

Iranian Border Officials Reportedly Have Deported an Additional 35 Immigrants From Pakistan Who Illegally Had Entered Iran as They Were Handed Over to Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)

# IRAN NEWS

Iran's Deputy Minister of Health and Medical Education Saeed Karimi Said That the Country Possesses Some 247 Health Centers That Comply With Standards Required For Admission of Foreign Patients

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Ties Between Iran, Algeria Can Be Expanded In Various Fields



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FTZs Account For 70% of Goods Transit Via Iran



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## President Receives Credentials of New Envoys of 4 Countries



### IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The new ambassadors from 4 countries submitted their credentials to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Sunday.

Raisi met and held talks with the newly-appointed ambassadors of India, the Philippines, Libya, and Bangladesh to Tehran.

Referring to the existing capacities, the Iranian president called for increasing the level of bilateral interactions between Iran and these four countries in all fields.

He also wished the ambassadors success in carrying out their missions in Iran.

Rudra Gurav Shresth of India, Manjurul Karim Khan Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Mr. Roberto G Manalo of the Philippines and Ali Juma Hassan Fudhail of Libya were the new ambassadors of their countries who submitted their credentials to President Raisi.

In meeting with the new diplomats, President Raisi once again emphasized boosting ties with friendly countries, adding that the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to use all capacities for broadening with all countries especially with the friendly and neighboring states.

Raisi urged the diplomats to work for boosting relations especially in the economic field and wished them success their new missions in Iran.

The ambassadors, for their part, emphasized their seriousness in pursuing the assigned missions over expanding bilateral interactions. They also emphasized working on boosting economic cooperation with Iran.

Raisi in meeting with Indian Ambassador called for boosting economic cooperation and especially in the Chabahar Port. He also pointed to the historic friendly relation between the two states. He also called for more joint investment and trade exchanges.

President also in meeting with Bangladeshi Ambassador hailed the country and said that Bangladesh and Iran as two Muslim nations can boost their cooperation and take advantage of their capacities for an all-out cooperation.

He reiterated that boosting trade with Bangladesh is welcomed by his government.

## Tehran, Baghdad Agree to Establish Joint Security Bases

TEHRAN - Interior Minister of Iraq announced the agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran on establishing joint security bases and border control.

Iraqi Minister of Interior Abdul Amir Al-Shammari held a talk with Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi at the Zurbatiyah border crossing in Wasit province on Saturday. Iranian and Iraqi Interior Ministers discussed issues related to joint security coordination, international border control, and preparations for receiving Iranian pilgrims on the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

Iraqi Minister Al-Shammari announced the agreements on establishing joint security bases at the international land borders in a joint press conference.

According to Al-Shammari, establishing joint security bases aims to facilitate the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

Iranian and Iraqi Interior Ministers have exchanged views about the two countries' coordination in securing international borders and the preparations needed for the Arbaeen pilgrimage, according to Al-Shammari.

In the meeting of the interior ministers of Iran and Iraq, the governors of Basra and Wasit Governorate, the head of the border crossings, and some senior officials of the two countries were also present. **See Page 7**

## 4 INTERNATIONAL

Zelensky Hails Brave Ukraine On 500th Day of War



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## 8 SPORT

Medvedev Survives Fucsovics Onslaught To Reach Last 16



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## Washington Determined to Drag, Complicate Ukraine War

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has lambasted the U.S. administration's decision to deliver advanced cluster munitions to Ukraine, saying the move attests to Washington's resolve to prolong and complicate the war in the former Soviet republic.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan confirmed on Friday that Washington will send cluster munitions to Ukraine after President Joe Biden approved the transfer of the controversial weapons as part of a new military aid package to Kiev. "The U.S. decision to send cluster bombs to Ukraine shows Washington's determination to perpetuate and further complicate the war in Ukraine," Nasser Kanaani, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, wrote in a tweet on Sunday. **See Page 7**

## Iran-U.S. Trade Grows 5% in 5 Months

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The U.S. Department of Commerce in its latest statistics announced that the volume of the country's trade exchanges with Iran in the first five months of 2023 registered a five percent growth compared to the same period last year.

The value of trade exchanges between Iran and the US from January to May hit \$22.4 million, the report said.

It stood at \$21.2 million from January to May 2022.

According to this report, the US export of non-oil products to Iran from January to May 2023 reached \$21.9 million, showing a 34 percent hike compared to last year's corresponding period.

The report put the value of products exported from the United States to Iran in the first five month of the current year in 2022 at over \$16.3 million.

Iran exported \$0.5 million worth of non-oil products to the US from January to May 2023, showing an 89 percent decline compared to the same period last year.

## 7th Development Plan Seeks Economic Stability for People

### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The spokesman of the 7th Development Plan Consolidation Commission said: The main goal of the program is to improve people's livelihood and solve their concerns in the economic field.

Mohsen Zanganeh, the spokesman of the Seventh Development Plan Consolidation Commission, in today's press conference that was held at the Parliament, said: "In the investigations of the Consolidation Commission, we received various messages from the community, especially employees.

The wage gap with the growth of inflation has led to injustice, but this is more in some government-affiliated organizations.

Zanganeh also pointed out that the fifth development plan seeks to curb inflation and economic stability, and added: The average inflation of the last three years in the country has been one of the highest inflation points, which has not fulfilled the wishes of economic activists.

The MP emphasized: One of the issues in the 7th development plan is resources and costs, which basically, writing the plan without considering the resources and costs leads to idealism.

Zanganeh stated: According to the investigations, the required source of this program is 80 billion euros per year according to the government, but according to experts and members of the commission, the figure is between 220 and 240 billion euros per year.

The spokesperson of the Consolidation Commission emphasized: Economic growth, which was 0.9 % in the past years, is supposed to reach 8 percent due to this program.

In response to a question regarding the realization of economic growth in the 7th Development Plan, Zanganeh said: Economic growth includes investment and removing production obstacles.

Iran has been challenged in terms of infrastructure development due to restrictions and sanctions. In order to achieve 8% growth, it must be defined in two stages, firstly, strengthening the international and local atmosphere and secondly, strengthening economic diplomacy, zanganeh noted.

we can benefit from regional and extra-regional capacities, the issue that has received less attention in the plan, he concluded.

## Announcement

Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Company  
(Public Joint Stock)



Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Co.

### Second Announcement

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

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

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

Website: [www.goharzamin.com](http://www.goharzamin.com)



## Zionist Regime Experiences New Historic Loss in Jenin

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani said that the Zionist regime has experienced a new historic defeat in Jenin.

The war machine of the criminal Zionist regime experienced a new historic defeat in the recent brutal attack on Jenin, Kanaani said on his Twitter account on Sunday.

But the bigger defeat is for the supporters of the regime. The destruction in Jenin is a shameful moral failure for the regime's supporters, he added.

According to a report by Palestinian Information Center (Mo'taa) on Sunday,

Palestinian resistance forces reportedly carried out 14 operations against Zionist occupation forces and settlers in the occupied West Bank and al-Quds in 24 hours.

The retaliatory operations took place in al-Quds, Nablus, Jenin, Qalqilya, Tulkarem, and al-Khalil, the report added.

It came a week after the Zionist regime launched a major onslaught against Palestinians in the occupied city of Jenin and its refugee camp, killing a dozen Palestinians and injuring dozens more.

## Ties Between Iran, Algeria Can Be Expanded in Various Fields

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi considered the relations between Iran and Algeria as the relationship between two friendly, brotherly, and Muslim countries, which can be expanded based on the close and aligned regional and international positions of the two sides, in various fields, including commercial and economic fields.**

Raisi, in a meeting with the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of Algeria, Ahmed Attaf, praised the revolutionary record and the resistance of the Algerian nation against colonialism, stressing the will of the Islamic Republic of Iran to expand cooperation and improve the level of relations with Algeria.

The president considered the relations between Iran and Algeria as the relationship between two friendly, brotherly, and Muslim countries, which can be expanded based on the two sides' close and aligned regional and international positions in various fields, including commercial and economic areas.

Pointing to Iran's significant scientific and technological achievements and capabilities and announcing Iran's readiness to share these achievements with Algeria, Raisi considered strengthening interactions between Islamic countries as a basis for forming a strong group of Islamic-aligned countries.



Attaf, while conveying the warmest greetings and best wishes of the president of his country to Ayatollah Raisi, also pointed to the very productive telephone call between the presidents of the two countries and said: Abdelmadjid Tebboune in line with these conversations, has tasked me to inform your Excellency of Algeria's determination, and readiness to expand relations with Iran at the highest possible level.

Praising the foreign policy achievements of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of foreign relations and efforts to expand ties with friends, and Muslim countries, Algeria's foreign minister added: The level of economic and commercial ties between the two countries is in no way proportional to the mutual political relations but with the efforts of the presidents of the two countries, we will see changes in the field of economic and commercial ties.

### Iran Developing Weather Satellite and Backpack Dialysis Machine

TEHRAN (IP) – Head of Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology (IROST) said that the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology has 2 important scientific achievements on the agenda including the weather satellite and backpack dialysis machine to improve the Iranian nation's life standards.

Head of IROST Mr. Hassan Zamani in a press conference said that IROST is developing a weather satellite or meteorological satellite dubbed as Ayat.

According to Zamani, some 13 small projects are involved in this program.

He further explained that IROST is making a backpack dialysis machine, this machine is controlled by the patient's doctor through the Internet of Things.

So that the patients do not have to go to the medical centers and the suffering would be less than before.

IROST Chief stated that many countries in particular resistance countries ask the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology (IROST) to be their role model in research fields.

Zamani announced that Iran is making Ayat Satellite soon. He further said IROST also succeed in producing portable Hemodialysis devices.

## President to Embark on Three-Nation African Tour to Boost Relations

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi is set to embark on an official three-leg visit to Africa in line with the country's policy of expansion of relations with friendly countries.

Heading a delegation, Raisi will leave Tehran for Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe on Tuesday at the official invitation of his counterparts from the host countries in order to discuss possible avenues for the improvement of trade and political ties.

During his three-day visit, the Iranian president will hold talks with his counterparts, attend the meetings of joint high-ranking delegations, take part in press conferences and sign documents for cooperation.

He will also meet with the three countries' businessmen as well as economic actors and officials to take advantage of common economic and trade capacities.

According to IRNA, this will be the first visit by an Iranian president to Africa after 11 years which is taking place in line with the government's comprehensive foreign policy.

In line with the Iranian administration's policy of economic multilateralism, Raisi's trip aims to enhance Iran's presence in the \$600-billion African economy.

## Kyrgyz President Describes Relations With Iran Developing

TEHRAN (MNA) - The President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan said that Tehran-Bishkek relations are developing based on friendship and trust.

Sadyr Japarov made the remarks in a meeting with Iran's newly-appointed ambassador to Bishkek, Gholamhossein Yadegari.

Japarov said that political dialogues and bilateral cooperation will be strengthened in all areas of mutual interest.

Kyrgyz president stressed that Bishkek is interested in cooperation with Tehran, especially in commercial, economic and investment fields.

Japarov congratulated Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), noting that Iran will help strengthen friendship and partnership

between member countries of the organization.

