little bit of an issue for the schedule."

Later in the day, five-time champion Venus Williams suffered a nasty fall on the same court, hurting her already-banded right knee.



Kyrgios Withdraws From Wimbledon With Wrist Injury

LONDON (Dispatches) - Nick Kyrgios withdrew from Wimbledon with a wrist injury, stripping the tournament of one its headline acts 12 months after the firebrand Australian finished runner-up to Novak Djokovic.

"I'm really sad to say that I have to withdraw from Wimbledon this year," the 28-year-old wrote on Instagram, explaining that he had hurt his wrist as he prepared in vain to play in Mallorca last week.

Kyrgios had been an injury doubt in the build-up to Wimbledon. However, that was because he was struggling to recover from knee surgery which has restricted him to just one match in 2023.

"I tried my hardest to be ready after my surgery and to be able to step on the Wimbledon courts again. During my comeback, I experienced some pain in my wrist during Mallorca," he added.

"As a precaution, I had it scanned and it came back showing a torn ligament in my wrist. I tried everything to be able to play and I am disappointed to say that I just didn't have enough time to manage it before Wimbledon."

"I'll be back, and as always, I appreciate the support from all my fans." Kyrgios had been due to face wild card David Goffin in the first round at the All England Club today. His place in the draw will be taken by a lucky loser from qualifying.