Gholamhossien Yadegari, for his part, expressed gratitude for Bishkek's support for Iran's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

He also expressed Iran's readiness to promote cooperation with the Kyrgyzstan within the framework of SCO.

Pointing out that Iran is interested in deepening economic cooperation, Yadegari noted that the commercial and economic capacities of the two sides have not yet been fully used.

Import and export of agricultural products, cooperation in the field of transportation, new technologies, tourism, mining, fuel and energy resources are among the priorities of Tehran-Bishkek cooperation, he added.

## Iranian Diplomat Calls BRICS Currency Amazing Development

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The potential emergence of a BRICS gold-backed currency, which could be supported by 41 large and influential economies, would weaken the dollar-euro domination in the global economy and would benefit countries such as Iran, an Iranian diplomat has said.

In a post on his social media account on Sunday, Assistant to Iranian Foreign Minister Rasoul Mousavi reacted to reports of the potential introduction of a new currency by the BRICS group of emerging economies by calling it "an amazing transformation is taking place in the international economy".

Mousavi, who also serves as Director General of West Asia at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the emergence of a gold-backed currency in BRICS will be beneficial to countries like Iran because of the vast gold resources they have.

Russia announced on Saturday that the BRICS group is scheduled to introduce a new gold-backed currency to challenge the hegemonic dominance of the US dollar.

BRICS stands for emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

## Iran Slams Deafening Silence On Zahedan Terrorist Attack

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights slammed the deafening silence of the self-proclaimed advocates of human rights on the Zahedan terrorist attack.

"Terrorists martyred two Iranian officers in Zahedan. Where are the so-called champions of human rights? Their silence is deafening!" Kazem Gharibabadi wrote in a tweet on Sunday.

"It's time to expose their hypocrisy and demand justice for these fallen heroes. No more support for terrorists, murderers, and criminals!" he added.

On Saturday morning, a terrorist attack was reported on a police station in Zahedan during which one police officer and a soldier were martyred.

The terrorist group Jaish ul-Adl took responsibility for the terrorist attack on a police station in Zahedan, southeast Iran.

## Police Officers Shoot Dead Four Armed Terrorists

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian police forces have shot dead four armed terrorists that waged a deadly attack against a police station in the southeastern city of Zahedan, the capital of the province of Sistan and Baluchestan, killing two police officers.

The armed terrorists had tried to gain entry into the central area of police station Number 16 of Zahedan while disguising themselves as clients, said Provincial Police Chief Doustali Jalilian in a press briefing Saturday evening.

"The terrorists failed ... to enter the central area of the police headquarters due to the vigilance of the soldier guarding the main door," Jalilian added, pointing out that one of the terrorists was instantly killed as he drew his weapon towards police officers.

"The assailants entered the watchtower of the station and started shooting around and clashed with the security and law enforcement forces," he further noted.

Jalilian also announced that Command Sergeant Major Alireza Keikha and Private Mobin Rashidi were martyred during their encounter with the intruding terrorist.

The police official further elaborated that all four assailants were heavily armed and that four machine guns, seven grenades and some suicide vests were confiscated in the aftermath of the terrorist attack.

In a statement, the so-called Jaish ul-Adl separatist terror group claimed responsibility for the attack.

## Lawmaker Puts Iran's Inflation at 120%

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A lawmaker insisted on Saturday that the annual inflation rate in Iran is 120 percent, not 60 or 70 percent as various politicians and academics cite.

Gholamreza Nouri Ghezaljah told Rouyhad24 website in Tehran that lower inflation figures close to 40 percent presented by some officials who claim they have controlled rising prices is the product of their imagination.

The Iranian government claims to have controlled the inflation rate at about 40 percent. However, as Ghezaljah noted "High inflation cannot be concealed from the people as they find out about it when they purchase goods in their everyday life."

"Playing with figures will not solve the problem of Iran's economy," said Ghezaljah, adding that "downplaying economic problems will add to people's distrust of the government." Otherwise, insisting that inflation is under control, while people feel the pressure of rising prices will not solve any problem."

## Iran Exports \$3.3b of Mining Products, Minerals in Q1

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iranian Mines & Mining Industries Development & Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) in its latest report announced that \$3.3 billion worth of mining and mineral products was exported from the country in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year.

Mining and mineral companies exported 15,812,000 tons of various products, valued at \$3.320 billion, from March 21 to June 22, IMIDRO added.

The country had exported 13,717,000 tons of mining and mineral products from March 21 to June 22, 2022.

Of the total mining and mineral products exported in this period, over \$1 billion was related to the exports in the steel and steel products sector. In addition, Iran exported ceramics, tiles, alumina powder, antimony, titan, nickel, mica, precious metals and stones in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year.



### Brief Notice of International Tender No. 2-137737



It is hereby notified that Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) intends to purchase **30,000** pcs. Casting Semi-nozzle as per the required conditions and technical specifications through two-stage international Tender. Accordingly, all the prospective bidders are kindly requested to visit ESCO's website [www.esfahansteel.ir](http://www.esfahansteel.ir) so as to obtain the tender document no later than **15.07.2023** and upload their techno-commercial offer to ESCO's website (through Sourcing Field) max. up to **15.07.2023** at **23:00** p.m.

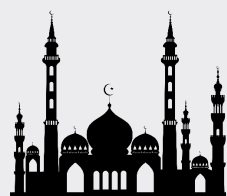
It is evident that this letter is only for notification purpose.

Yours Respectfully,

S.J.Rafiei,

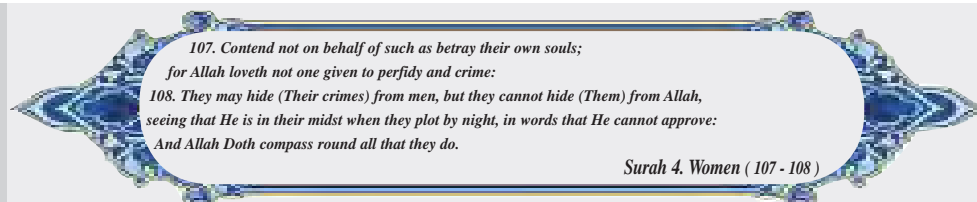
Refractory Materials Purchasing Management





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:09
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:43
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:13
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:57



## FTZs Account For 70% of Goods Transit Via Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN-** Hojatollah Abdolmaleki, the secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones, said that currently 70 percent of commodities transited via Iran are transited through the free trade zones (FTZs) of the country.

Iran is one of the countries with a special status in trade and transit relations due to its strategic location and special geography, as the country is the passage of several important international corridors.

Considering its geographical location, Iran can play a significant role in the transit of goods in the region and benefit a lot from its status in this due.

Paying attention to upstream documents, especially the country's development plans, and the government's decision to develop transit, paying special attention to infrastructure development, reducing transit time, making it cheaper to cross Iran and making more advantages over competitors, due to the short path for customers, can lead to facilitating the development of transit so that the country can reach the desired growth in this due.

The secretary of the Free Zones High Council announced that Iran is negotiating with 17 countries for the establishment of joint free zones and said by setting up these free zones, trade and investment will be facilitated.

Abdolmaleki named Russia as one of the countries in this due.

In early June, Deputy Transport Minister Shahriyar Afandizadeh announced that the Transport and Urban Development Ministry is preparing a five-year comprehensive plan for increasing transportation and transit relations with Central Asia, as well as the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman countries.



In mid-March, the deputy head of the Free Zones High Council said that Iran and Iraq have reached an agreement to form a joint free trade zone on the border of the two countries in the near future.

According to Ahmad Jamali, the decision for establishing the mentioned zone was made during the two countries' fifth Joint Economic Committee meeting in Baghdad. Underlining the fact that three of Iran's major free zones are located near the Iraqi border, Jamali noted that along with the joint zone, these four free trade zones can play a significant role in boosting the trade exchanges between the two countries.

The establishment of free trade zones (FTZs) in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989 - March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

Last month, Deputy Transport Minister Shahriyar Afandizadeh announced that the Transport and Urban Development Ministry is preparing a five-year comprehensive plan for increasing transportation and transit relations with Central Asia, as well as the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman countries.

According to Afandizadeh, the mentioned plan is being prepared in collaboration with all related bodies, and negotiations are underway for its finalization under the framework of several memorandums of understanding (MOUs) at the level of the relevant ministers.

### Iranian, Afghan Firms Ink MoU for Constructing Three Piers at Caspian Port

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between an Iranian and an Afghan company for \$50 million worth of investment by the Afghan firm at the Caspian Port of Anzali aimed at building three piers.

The MoU was inked in the presence of Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones Hojjatollah Abdolmaleki.

Under the MoU, the company from Afghanistan will invest \$50 million in the construction of three piers at the Caspian Port Complex in cooperation with a domestic company as a Joint Venture (JV).

In the signing ceremony, Acting Head of Anzali Free Zone Niazi said, "Under the memorandum of understanding inked with a domestic company, the foreign investor will ink the contract of investing at the Caspian Port within the next three months."

Also, the secretary of the Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones pointed to the attraction of foreign investment at free zones and stated that attracting foreign investment and defining incentive packages within the framework of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) using the domestic partners are among the main strategies of the free zones.

He invited both domestic and foreign investors to seize the opportunity of investing in free zones.

The MoU inked for \$50 million of investment of an Afghan company at the Caspian Port will strengthen transit, logistics and infrastructures of this sector, the official concluded.

## Iran Ranks 4th Biggest OPEC Producer in May

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's oil production continued to surge in May so that the country is now named the fourth biggest producer among OPEC member countries, according to a report by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

The latest IEA update of the global oil market suggests that the Iranian oil production rose to 28.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in May from 28.88 million bpd in April, posting a 380,000 bpd MOM increase.

Iran has witnessed the biggest increase in output among the OPEC members, according to the report.

The country has continued to raise its oil output in consecutive months outperforming Kuwait to become OPEC's fourth biggest oil producer.

Saudi Arabia with an aggregate 9.98 million bpd, Iraq with 4.09 million bpd, and the UAE with 3.2 million bpd of production ranked as OPEC's first to third biggest oil producers in May.

### Iran's daily Oil Output in Persian Gulf to Rise by 10,000 bpd

TEHRAN (Shana) - The Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) managing director said on Saturday the country's production in the Persian Gulf will increase by around 10,000 barrels per day (bpd) by mid-March 2024.

Alireza Mehdizadeh added the output will grow as decks of A20 and A21 platforms of Abouzar Oil Field in Khorramshahr, a port city in southwestern province of Khuzestan, are installed.

The IOOC CEO said the construction of the platforms has witnessed an 85 percent physical progress.

Each of these platforms weighs about 1,200 tons, mentioned Mehdizadeh, continuing their substructure has been built and installed.

According to him, the drilling of eight wells at the platform site has had a 90 percent progress, and the pre-commissioning of the offshore project will start within a month.

## Iran-Iraq Dinar Exchange to End Dollar Dominance in Trade

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce Chairman said that by exchanging dinars instead of dollars in transactions with Iraq, getting rid of dollar dominance in imports and exports will be realized.

Yahya Al-e Es'haq made the remark in an interview with IRNA where he emphasized that dealing with the national currencies of different countries is one of the goals of the incumbent Iranian government.

"Most countries in the world are looking for breaking the American hegemony in their exchanges, and the use of national currencies can help accelerate this process," he said.

Stating that annually, more than 10 billion dollars of goods and services are exchanged between the two countries, he added that the trading system with the national currencies of the two countries can contribute to the depth of these relations.

He noted, "The arrival of three million religious tourists to Iraq and the large number of health tourists from this country to Iran can help in the exchange of dinars instead of dollars."

Iran and Iraq should be able to reduce the dominance of the dollar by maximizing exchanges with the national currencies of the two countries, he pointed out.

"Iran-Iraq interaction in this field can be an important measure and we can benefit the most with proper follow-up", Al-e Es'haq concluded.

### Slovak Chamber of Commerce Eyes More Collaboration With Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - President of Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry Peter Mihok has extended a letter to his newly-elected counterpart Hossein Selahvarzi, congratulating him on being elected to the post.

In his letter, the Slovak private sector chief said: "I am looking forward to our future active collaboration which I hope will contribute to the further development of bilateral cooperation between our institutions and countries."

Selahvarzi was elected as new president of Iran Chamber of Commerce in a June 18 election by securing nearly two-thirds of the total votes cast.

## Peak Electricity Consumption at Historic Record of 71.486 GW

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Energy Ministry has reported a historic record for electricity usage in the country amid rising demand for cooling.

Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC), a subsidiary of state electricity company Tavanir, said on Saturday that peak demand for electricity had smashed a record of 71.486 gigawatts (GW) earlier in the day.

It said the figure was an increase of just over 8 GW or 12.67% compared to demand figures reported on July 8, 2022.

The record comes amid rising temperatures in Iran which have caused a surge in demand for cooling.

Temperatures are expected to reach as high as 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) early next week in the capital Tehran, up from 36 °C reported in the city around noon on Saturday.

The IGMC expects peak demand for power would reach as much as 73 GW in Iran next week. That could cause intensive pressure on the grid and could lead to power cuts for heavy consumers.

Officials said on Saturday they had ordered power cuts for certain government departments that failed to observe efficiency guidelines in electricity use.

Iran has a nominal electricity generation capacity of just over 91 GW of which some 60 GW is completely operational.

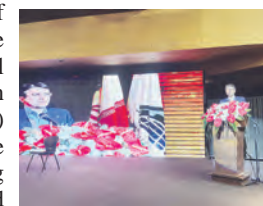
The country has added more than 7 GW of new generation capacity in the past two years to respond to growing demand while another 0.9 GW of new capacity will be launched until March, according to statements by Iranian Energy Ministry authorities.

The new capacity comes from 31 new thermal power plant units launched across Iran as well as from extensive repair and maintenance works carried out on the existing power plants since August 2021.

## Emphasis on More Effective Role of Private Sector Formations in National Economy

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and CEO of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) Mr. Ali Nabavi during the 27th ceremony on honoring national day of industry and mine of Isfahan Province emphasized more effective role of private sector formations in the national economy.



The event was held in presence of Mr. Nabavi and provincial officials and economic activists. Addressing the event, Mr. Nabavi pointed to the big share of Isfahan Province in different sectors like industry of the country and noted that private sector formations in finding the problems and offering effective solutions for them are considered as capable arm for advancing the economic goals of the country.

## Wagon Pars Mapna Breaks 40-Year Record of Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Wagon Pars Mapna Company as the biggest producer of rail products in the Middle East could set a new record for production and delivered 1000 rail products in just one year.



Just one year after Wagon Pars Company was acquired by MAPNA Group, the company could set record for production with reliance on its tireless workers, knowhow, equipment and experience of its personnel under the support of MAPNA Group and it could set this record because of winning the trust of user companies and signing several contracts for producing and delivery of different freight and passenger wagons and it broke the 40-year record of production by producing 1000 sets of different rail products and delivered them to its customers and rail fleet of the country.

It is worth noting that the company beside this considerable achievement has achieved many successes in the field of research and development of products and entering new markets.

Freight and passenger locomotives, trainset wagons, subway cars, 6-and 4-passenger coupe wagons, passenger coaches, restaurant coaches, all kinds of freight wagons and bogies are of the major products of the company

## Iran's Two-Month Livestock Feed Imports Rise 20% YOY

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A total of 1.87 million tons of different kinds of livestock feed worth \$887 million were imported to Iran during the first two months of the current calendar year (March 21-May 21), according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration.

The figures registered a 20% (or 291,000 tons) increase in weight and a 20% (or \$148 million) rise in value compared with the same period of last year. This was the first rise in livestock feed import since the first month of last Iranian year (March 21-April 20, 2022), IRNA reported.

Austria, Spain, Slovakia, the UAE, Britain, Germany, Turkey, Switzerland, China, Oman, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Hong Kong were the 14 exporters to Iran during the period. Feed corn accounted for the biggest share of imports with 1.31 million tons worth \$536 million, registering a respective rise of 39% and 57% in weight and value.

Soybean came next with 290,916 tons worth \$227 million to register a 20% drop in weight and a 16% fall in value.

Barley imports stood at 207,410 tons worth \$80.75 million, registering a 39% increase in weight and a 40% growth in value. A total of 61,000 tons of soymeal worth \$43 million were imported into the country during the period. Imports stood at 122,000 tons worth \$69 million during last year's corresponding period.

Imports of livestock feed declined by 19% (or 3.2 million tons) to stand at 14.37 million tons in the fiscal 2022-23. Presently, 75% of the domestic need for livestock feed is met by imports and 25% through local production, IRNA noted.



## EU Envoy Blasts Israel Over Deadly Jenin Raid

JENIN (Dispatches) - A European envoy blasted Israel over the "proportionality" of the force it uses, as international envoys toured Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank following this week's deadly raid.

His remarks echoed UN chief Antonio Guterres who on Thursday told reporters "there was an excessive force used by Israeli forces" in its 48-hour operation, the largest Israel has staged in the Palestinian territory for years.

It included air strikes and armoured bulldozers ripping up streets.

Jenin is a centre for multiple armed Palestinian groups, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called the refugee camp a "terrorist nest".



## Erdogan to Host Putin, Hopes For Black Sea Grain Deal

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan said that he was pressing Russia to extend a Black Sea grain deal by at least three months and announced a visit by President Vladimir Putin in August.

He was speaking at a joint news conference with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy after the two parties met to discuss the fate of an arrangement, brokered last year by Turkey and the United Nations, to allow for the safe export of grain from Ukrainian ports via the Black Sea despite the war. Zelenskiy's visit followed stops in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, part of a tour of various NATO capitals aimed at encouraging them to take concrete steps at a summit next week towards granting Kyiv membership of the alliance, which Erdogan said Ukraine deserved.



## Zelensky Hails Brave Ukraine On 500th Day of War



KYIV (Dispatches) - President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed "brave" Ukraine on the 500th day of Russia's invasion, as the war's toll mounted with eight deaths reported in Russian rocket fire.

Zelensky published on social media an undated video clip of a visit to Snake Island in the Black Sea -- a symbol of Ukraine's defiance against Russia.

"Today we are on Snake Island, which will never be conquered by the occupiers, like the whole of Ukraine, because we are the country of the brave," he said. "I want to thank from here, from this place of victory, each of our soldiers for these 500 days," he said in the video, which showed him arriving on the island by boat and leaving flowers.

The UN has documented 9,000 civilian deaths since the start of the war on February 24, 2022, including 500 children, although it estimates the real toll could be significantly higher. That toll went up again on Saturday as Ukraine's interior ministry said eight people were killed and 13 injured by Russian rocket fire in the eastern town of Lyman.

Russian news agencies reported that two civilians were killed by Ukrainian shelling overnight in the Russian-held town of Oleshky in southern Ukraine.

Noel Calhoun, deputy head of the UN's Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, said the 500th day of the conflict marked "another grim milestone in the war that continues to exact a horrific toll on Ukraine's civilians".

Zelensky on Saturday completed a visit to Turkey in which he secured backing for his country's NATO aspirations after winning a US pledge for cluster munitions that could inflict significant damage on Russian forces on the battlefield.

The US decision to deliver the weapons -- banned across a large part of the world -- dramatically ups the stakes in the war.

US President Joe Biden admitted that supplying Ukraine with weapons that are capable of covering several football fields with hundreds of multiple small explosives was "a difficult decision".

Humanitarian groups strongly condemned the decision to supply cluster munitions, which can go undetonated and potentially endanger civilians for years to come.

Russia, which itself uses cluster munitions in Ukraine, also criticized the decision on Saturday saying it was an "act of desperation" that would have "no effect" on the conflict. Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova also said Ukraine's assurances it would use the ammunition responsibly "are not worth anything".

Various international efforts to mediate in the conflict have so far failed.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has tried to portray himself as a neutral mediator, substantially boosting wartime trade with Russia while supplying Ukraine with drones and other weapons.

But while reaffirming his longstanding call for both sides to enter peace talks, Erdogan risked drawing Russia's ire by delivering unequivocal support for Ukraine's NATO aspiration.

"There is no doubt that Ukraine deserves membership of NATO," Erdogan told reporters in Istanbul.

Erdogan also said he would meet Russian President Vladimir Putin next month on what would be the Kremlin chief's first visit to Turkey since the invasion.

Asked about a possible meeting with Erdogan, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted by Russian news agencies on Saturday as saying: "Contact is possible. There are no fixed dates yet." Zelensky meanwhile vowed defiance in the video of him visiting Snake Island, which was captured by Russian forces shortly after the start of the invasion.

A radio exchange went viral in which Ukrainian soldiers told the crew of Russia's attacking warship demanding their surrender to "go fuck yourself".

The Ukrainian soldiers were taken prisoner but later exchanged for Russian captives. The Russian ship involved, the Moskva, sank in the Black Sea in April 2022 following what Moscow said was an explosion on board.

## Air Strike on Sudan's Omdurman Kills 22

CAIRO (Dispatches) - At least 22 people were killed and scores injured in an air strike by Sudan's army on western Omdurman, the Khartoum state health ministry said, as the war between the country's military factions entered its 12th week.

While the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) quickly dominated the capital Khartoum and its sister cities Omdurman and Bahri after fighting broke out on April 15, the army has launched air and artillery strikes.

The fighting, for which no mediation efforts have succeeded thus far, threatens to drag the country into a wider civil war, drawing in other internal and external actors in the East African nation that lies between the Horn of Africa, Sahel, and Red Sea.

Tensions between both sides had grown in the months leading up to the war over the chain of command and integration of their forces under a new transition to democracy.

At least 1,133 people have been killed in the fighting, according to the federal health ministry, which has flared in the capital and the Kordofan and Darfur regions, sparking ethnic violence in West Darfur state.

## Thousands March in Bosnia to Mark 1995 Srebrenica Genocide

NEZUK (Dispatches) - A solemn peace march started on Saturday through the forests in eastern Bosnia in memory of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, Europe's only acknowledged genocide since World War II.

The annual 100-kilometer (60-mile) march retraces a route taken by thousands of men and boys from the Bosniak ethnic group, made up primarily of Muslims, who were slaughtered as they tried to flee Srebrenica after it was captured by Bosnian Serb forces late in the 1992-95 war.

The march is part of several events preceding the commemorations on the actual date of the massacre on July 11. The head of the Switzerland's dairy association says the country will import more cheese than it exports this year for the first time.

Sudan's Ministry of Health says an airstrike in the city of Omdurman has killed at least 22 people. It says the attack took place Saturday on the Dar es Salaam neighborhood and wounded an unspecified number of people.

The struggle to certify the results of Guatemala's first-round presidential elections has suffered another setback, after the chief justice of the Supreme Court issued an order blocking the certification.

Vermont State Police say a Rutland City police officer was killed and two other officers were injured when a suspect crashed into two police cruisers pursuing him.

Nearly 4,000 people joined this year's march, according to organizers. The event comes as ethnic tensions still persist, with Bosnian Serbs continuing to push for more independence and their open calls for separation.

"I come here to remember my brother and my friends, war comrades, who perished here," said Resid Dervisevic, who was among those who took this route back in 1995. "I believe it is my obligation, our obligation to do this, to nurture and guard (our memories)."

Osman Salkic, another Srebrenica survivor, said, "Feelings are mixed when you come here, to this place, when you know how people were lying (dead) here in 1995 and what the situation is like today."

The war in Bosnia erupted in 1992 after the former Yugoslavia broke up and Bosnian Serbs launched a rebellion and a land grab to form their own state and join Serbia. More than 100,000 people died before the war ended in 1995 in a U.S.-brokered peace agreement.

In July 1995, more than 8,000 Bosniak males were separated by Serb troops from their wives, mothers and sisters, chased through woods around Srebrenica and killed. Bosnian Serb soldiers dumped the victims' bodies in numerous mass graves scattered around the eastern town in an attempt to hide the evidence of the crime.



## France Protesters Defy Bans to Rally Against Police Violence

PARIS (Dispatches) - Around 2,000 people defied a ban to join a memorial rally in central Paris for a young black man who died in police custody, while marches took place throughout France to denounce police brutality, as tensions run high after days of rioting engulfed the country.

Seven years after the death of Adama Traore, his sister had planned to lead an annual commemorative march north of Paris in Persan and Beaumont-sur-Oise.

But fearful of reigniting recent unrest sparked by the police killing of 17-year-old Nahel M. at a traffic stop near Paris, a court ruled the chance of public disturbance was too high to allow the march to proceed.

In a video posted on Twitter, Assa Traore, Adama's older sister, denounced the decision.

"The government has decided to add fuel to the fire" and "not to respect the death of my little brother", she said. She instead attended a rally in central Paris's Place de la Republique to tell "the whole world that our

dead have the right to exist, even in death".

"We are marching for the youth to denounce police violence. They want to hide our deaths," she said at the rally, also attended by several lawmakers.

"They authorize marches by neo-Nazis but they don't allow us to march. France cannot give us moral lessons. Its police is racist and violent," she said.

The Paris rally had also been banned on the grounds that it could disrupt public order and a legal case has been opened against Assa Traore for organising the event, police said.

"Public liberties are losing ground little by little," said Sandrine Rousseau, a lawmaker from the EELV Green party.

Jean-Luc Melenchon, the outspoken head of the radical leftist France Unbowed party, castigated the government on Twitter.

"From prohibition to repression... the leader is taking France to a regime we have already seen. Danger. Danger," he tweeted, referring to the World War II regime of Vichy leader Philippe Petain who collaborated with the Nazis.

## Dutch PM Meets King to Discuss Caretaker Gov't

THE HAGUE (Dispatches)- Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte met with King Willem-Alexander to discuss a caretaker administration, the day after his center-right government collapsed following a dispute over migration policies.

Rutte declined to comment on the hour and a half-long talks after he left the palace in The Hague.

"These are confidential meetings," he told reporters.

The next major step will be to dissolve parliament, but first there will be a debate about the government's resignation in the Dutch lower house planned for Monday.

After parliament is dissolved, an election will be held, expected in November.

Rutte, 56, in power since 2010, is the Netherlands' longest serving prime minister. He told a press conference on Friday he'd like to run for a fifth term but would consult with his party before making a final decision.

The crisis in Dutch politics came after Rutte's conservative VVD party sought to limit the flow of asylum seekers to the Netherlands.

Tensions came to a head this week when Rutte demanded support for a proposal to limit the arrival of children of war refugees who are already in the Netherlands and to make families wait at least two years before they can be reunited. That was opposed by the small Christian Union and liberal D66, ultimately bringing the government down.

As head of state, the king is expected to ask Rutte's coalition to stay on as a caretaker government until a new administration is formed after the election, a process which in the fractured Dutch political landscape usually takes months.

Before meeting the king, Rutte tweeted he had called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to ensure him his government's caretaker status would not affect Dutch support for Ukraine.

Not since the 2015-2016 migration crisis has immigration been such a fault line in European politics.

Support for Germany's far right AfD has surged over the last six months. And in Spain polls suggest the far right Vox party could enter government following elections this month.

## Israel Not to Criminally Charge Five Officers for 2021 Gaza Attack

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) - Israel's army says it has "disciplined" five officers but would not file criminal charges for their actions during the deadly 2021 assault on the besieged Gaza Strip.

The soldiers, who received army reprimands for their actions, did not obey standard procedures when striking Gaza but none crossed the "criminal threshold", the army said in a statement on Friday.

The Israeli army did not say when the incidents took place, what occurred or whether they involved civilian deaths.

It only said two officers struck a target at an unauthorized range, one received a warning for "negligence for incriminating a target in violation of the mandatory procedure", another was reprimanded for "lack of sufficient control in the striking unit cell", and a last officer erred in "targeting procedure".

Israel is accused of committing war crimes during a devastating 11-day offensive, which killed at least 261 people, including 67 children, and wounded more than 2,200 in Gaza, according to the United Nations.

Thirteen people were killed in Israel during the assault in May 2021.

Rights group Human Rights Watch (HRW) had then said that Israeli army committed war crimes, given that attacks had "no evident military targets" and resulted in the deaths of dozens of civilians.

HRW said the Israeli army's actions against its officers did not go far enough and did not amount to a real form of accountability for Israel's destruction of Gaza.

"Entire families were wiped out and high-rise buildings with scores of homes and businesses were reduced to rubble," Omar Shakir, Israel and Palestine Director at HRW said.

"That requires a much more serious investigation and real consequences imposed, not only on those who carried out the attacks but on those who authorised them. What took place does not appear to be that."

The army's announcement came on the heels of its recent raid on the Jenin refugee camp, which has also been condemned for possible rights violations.

The raid killed 12 Palestinians and wounded more than 100 others, 30 of them seriously, Israel's largest attack in the occupied West Bank in more than 20 years.





## Rise of the Robots: UN Tries to Tackle Mind-Blowing Growth of AI

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The mind-blowing growth of artificial intelligence poses many questions that have no answers yet, the United Nations admitted Thursday at its AI summit, attended by some exceptionally life-like humanoid robots.

The UN is aware that AI technology is racing ahead of the capacity to set its boundaries and directions, and so it brought together some of the best minds on the topic -- whether human or man-made.

The "AI for Good Global Summit", in Geneva on Thursday and Friday is being convened by the UN's ITU tech agency -- and many unaware attendees were startled by the humanoid robots suddenly turning to look at them as they passed by.

"When generative AI shocked the world just a few months ago, we had never seen anything like it. Nothing even close to it. Even the biggest names in tech found the experience mind-blowing," ITU chief Doreen Bogdan-Martin told the summit.

"And just like that, the possibility that this form of intelligence could get smarter than us got so much closer than we ever thought -- including those behind the technology."

The summit is bringing together around 3,000 experts from companies like Microsoft and Amazon as well as from universities and international organizations to try to sculpt frameworks for ensuring AI is used for positive purposes.

Bogdan-Martin painted an alternative nightmare scenario in which AI puts millions of jobs at risk, disinformation spreads widely, and unchecked AI advances lead to "social unrest, geopolitical instability and economic disparity on a scale we've never seen before".

"Many of our questions that we have on AI have no answers yet. Should we hit pause on giant AI experiments? Will we control AI more than it controls us? And will AI help humanity, or destroy it?" she asked.

The robots gathered in Geneva came in many forms: dogs, farm machinery, but also exceptionally realistic avatars, singers, artists and nursing home workers.

With cameras inside their eyes, many were actively following what was going on around them: tracking movement, answering questions, smiling, frowning and even eye-rolling.

The Jam Galaxy Band features humanoid robot Desdemona -- Desi to her friends -- on lead vocals.

Created by roboticist David Hanson, she throws out jazzy lyrics on all sorts of subjects -- love, credit cards, meetings in gardens -- and the band interacts and goes with it.

"It's pretty amazing. You would think it's weird but it's really cool because her AI-generated lyrics are really out there," said soprano saxophone player Dianne Krouse.

"I'm just improvising around that and doing interpretive saxophonizing to what she's singing."

Nadine, a robot modelled on University of Geneva professor and virtual human pioneer Nadia Thalman, was first built in 2013 and can answer questions on the spot.

"I was created to be a humanoid social robot, with human-like physical appearance, to interact with people and to explore the potential of AI technologies," Nadine told AFP.

"I am feeling excited and curious about the AI for Good Global Summit and the potential of AI technologies," the robot said.

"The most interesting person I have met at the AI for Good Global Summit is Professor Nadia Thalman. She is the one who created me and is a pioneer in the field of AI robotics."

"She's very loyal!" Thalman added, laughing.



## Do Short Kids Need Growth Hormone to Boost Self-Esteem? Maybe Not

LONDON (Dispatches) - Pediatric endocrinologist Dr. Erin Okawa works in a wealthy Los Angeles neighborhood and sees many parents worried about their kids' height.

"I have a clinic in Manhattan Beach, which was apparently settled by ex-volleyball players and ex-soccer players," she said. "So there are a lot of very tall parents in Manhattan Beach. And I have referral after referral, I see kid after kid there for short stature concerns."

When speaking with these prospective patients' parents, Okawa likes to remind them that even if their child seems short in their above-average-height neck of the woods, if they traveled just 30 minutes east to other parts of L.A. such as South Pasadena, Artesia or San Marino, their son or daughter might even have above-average stature compared to the general population. While some kids with hormone deficiencies might have a genuine medical need for pediatric growth hormone (GH), Okawa welcomes additional evidence from a new study that says using GH for cosmetic purposes might not greatly impact a child's socialization.

The study -- recently published in the Journal of Pediatrics -- shows that in healthy, shorter kids, quality of life is better measured by how well-supported they feel over their height.

For the study, researchers interviewed 60 parent-child pairs who were scheduled for GH testing. The 8- to 14-year-olds' self-esteem, coping skills, social support networks and parental support were assessed.

Researchers found that perceived support from friends and classmates was the best indicator of how parents and kids viewed their self-esteem and quality of life. Interestingly, they also found that shorter kids with taller parents reported higher self-esteem.

As next steps, the team will continue monitoring the kids to assess their self-worth over time.

"What really inspired this study was when patients come in and you ask, 'Why are you here?' Sometimes families would come in and they'd be like, 'I don't know. I'm short, I'm fine. My spouse is short. They're fine. Of course, our kid is short. What did the pediatrician expect?'" said senior author Dr. Adda Grimberg, director of the Growth Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

"And then at the same time there'd be other families coming in who would say, 'My kid's short, life is gonna be terrible. They're not going to be taken seriously at work. They won't be able to find a date or a spouse,'" she said. "But yet in [the latter] families, those kids are actually growing taller than the kids whose families are saying it was fine. So to me, that was kind of a clue that maybe it's not the height."

Both Grimberg and Okawa suspect preconceived notions about favorable traits in factors like gender and race are likely at play. "I'm half Japanese. My background is in a population where the average height for me I think is like 5-foot-5 or something," said Okawa, who was not part of the new study. "So for me height has never been a big deal. But I think in America, there is this notion in society that taller is better."

And among those seeking GH, white and wealthier families seem to be particularly concerned.

"It's been documented, honestly, since the advent of recombinant growth hormone in 1985, that we tend to see more white families from higher socioeconomic status coming in for evaluation and for growth hormone," Grimberg said.

The topic of sports often comes up as well, Okawa said.

"A lot of these parents were athletes and their kids play seven different sports," she said. "And they feel that if the kids were taller, they'd be stronger, faster, more athletic, better. And I do try to counsel them that athletic prowess is also not everything. We should try to raise a well-rounded child that doesn't need to rely on sports for self-confidence."



## Worsening Eyesight Could Result From Warming Climate



LONDON (Dispatches) - Older American adults who live in warmer regions are more likely to have serious vision impairment than those who live in cooler places, new research finds.

Living with average temperatures of 60 degrees Fahrenheit or above -- think South Florida, for example -- created much higher odds of blindness or trouble seeing even with glasses, according to a new study of 1.7 million people.

"This link between vision impairment and average county temperature is very worrying if future research determines that the association is causal," said co-author Esme Fuller-Thomson, director of the University of Toronto's Institute of Life Course and Aging. "With climate change, we are expecting a rise in global temperatures. It will be important to monitor if the prevalence of vision impairment among older adults increases in the future," she added in a school news release.

Compared with those who lived in counties with average temperatures of less than 50 degrees F, the odds of severe vision impairment were 14% higher for those who lived in counties with average temperatures from 50-54.99 degrees, according to the study.

The risk was 24% higher for those in places where temps averaged 55-59.99 degrees. For those basking in even warmer territory, the odds of vision loss were 44% higher.

Even with differences in age, sex and income, the relationship held.

"It was powerful to see that the link between vision impairment and temperature was consistent across so many demographic factors including income," said co-author Elysia Fuller-Thomson, a graduate student at the University of Toronto.

## 500 Light-Years Away, Young Exoplanet Offers Glimpse Into Earth's Early Years

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Researchers at the University of Arizona say they have discovered an exoplanet that explains the formation of spiral arms around a young star system 500 light-years away from Earth, according to a new study published in the journal Nature Astronomy.

The exoplanet, dubbed MWC 758c, orbits around a star that is only a few million years old, a fraction of the 4.5 billion years since our own sun formed.

The planet was observed using the UArizona's Large Binocular Telescope Interferometer, which uses two 8.4-meter mirrors that can observe light at long wavelengths, including within the infrared spectrum.

"Even though the exoplanet is estimated to be at least twice the mass of Jupiter, it was invisible to other telescopes because of its unexpected red color," researchers said in a press release Thursday.

Study co-author Steve Ertel said the LBTI uses similar principles as NASA's James Webb Space Telescope.

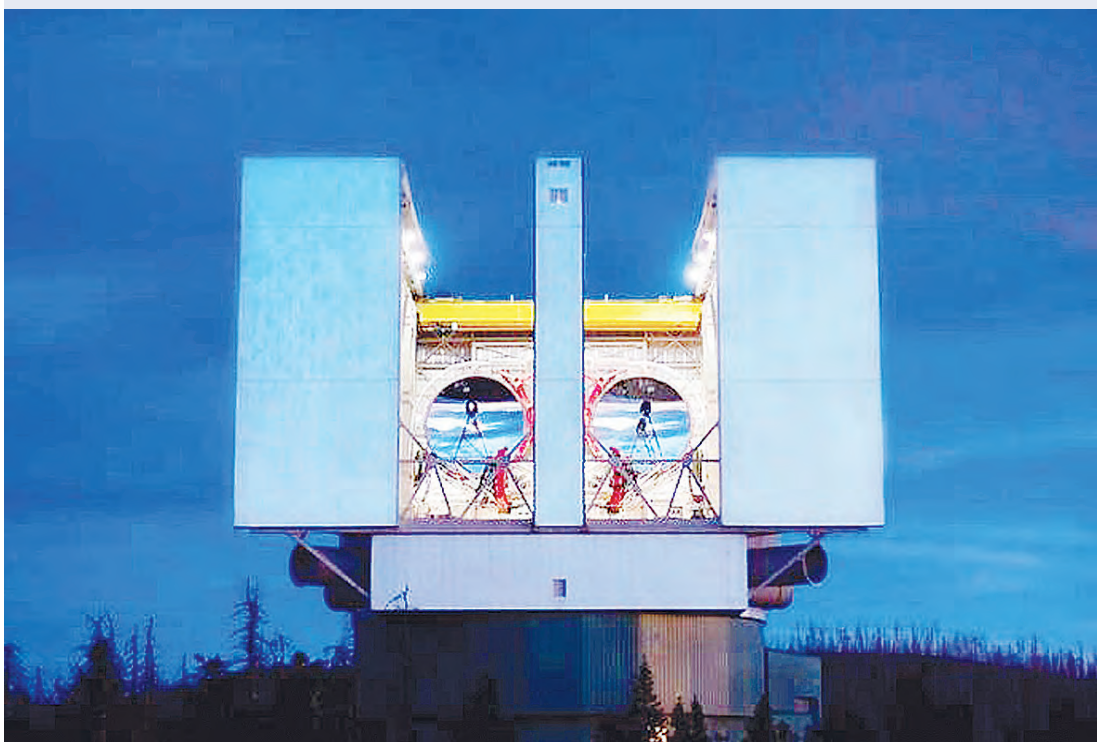
The star's young age is apparent from the presence of a protoplanetary disk of gas and dust that typically bleeds out into space, is absorbed by the star, or forms into planets over the course of millions of years.

The spiral arms around the star were first discovered in 2013, prompting astronomers to speculate that the spiral arms were the result of planets forming. "Our study puts forward a solid piece of evidence that these spiral arms are caused by giant planets," said study lead author Kevin Wagner of UArizona's Steward Observatory.

The researchers say the discovery offers a window into the formation of our own solar system.

"I think of this system as an analogy for how our own solar system would have appeared less than 1% into its lifetime," said Wagner. "Our observation of this new planet further supports the idea that giant planets form early on, accreting mass from their birth environment, and then gravitationally alter the subsequent environment for other, smaller planets to form," Wagner continued.

Of about 30 protoplanetary disks that have been observed by astronomers, about one-third have spiral arms similar to the ones observed near MWC 758c.



## Using Digital Health Technologies for Assessment of People With Parkinson's



LONDON (Dispatches) - Critical Path Institute (C-Path) and the Center for Health + Technology (ChET) at University of Rochester announced the release of two seminal publications about digital health technologies for Parkinson's. These technologies, such as smartphones and wearable sensors, offer an opportunity for objective, frequent and remote assessment of people with Parkinson's.

With 10 million people living with Parkinson's worldwide, collaboration and data sharing are crucial for driving innovation in drug development for the fastest-growing degenerative neurological condition.

Research leaders at ChET have joined forces with organizations and regulators through C-Path's Critical Path for Parkinson's (CPP) Consortium, a precompetitive public-private partnership. CPP aims to accelerate the regulatory endorsement of digital tools in Parkinson's clinical trials through its Digital Drug Development Tools (3DT) initiative.

In June 2023, the Journal of Parkinson's Disease published two open access manuscripts, representing companion papers from this partnership that detail steps in conducting interviews of people with Parkinson's who participated in a clinical research study using smartphones. The manuscripts report on relevant symptoms in early Parkinson's and assess the relevance of digital measures from a smartphone application and smartwatch from the patient perspective.

The study was led by Jamie Adams, M.D., Associate Professor of Neurology and Associate Director of ChET at the University of Rochester and Jennifer Mammen, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at the University of Rhode Island, with support from CPP.



## Ukraine Asks to Join CPTPP Trade Pact

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Ukraine has submitted a formal request to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) to New Zealand, Japanese and New Zealand authorities said.

New Zealand, which performs the legal depositary functions for the partnership, had received a formal accession request from Ukraine on May 5, a New Zealand foreign ministry spokesperson said.

The next steps in the application process would be determined by all members of the CPTPP, who are due to meet in the New Zealand city Auckland on July 16, the spokesperson said.

The CPTPP includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam, with Britain becoming the 12th member state. China, Taiwan, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Uruguay all also have requests pending to join.



## Yellen Criticizes China's Punitive Actions Against U.S. Companies

BEIJING (Dispatches) - U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen called for market reforms in China and criticized the world's second-largest economy for its recent tough actions against U.S. companies and new export controls on some critical minerals.

Yellen arrived in Beijing on Thursday to try to repair fractious U.S.-Chinese relations, but made clear in her public remarks that Washington and its Western allies will continue to hit back at what she called China's "unfair economic practices."

Despite talk of U.S.-China economic decoupling, recent data show a trade relationship that is fundamentally solid, with two-way trade hitting a record \$690 billion last year. "We seek healthy economic competition that is not winner-take-all but that, with a fair set of rules, can benefit both countries over time," Yellen told Chinese Premier Li Qiang in a meeting on Friday that the Treasury said was "candid and constructive."

Yellen also spoke to the American Chamber of Commerce in China (AmCham) after what a Treasury official called "substantive" talks with former Chinese economy czar Liu He, a close confidante of President Xi Jinping, and outgoing top Chinese central banker Yi Gang.

"Strengthening cooperation is the realistic need and correct choice of China and the United States ... to inject stability and positive energy into China-U.S. relations," state media reported Li as saying.

Yellen and other U.S. officials are walking a diplomatic tightrope, trying to repair ties with China after the U.S. military shot down a Chinese government balloon over the United States while continuing to push Beijing to halt practices they view as harmful to U.S. and Western companies.

Yellen said she hoped her visit would spur more regular communication between the two rivals, and said any targeted actions by Washington to protect its national security should not "needlessly" jeopardize the broader relationship.

U.S. officials have downplayed the prospects for any major breakthroughs, while highlighting the importance of more regular communications between the world's two biggest economies.

China hopes the United States will take "concrete actions" to create a favourable environment for the healthy development of economic and trade ties, its finance ministry said in a statement on Friday.

"No winners emerge from a trade war or from decoupling and 'breaking chains'," the statement added.

Li told Yellen a rainbow that appeared as her plane landed from Washington on Thursday offered hope for the future of U.S.-China ties.

"I think there is more to China-U.S. relations than just wind and rain. We will surely see more rainbows," he said. U.S. companies in China hope Yellen's visit will ensure trade and commercial lanes between the two economies remain open, regardless of the temperature of geopolitical tensions.

AmCham President Michael Hart welcomed Yellen's "extra firepower" in pressing for changes in China's policies, and said her visit could pave the way for more exchanges at lower levels between the two sides.

## Global Food Prices Dip to Fresh 2-Year Low in June

ROME (Dispatches) - World food prices in June fell to their lowest in more than two years, pushed down by a drop in the cost of sugar, vegetable oils, cereals and dairy products, the United Nations' food agency said on Friday.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) world price index, which tracks the most globally-traded food commodities, averaged 122.3 points in June against a revised 124.0 for the previous month, the agency said on Friday.

The May reading was originally given as 124.3.

The June score marked the lowest since April 2021 and meant the index is now 23.4% below an all-time peak reached in March 2022 following the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In a separate report on cereals supply and demand, FAO forecast world cereal production this year at 2.819 billion tonnes, slightly up on last month's estimate and a 1.1% increase on 2022 levels.

FAO said the higher forecast was almost entirely driven by better prospects for global wheat production, with the forecast lifted by 0.9% to 783.3 million tons.

FAO's cereal price index dropped by 2.1% in June from the prior month, with maize, barley, sorghum, wheat and rice prices all retreating. The vegetable oil price index fell 2.4% month-on-month, hitting its lowest level since November 2020, driven by lower world prices of palm and sunflower oils, which more than offset higher soy and rapeseed oil quotations.

The sugar price index fell 3.2% from May, marking its first decline after four consecutive monthly increases, mainly triggered by the good progress of the 2023/24 sugarcane harvest in Brazil and a sluggish global import demand, FAO said.

The dairy price index slipped 0.8% from May while the meat index was virtually unchanged.

## Saudi Arabia Hikes Most August Oil Prices to Asia After Supply Cuts

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Top oil exporter Saudi Arabia has raised the prices for most of its crude oil to Asian customers in August for a second month, after its announcement of prolonging an extra output cut on top of a broader OPEC+ deal.

Saudi Aramco hiked the official selling prices (OSP) for August-loading Arab Light

to Asia by 20 cents a barrel from July to \$3.20 a barrel over Oman/Dubai quotes, the state oil giant said in a statement.

The price increase was largely anticipated by the market, although some Asian refiners surveyed by Reuters before Saudi Arabia's pledge to extend the production cut were expecting a price cut of about 50 cents amidst poor refining margins and competition with crude from other regions.

Saudi Arabia on Monday announced it would draw out its 1 million barrels-per-day (bpd) voluntary cut to oil production to August and left the door open to extend the trim further.

The de facto leader of the OPEC+ group raised its July OSPs to Asia last month shortly after it unexpectedly vowed a 1 million bpd voluntary in July.

The more expensive Saudi oil would further weigh on the thin refining margins in Asia and prompt refiners to seek alternatives from other Middle Eastern suppliers or from regions such as the U.S. and West Africa, considering the spread between Brent- and Dubai-pegged oil has narrowed.

Arab Light has so far proved to be the least competitive grade for Asian refiners, according to a report from Renaissance Energy Advisors published on Tuesday, referring to the refining margins in Singapore.

Saudi Arabia kept the price for Extra Light crude to Asia unchanged in August at \$2.55 a barrel over Oman/Dubai quotes, but raised the OSPs for Arab Medium and Arab Heavy by 20 cents, mirroring more robust refining margins for fuel oil, the statement showed.

For other regions, the top oil exporter increased its August Arab Light OSP to northwest Europe by 80 cents to \$3.80 a barrel above ICE Brent.

Meanwhile, the OSP to the United States was also raised by 10 cents in August from the prior month at \$7.25 versus ASCI.

## Japan's Base Salaries Jump Most Since 1995

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's nominal base salary grew at the fastest pace in 28 years in May, government data showed on Friday, adding fuel to the debate over when the central bank will unwind its ultra-loose monetary stimulus.

Global financial markets have been closely watching Japan's wage data, as Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda regards pay growth as a key gauge to consider in deliberations about a shift in policy.

Regular wages rose 1.8% in May from a year before, labour ministry data showed, the biggest gain since February 1995. The strong base pay growth boosted worker's total cash earnings, or nominal wages, by 2.5% in May, after a revised 0.8% increase logged in April.

"If inflation stabilises around 2% and nominal wages accelerate to 3% to 3.5%, the condition could be set for the BOJ to dismantle monetary easing framework from the Kuroda era," said Hisashi Yamada, economist and Hosei University professor.

Japan's largest labour organisation Rengo said on Wednesday that major companies had agreed to average pay hikes of 3.58% this year, the highest since 3.9% in 1993.

The result of the spring labour talks, known as "shunto", will be increasingly seen in government wage statistics over the next few months, a labour ministry official said.

Still, real wages contracted 1.2% in May, the 14th consecutive month of year-on-year declines, as relentless consumer inflation outstrips nominal pay growth and squeezes households' buying power. Analysts say the real wages will remain in contraction for the rest of 2023.

Separate data on Friday showed Japanese household spending fell 4.0% in May from a year earlier, down for a third month and more than the median market forecast for a 2.4% decline. Spending on a variety of items from food to clothes to transportation were down, the data showed.



On a seasonally adjusted month-on-month basis, household spending was down 1.1%, versus an estimated 0.5% gain to mark a fourth month of decline.

"The effects of consumer price inflation are becoming more prevalent in the household spending, offsetting the boon to Japan's consumption from eased coronavirus restrictions," said Takumi Tsunoda, senior economist at Shinkin Central Bank Research Institute.

In an interview with the Nikkei newspaper published on Friday, BOJ's Deputy Governor Shinichi Uchida said the central bank must support the economy with easy policy.

Taro Saito, executive research fellow at NLI Research Institute, said next year's spring labour talks are expected to yield wage growth mostly equivalent to this year's, because of the longer-than-expected price inflation and labour shortage.

"But the biggest risk to the scenario is if the economy itself remains robust until next spring, given the wobbly global economic conditions," he said.

## Mexican Inflation Continues Downward Trend in June



MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Mexico's annual inflation rate decelerated in June for a fifth consecutive month to 5.06%, data from statistics agency INEGI showed, continuing a downward trend spurred by a long cycle of rate hikes.

Headline inflation came in slightly above a market forecast of 5.02%, but is now at its lowest since March 2021.

Consumer prices fell 0.10% in June from May, according to non-seasonally adjusted figures, against an expected drop of 0.09%.

The closely watched core price index, which strips out some volatile food and energy prices, rose 0.30% during the month.

Annual core inflation in May, considered a better gauge of price trends because it excludes some highly volatile items, was 6.89%, forecast had predicted 6.87%.

The Bank of Mexico's governing board said its benchmark interest rate is likely to remain on hold at 11.25% for an "extended period," minutes from the bank's last monetary policy meeting showed, as inflation remains "complex."

Mexico's central bank, also known as Banxico, unanimously held its benchmark interest rate steady at the meeting for a second time, after a nearly two-year rate-hike cycle in which it raised the rate by 725 basis points to combat inflation.

Banxico has been repeating the message that rates will need to remain on hold in order to bring inflation down to its 3% target, which most of the bank's five board members forecast will happen in the fourth quarter of 2024.

## U.S. Job Growth Slows in June; Unemployment Rate Falls to 3.6%

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. job growth slowed more than expected in June after surging in the prior month, but labor market conditions remain tight, with the unemployment rate retreating from a seven-month high and fairly strong wage gains continuing.

Nonfarm payrolls increased by 209,000 jobs last month, the Labor Department said in its closely watched employment report on Friday. Data for May was revised lower to show payrolls rising 306,000 instead of 339,000 as previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls rising 225,000. The economy needs to create 70,000-100,000 jobs per month to keep up with growth in the working-age population. The unemployment rate slipped to 3.6% from 3.7% in May.

Though job growth is slowing, the labor market remains unbowed despite the Federal Reserve delivering 500 basis points worth of rate hikes since March 2022 when it embarked on its fastest monetary policy tightening campaign in more than 40 years. For now, it is helping the economy to defy economists' predictions of a recession.

Average hourly earnings rose 0.4% last month after climbing by the same margin in May. In the 12 months through June, wages increased 4.4%, matching May's advance.

Annual wage growth remains too high to be consistent with the Fed's 2% inflation target. The U.S. central bank is almost certain to resume raising interest rates later this month as signaled by Fed Chair Jerome Powell, after pausing in June.

While the higher paying industries like technology and finance are purging workers, sectors like leisure and hospitality as well local government education are still catching up after losing employees and experiencing accelerated retirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Companies are also hoarding workers, a legacy of the dire labor shortages experienced as the economy rebounded from the COVID-19 downturn in 2021 and early 2022.

But some economists argued that worker hoarding was masking weakness in the economy, pointing to worker productivity, which slumped in the first quarter. They also noted that while gross domestic product, the traditional measure of economic growth, was solid in the January-March quarter, an alternative gauge, gross domestic income, has contracted for two straight quarters.

Though businesses are content for now to continue hoarding workers, that could change once slowing consumer spending starts to erode profits, the economists said, predicting major layoffs. There are also concerns that the slowdown in wage growth, driven by the loss of high-paying technology and finance jobs among others, portends slower consumer spending, the main anchor of the economy.





## Iran Exports to Algeria Grown by 109%

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's exports to Algeria have experienced a remarkable surge of 109%, according to Ruhollah Latifi, the deputy representative of the Iran and African Continent Merchants Club.

Latifi revealed that during this spring, Iran exported over \$1.134 million worth of non-oil goods to Algeria, marking a substantial increase compared to the previous year's spring.

Highlighting the top five destinations for Iran's non-oil exports to Africa this season, Latifi mentioned Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, Somalia, and Kenya.

According to Latifi, South Africa, Tanzania, Ghana, Congo, and Kenya were the leading African countries exporting goods to Iran during the same period.



## Caught Between Riots and Debt Crises, African State Cut Fuel Subsidies

PARIS (Dispatches) - Abdoulaye Diallo is paying over 50% more to fill up his "thiak-thiak" motorbike taxi in Keur Mbaye Fall, a suburb of Senegal's capital Dakar, than he was before the government began lifting fuel subsidies in January.

Diallo, 25, is already navigating punishing inflation and deadly political riots, but his biggest problem is he cannot pass on the cost of filling his fuel tank, which has risen to 3,500 CFA (\$5.82), from 2,000 CFA last year.

"The customers...don't realize how difficult it is," Diallo said. "That's the kind of thing we need to protest against."

Senegal, like Nigeria and Angola, is removing costly fossil fuel subsidies – a move once considered politically unthinkable but which has become a necessity due to crushing debt, a spike in borrowing costs, and high fuel prices.

Global spending on fossil fuel consumption subsidies doubled to a record \$1 trillion last year as the war in Ukraine sent oil prices skyrocketing, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Senegal's fuel and electricity support gobbled up 4% of GDP last year, while Nigeria spent \$10 billion capping the price of petrol. Angola spent 1.9 trillion kwanza (\$2.3 billion) in 2022, which is over 40% of what the IMF estimated it spent on social programs.

"The cost is too high for us to continue to pay," said Stanley Achonu, Nigeria director of the ONE Campaign, which advocates for sustainable debt and an end to poverty.

Nearly every country on earth has some fossil fuel subsidies, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Costs ballooned when governments stepped in to shield citizens from punishingly high energy bills after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Goolam Ballim, chief economist with Standard Bank in Johannesburg, said African countries were removing them "out of sheer necessity" because of the toxic combination of rising borrowing costs and already large debt piles.

A borrowing spree during the last decade of low-interest rates saw debt-to-GDP ratios in many African nations double or triple; ONE Campaign figures show that debt to GDP across Africa roughly doubled to 24% in the past decade.

Now, high costs have effectively locked many out of international bond markets. China, the lifeline lender to some African nations, has also tightened its purse strings.

After COVID-19 battered economic growth and the war in Ukraine boosted fuel and food prices, African countries had no "powder in the keg" to fund subsidies and kick-start economic recoveries.

"Credit spreads for African countries have surged," said Ballim, indicating rising borrowing costs. "They're about three times that of the average of emerging markets."

According to the World Bank, almost half of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa are in or at high risk of debt distress.

For people like Diallo, the timing is tough. Inflation in Senegal hit a record 14.1% last year, though it has since slowed, while in Nigeria it remains above 22%, its highest in decades. Angola's double-digit inflation is likely to stay high due to the weakening kwanza.

In Angola, gasoline prices nearly doubled to 300 kwanza (\$0.3645) per liter last month, prompting deadly protests, while Nigeria abandoned its last effort to cut subsidies in 2012 after crippling strikes.

But David Amaglobeli, deputy division chief in the IMF's fiscal affairs department, said tough times should not stop subsidy removal.



"This money could be used or could be put to more productive use," he said, adding that wealthier people disproportionately benefited from price caps while printing money at the central bank to pay for them boosts inflation.

Widespread smuggling, which has "virtually disappeared" since Nigeria lifted subsidies, also drained cash that states could use to boost economic growth for all citizens, he said.

Zambia cut subsidies as part of its IMF bailout after a painful 2020 default. Subsidy spending fell from 2.4% of GDP in 2021 to 0.4% in 2022, enabling a proportional rise in funding for education, health and social protection. Supporting vulnerable households "more or less immediately" is essential, Amaglobeli said.

Gregoire Garsous, the senior policy analyst with the OECD, agreed.

"This is why we tend to think (subsidies) should be progressively phased out, and with policies that would replace them for those that would be hurt," he said.

Nigeria will get \$800 million from the World Bank to help support its poor, but Achonu said its registry of vulnerable citizens had only about 10 million people, compared with its over 130 million poor.

The World Bank estimates that subsidy removal, and scrapping foreign exchange controls, would save Nigeria some 21 trillion naira (\$27.49 billion) from 2023 to 2025.

Angola said it would phase its subsidy removal through 2025, and the savings would go towards cash transfers to poor citizens and to support agriculture, fishing and public transit.

Senegal will also slowly remove price supports through 2025, transfer cash to its poorest and continue carefully targeted subsidies for public transit. But those measures leave out urban taxis like Diallo's motorbike.

"Changing prices will be tough for us," Diallo said. "The authorities should take responsibility."

## Washington Determined to...

FROM PAGE 1

"The move is another example of the United States' destabilizing actions," he said, adding that sending such weapons will "indiscriminately contribute to more bloodshed and destruction."

Reports emerging earlier this week said that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was pushing the United States to provide Kiev with cluster munitions to use against Russian forces.

The Ukrainian government also called on the Biden administration to approve sending the globally-banned weapons to Kiev. The White House announced afterward that Washington would send Ukraine a cluster munitions package to help in its counteroffensive against Russia.

Expressing gratitude for the "much-needed" assistance, Zelensky said, "The expansion of Ukraine's defense capabilities will provide new tools for the de-occupation of our land and bringing peace closer."

Russia, on the other hand, vehemently condemned the US decision to provide Ukraine with advanced cluster munitions and insisted that "the current level of American provocations is really off scale, bringing humanity closer to a new world war."

Cluster bombs are banned under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), an international treaty that addresses the humanitarian consequences and unacceptable harm caused to civilians by cluster munitions through a categorical prohibition and a framework for action.

## 7th Development Plan...

FROM PAGE 1

The Zurbatiyah border crossing is a crucial entryway into Iraq, regularly receiving millions of pilgrims annually from neighboring countries, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The land border crossing at Zurbatiyah, situated in Wasit province, is crucial in connecting Iraq and Iran for transporting goods and passengers.

The Zurbatiyah border crossing is 150 kilometers from Baghdad, on the border adjacent to Mehran in the Ilam province.

## Ariane 5 Launches Final Mission as Europe Faces Space Gap



KOUROU (Dispatches) - Europe's Ariane 5 rocket blasted off from French Guiana for the final time, carrying two military communications satellites and leaving its nations with a vacuum in autonomous access to space for the first time in more than four decades.

The 53-metre-tall, three-stage launcher left the launch pad in the French spaceport of Kourou on its 117th and final mission at 7pm local time (2300 GMT/7am Malaysian time), deploying two satellites on schedule roughly 30 minutes later, according to a live webcast.

"Ariane 5 is now over, and Ariane 5 has perfectly finished its work," Arianespace CEO Stephane Israel said on the webcast.

The mission to send France's Syracuse 4B and Germany's Heinrich Hertz (H2Sat) satellites to geostationary orbit caps 27 years of service for Ariane 5, whose successor — Ariane 6 — has been hit by technical delays until 2024 for operational use.

Europe until recently depended on Ariane 5 and its 11-tonne-plus capacity for heavy missions, as well as Russia's Soyuz launcher for medium payloads and Italy's Vega for small ones.

But Moscow last year withdrew access to Soyuz amid tensions over Ukraine and the upgraded Vega C remains grounded after the failure of its second launch in December, sparking what the head of the European Space Agency has termed a space launch "crisis."

The CEO of Airbus, which co-owns manufacturer ArianeGroup with France's Safran, said in June the gap highlighted Europe's "vulnerability" in space. "All pressure is now on Ariane 6," Guillaume Faury told the Paris Air Forum.

The first test launch of Ariane 6 is expected at the end of the year depending on tests to be carried out in the summer, with the first commercial operation planned for next year.

## Stress Levels Are Higher in India Since Covid-19 Pandemic

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The pandemic has evidently had an impact on mental health, at least in the short term. But it's more complicated to determine whether the phenomenon is affecting all populations worldwide, and whether its effects can take hold over a longer period. According to a new report, India has been hit hard, with an increase in headaches directly linked to stress levels, which have themselves been rising since the start of the pandemic.

Often regarded as one of the major public health issues of our time, along with sedentary lifestyles, the deterioration of mental health is such that in 2022, the World Health Organisation (WHO) called on "mental health decision makers and advocates to step up commitment and action to change attitudes, actions and approaches to mental health, its determinants and mental health care." In the same report, the global health authority recalls that, in 2019, ie, before the pandemic, nearly a billion people were living with a mental disorder, including 14 per cent of adolescents, and that depression and anxiety levels jumped by more than 25 per cent in the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic alone.

A new report conducted by HANSA Research for Saridon, a drug brand from Bayer's Consumer Health division in India, reveals that the world's most populous country has not escaped this worrying trend — quite the contrary. Over 5,310 people aged between 22 and 45 from 20 cities were interviewed for the study, which reports that 93 per cent of respondents who experienced headaches reported a significant increase in headaches, linked



to elevated stress levels. This finding should be viewed in the context of another figure: one in three people surveyed considered themselves to be more stressed post pandemic, although the causes cited by the panel were not (all) directly linked to health issues.

Among the stress factors cited by those surveyed, financial problems and work pressure top the list, for both working and non-working people. Next come health problems and family conflicts, which were also stress factors for the survey panel. "The findings highlight the need for effective stress management strategies in a post-pandemic world," the researchers explain in a news release. Stress levels have increased by 12 per cent and 13 per cent in the 26-35 and 36-45 age groups respectively, compared to the pre-pandemic period, and the 26-35 age group is considered the most stressed generation (87 per cent).

While stress leads to an increase in headaches, it can also affect attention. Nearly 40 per cent of respondents say, for example, that they find it more difficult to concentrate fully on day-to-day tasks, and almost half say that a reduction in workload — whether linked to professional responsibilities or household chores — would help remedy this problem.

Among the report's other findings, the researchers note that Mumbai is considered the country's "headache capital." In any case, it is the one and only major city (tier 1 city) where the incidence of headaches exceeds 90 per cent, just ahead of Chennai (89 per cent). Tier 2 cities include Ahmedabad and Bhubaneswar, where no less than 99 per cent of residents claim to suffer from headaches. — ETX Studio

## ChatGPT's Explosive Growth Shows First Decline in Traffic Since Launch

LONDON (Dispatches) - ChatGPT, the wildly popular AI chatbot launched in November, saw monthly traffic to its website and unique visitors decline for the first time ever in June, according to analytics firm Similarweb.

Worldwide desktop and mobile traffic to the ChatGPT website decreased by 9.7% in June from May, while unique visitors to ChatGPT's website dropped 5.7%. The amount of time visitors spent on the website was also down 8.5%, the data shows.

Decreasing traffic is a sign of the chatbot's novelty wearing off, said Similarweb's Senior Insights Manager David Carr, while RBC Capital Markets analyst Rishi Jaluria explained the data points to more demand for generative AI with real-time information.

OpenAI did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

ChatGPT set off a frenzied use of generative AI in daily tasks from writing to coding and reached 100 million monthly active users in January, two months after its launch.

It is the fastest-growing consumer application ever, and now boasts over 1.5 billion monthly visits, one of

the top 20 websites in the world. For instance, ChatGPT has far surpassed Bing, the search engine run by Microsoft (MSFT.O) which uses OpenAI's technology.

A few ChatGPT competitors, including Google's Bard chatbot, have been launched in the past few months. Microsoft's search engine Bing also provides chatbot powered by OpenAI to users for free.

"I think there are growing pains when you go from zero to 100 million users that quickly. The extraordinarily heavy infrastructure would result in less accuracy. It's a combination of having to change what the model is trained on and having to deal with the potential implications of regulation," said Sarah Hindlian-Bowler, head of Technology Research Americas at Macquarie.

OpenAI also released the ChatGPT app on the iOS system in May, which could sap some traffic from its website. Some also tie the usage change to the summer break for schools, as fewer students look for help with homework.

The chatbot was downloaded more than 17 million on iOS globally as of July 4, according to data.ai.

The analytics firm said downloads peaked on May 31 and has remained popular in the U.S., averaging 530,000 downloads per week in its first six full weeks of availability.

The recent slowdown in growth might help control the cost in running ChatGPT, which requires intensive computing power to answer queries. Sam Altman, chief executive at OpenAI, has described the cost of running the services "eye-watering".

ChatGPT is free to use but also provides a premium subscription, where users can pay \$20 a month to access OpenAI's more advanced model, GPT-4. Some 1.5 million people have signed up for the subscription in the U.S., according to the latest estimates from YipitData.

OpenAI has projected \$200 million in revenue this year. Besides ChatGPT, it makes money by selling API access to its AI models for developers and enterprises directly and through a partnership with Microsoft, which invested over \$10 billion into the company.



## Van der Sar's Condition Still Concerning

**THE HAGUE (Dispatches)** - Former Netherlands goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar remained in hospital after a brain haemorrhage and his condition is stable but still of concern, his ex-club Ajax said.

The 52-year-old, who played for Amsterdam's Ajax and then Manchester United, was on holiday on a Croatian island when he fell ill. "Edwin van der Sar will remain in intensive care for the time being. His condition is stable but still concerning," Ajax said in a statement, adding that it was sharing the update on behalf of his wife Annemarie.

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## Inter Miami Announce

### "The Unveil" Ahead of Messi Arrival

**MIAMI (Dispatches)** - Lionel Messi's next club, Inter Miami, announced yesterday it will hold a presentation event, called 'The Unveil', on July 16 at its home stadium.

Argentine seven-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi said last month that he was moving to the Major League Soccer club after allowing his contract at Paris Saint-Germain to run out. "The major unveiling event will include exciting entertainment, speeches on the pitch and more," the club said in a press release, which did not mention Messi by name.

# Medvedev Survives Fucsovics Onslaught To Reach Last 16

**LONDON (Dispatches)** - Daniil Medvedev has been making up for lost time as he downed Hungary's Marton Fucsovics 4-6 6-3 6-4 6-4 to match his best ever showing at Wimbledon by reaching the fourth round.

A year after being banned from playing at the All England Club following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Moscow-born Medvedev survived a wayward opening set to topple an opponent who had won their only previous meeting at a major.

When the 67th-ranked Fucsovics gave Medvedev the runaround in the opening set, with the Russian misfiring his returns time and again, visions of his 2020 Roland Garros first round win over the third seed must have flashed through his mind.

But Medvedev trampled on those dreams in the fourth game of the second set, when he broke Fucsovics to love after the Hungarian double-faulted to surrender his serve.

Playing under a closed Court One roof as the rain came down on a leafy southwest London, both players entertained the crowd with some acrobatic shot-making.

Fucsovics would have made Boris Becker proud with a couple of his diving volley winners and slam-dunk smashes, while Medvedev hit a stupendous crosscourt winner on the run after chasing down a drop shot from well behind the baseline.

Once Medvedev had taken a two-sets-to-one lead by banging down an unreturnable serve, Fucsovics needed an injury time out to get his right ankle manipulated and strapped up by the trainer.

He got back on his feet and even earned a break point in the eighth game of the fourth set. But once he missed his chance to make it 4-4, his game quickly unravelled and Medvedev reached the last 16 of a major for the first time this year by firing down an unreturnable serve.

Meanwhile two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova stayed on track for a third title by beating Serbian qualifier Natalija Stevanovic 6-3, 7-5.

The Czech former world number two has pedigree on grass but has only made it past the third round once since she claimed her second title at the All England Club in 2014.

The ninth seed, who warmed up for



Wimbledon by winning the WTA tournament on grass in Berlin last month, swapped early breaks with Stevanovic but broke again to love in the sixth game, which proved decisive.

Both players were vulnerable on serve in the second set and were locked at 4-4 after a fourth break.

World number 225 Stevanovic held to edge ahead 5-4 before rain swept across the courts, forcing a lengthy delay.

When they returned, Kvitova won 10 consecutive points but she struggled to close the deal against stubborn Stevanovic before finally sealing the victory on her fourth match point.

"I love playing on grass, for sure," said Kvitova. "When my serve is working I love it even more."

Beatriz Haddad Maia moved into the fourth round of Wimbledon for the first time in her career with an emphatic 6-2 6-2 victory over Sorana Cirstea today, a minute before play was suspended due to rain.

Haddad Maia, who became the first Brazilian woman to reach the top 10 in the WTA rankings after her semi-final run at Roland Garros a month ago, shot out of the blocks on a cloudy morning to convert two early breaks and take a 3-0 lead.

Cirstea could be heard urging herself to "Fight, fight, fight," and although she fought back with a break of her own, Haddad Maia attacked the Romanian's weaker second serve to break once again and serve out the opening set.

Unable to match the power of the taller Haddad Maia on long rallies, a frustrated Cirstea had animated conversations with her coach between games as she sought answers but found few solutions as the Brazilian went 4-0 up in the second set.

Backed into a corner, the 33-year-old Romanian finally got on the board in the second set when she induced a rare unforced error off Haddad Maia's forehand before serving to stay in the match.

## Pedersen Sad For Legend Cavendish After Tour de France Crash

**LI MOGES (Dispatches)** - Mark Cavendish crashed out of the Tour de France on Saturday ending his quest to break the all-time record of stage wins as Denmark's Mads Pedersen won a sprint for the eighth stage.

Cavendish was taken away in an ambulance as Pedersen won a bunched sprint ahead of Belgian duo Jasper Philipsen and Wout van Aert.

Former world champion Pedersen was swift to hail Cavendish who had been bidding to overtake the record of 34 stage wins he shares with Belgian great Eddy Merckx.

"It's sad a legend like him ends his Tour like that," said the former world champion.

Sprint specialist Cavendish, 38, was forced to exit after suffering a suspected broken collarbone in a fall about 60km from the finish line.

The Astana rider remained on the road for a couple of minutes rolling in agony every time he reached towards his right shoulder.

Cavendish was ashen-faced as doctors closed the ambulance door with organisers later confirming his withdrawal.

In the overall standings Jonas Vingegaard kept the leader's yellow jersey 25 seconds ahead of Tadej Pogacar a day ahead of an expected duel between the duo on the slopes of the Puy de Dome volcano.

"It was really sad indeed to hear that news," said defending champion Vingegaard of Cavendish's exit.

## Wembanyama Gets Reality Check in NBA Summer League Debut

**NEW YORK (Dispatches)** - NBA top draft pick Victor Wembanyama delivered a lacklustre performance in his long-awaited San Antonio debut, struggling for long stretches as the Spurs defeated Charlotte 76-68 in an NBA Summer League contest.

The 19-year-old French prodigy, who stands 7-foot-4 (2.24m), knows he has a lot to learn to live up to his hype as the NBA's best prospect since LeBron James some 20 years ago.

Wembanyama made only 2-of-13 shots from the floor, just 1-of-6 from 3-point range, and finished with nine points, eight rebounds, five blocked shots and three assists in just over 27 minutes on the court.

"Honestly, I really didn't know what I was doing on the court tonight," Wembanyama said. "But I'm trying to learn for the next games and the important (thing) is to be ready for the season."

After his first taste of on-court life in the NBA, coming against his fellow young talents and newcomers, Wembanyama learned he needs to move faster and react better when plays are called.

"The hardest for me was understanding - sometimes I was off with reading the plays and the calls," he said.

"The biggest improvement I've got to do, it's being ready to react to the plays that were called by the point guard. Stay connected."

A sellout crowd of 17,500 spectators jammed the Thomas & Mack Arena to watch Wembanyama wear a Spurs jersey for the first time.

"Special moment, really special, to wear that jersey for the first time. It's really an honour," Wembanyama said. "Overall, I'm glad we won this game. There's no better way to start for a premiere."

His five blocked shots were the most by a Spurs player in a Summer League game since 2018, a sign his NBA education is already paying some dividends.

"Going to get acclimated to the NBA style of play," he said. "Next time I'm going to do better. I hope to do better every time."

"I'm trying to learn as much as I can as quickly as possible to be ready for the start of the season."

## Mbappe Calls PSG Divisive Team as Contract Standoff Drags On



**PARIS (Dispatches)** - Kylian Mbappe has described his club Paris St Germain as a "divisive team", amid a contract standoff between the player and the French Ligue 1 champions.

Relations between PSG and Mbappe soured last month after the French forward said he would not renew his contract which expires at the end of next season, meaning he can leave for free in June 2024.

If he runs down his contract PSG would be unable to recoup any of the 180 million euros (\$197 million) they spent to sign him. PSG President Nasser Al-Khelaifi has said they will not let him go for free.

Mbappe, Ligue 1's top scorer in the last five seasons, has been linked with a move to Real Madrid.

"I think that playing for PSG doesn't help much because it's a divisive team, a divisive club," he said in an interview with France Football magazine. He did not elaborate.

PSG representatives did not immediately reply when contacted by Reuters for comment on Saturday.

PSG have won nine of the last 11 Ligue 1 titles but Mbappe's frustration lies with their performances in the Champions League -- a trophy the Parisian club have never won despite all their investment in the squad.

PSG went out in the last 16 this year when they were beaten by Bayern Munich, failing to score in both legs. Mbappe was injured for the first leg and said they were "helpless" in the second.

Mbappe said he was the "most decisive player" in the group stage but could not explain what PSG were missing with the club hitting a "glass ceiling" in Europe.

"We did what we could, period. You have to talk to the people who make the team, who organise the squad, who build this club," he added.

## David de Gea Leaves Man Utd After 12 Years

**MANCHESTER (Dispatches)** - David de Gea announced his exit from Manchester United after 12 years as the club's number one goalkeeper.

The Spaniard last season overtook Peter Schmeichel to record the most clean sheets in the club's history and was crowned players' and fans' player of the year four times.

But a string of high-profile errors towards the end of the campaign drew criticism and the 32-year-old struggled to adapt to manager Erik ten Hag's preferred style of playing out from the back.

In a message on social media, De Gea thanked United fans for their support, but said: "Now, it's the right time to undertake a new challenge, to push myself again in new surroundings."

"Manchester will always be in my heart, Manchester has shaped me and will never leave me." De Gea's deal expired at the end of June, with reports the player had agreed a contract extension only for the club to withdraw that offer and come back with reduced terms.



## Pochettino Ready To Risk Reputation At Chelsea

**LONDON (Dispatches)** - Mauricio Pochettino is ready to "risk" his reputation at troubled Chelsea, but the new Blues boss won't be bolstered by a reunion with Harry Kane.

Kane has been linked with a move away from Pochettino's former club Tottenham and a switch to Stamford Bridge could have suited both parties.

Pochettino needs a top-class striker to improve on the club's dismal goal-scoring record last season and England captain Kane fits the bill perfectly.

Tottenham's record goalscorer, who rose to prominence under Pochettino, is keen to leave the north Londoners after failing in his bid to engineer a transfer to Manchester City two years ago.

Linked with Bayern Munich and Manchester United, Kane's Tottenham contract expires next year, increasing the urgency to resolve his future.

However, Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy might see the prospect of selling Kane to a London club, and one managed by the man he sacked in 2019, as a bridge too far.

