

**TEDPIX, the Main Index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Dropped 17,829 Points to 2.158m on Monday, As Per Report, Over 8.491b Securities Worth 57.228 Trillion Rials (About \$137m) Were Traded at the TSE**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iranian Vice President in Women Affairs, Ansieh Khazali Says the United States Is the Primary Violator of Women's Rights as Washington Conceals Many of Its Problems While claiming to Defend Human Rights**

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## Iran Awards Contract for Gas Field Shared With Qatar

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's state-run Petropars company has awarded a contract for construction of large platform that will be installed at Belal gas field in the Persian Gulf near the maritime border with Qatar.

In a ceremony on Sunday, the Iranian Offshore Engineering and Construction Company (IOEC) won the contract to build the drilling rig.

The IOEC is supposed to build the 4-storey, 2,300-ton platform in the next 32 months, according to a report from the Iranian Oil Ministry.

The report said that Iran Marine Industrial Company, the largest shipbuilding yard in the country, has also been commissioned to build the jackets of the large platform.

The Belal gas field is located near South Pars, the largest gas field in the world which is shared between Iran and Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

Iran seeks to extract 500 million cubic feet (14.15 million cubic meters) per day of gas and 15,000 barrels of condensates from eight wells in Belal once the platform is installed at the field.

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## Tehran Warns E3 Over Any More Sanctions



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani says that the Islamic Republic of Iran will respond to any sanctions imposed by the West reciprocally and properly.

Considering the unilateral sanctions imposed by the U.S. and its allies on Iran as a violation of human rights, the senior Iranian diplomat in his weekly press conference on Monday slammed the irresponsibility of Washington and the three European parties to the JCPOA.

Criticizing the U.S. for illegally withdrawing from JCPOA, Kanaani cited that the European governments (Germany, France, UK) also avoided fulfilling their obligations within the framework of the deal, and despite the promises they made, they could not make up for the U.S.'s move.

European governments are just as responsible as the United States in fulfilling their obligations and should be held accountable for failing to do so, he added.

He went on to say that Tehran does not accept the allegations raised against it by the West, stressing that such actions are unconstructive and will not lead anywhere.

Calling on the European parties to JCPOA to adhere to their commitments, the foreign ministry spokesman said that any new sanctions based on baseless claims are completely rejected and Iran reserves its right to respond to any irresponsible action in a timely manner.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the senior Iranian diplomat referred to the status of relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, saying that the two countries have agreed to move on from the unfortunate issue related to the embassy attack in the framework of bilateral talks and return the relations to the right track.

He added that the Iranian foreign minister held positive talks with his Azeri counterpart during his recent visit to Baku. "Now we are witnessing a very positive atmosphere and the result of the talks with additional practical steps can be the basis for the resumption of the activities of the Azerbaijan embassy (in Tehran)," Kanaani emphasized.

He went on to say that Iran is aware of its responsibilities regarding the security of diplomatic places and acts responsibly, and an unexpected event is not a criterion for determining the security of embassies.

Azerbaijan's embassy in Tehran suspended its work in late January, days after an assailant entered Azerbaijan's embassy in Tehran holding a firearm and started shooting. The head of the security service of the embassy was killed and two embassy guards were wounded in the attack. The gunman, identified as Yasin Hosseinzadeh, claimed that his wife visited Azerbaijan's embassy in April 2022 and never returned, leaving him frustrated.

Referring to the meeting of Iran's top diplomat Hossein Amir-Abdollahian with his Sudanese counterpart after several years in Baku, Kan'ani said that the Sudanese side has expressed its readiness to resume official relations with Iran. "The relations between the two countries will benefit the Islamic world," he continued.

Answering a question regarding the Arash gas field and the denial of Iran's rights by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the senior Iranian diplomat said that Iran is holding bilateral talks with Kuwaiti officials regarding the issue.

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

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

Regarding the issue of sending Iran's envoy to Libya, Kanaani said that the activity of the Iranian embassy in Libya has started and Tehran will continue to strengthen its relations with Tripoli.

The Libyan envoy to Tehran also submitted his credentials to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, he said, adding that the Iranian diplomatic delegation has settled in the embassy and held bilateral meetings with the officials of the Libyan Foreign Ministry.

Kanaani further stressed that diplomatic efforts are continuing regarding the issue of exchanging prisoners with the United States.

The exchange of messages regarding the nuclear deal is also ongoing through mediators, according to him.

He also rejected the claims raised by the Zionist media regarding the holding of talks between Iran and the Israeli regime over prisoner swap and called the claims baseless.

## Kenya's Earnings From Tea Exports to Iran Rise Eightfold

NAIROBI (Dispatches) - Kenya's earnings from tea exports to Iran jumped eight times in the first quarter of 2023, partly soothing the impact of lower sales of the beverage to the Asian country's neighbour Pakistan.

Kenya exports about 50 per cent of its tea to Karachi but lower demand from tea buyers in that country saw Kenya's earnings from tea sales to Pakistan drop to Sh14 billion during the quarter, down from Sh16.9 billion in the same quarter in 2022.

Kenya, however, ramped up sales of the beverage to Iran during the period, which partly helped reduce the blow from lower tea sales to Pakistan.

Nairobi sold tea worth Sh4 billion to Tehran between January and March, which is an eightfold increase from sales amounting to Sh498.8 million in the same quarter last year, according to fresh data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS).

This partly helped to boost earnings from all exports to Asia which increased from Sh53 billion in the first quarter of 2022 to Sh58.2 billion in the first quarter of 2023, translating to a 9.8 per cent growth, said KNBS.

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## ViewPoint 10 Kilometers of Romance Harvested

Sometimes some actions cause hidden norms in the belief of the society to flaunt and to become symbol of a romance which is sustainable and lasting in the nature of the society but it has not put the valuable signs of unity on display in the form of an unconnected and disintegrated ocean.

The 10-kilometer feast of Eid al-Ghadir was of this type of phenomena. It is crystal clear that Shiites and Sunnis are well aware of this auspicious truth that Ghadir is an important event in the history of Islam when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), on way back from his last Hajj ceremony of his life known as Farewell Pilgrimage and following the Divine order, appointed Hazrat Ali (AS) as his successor. This appointment happened on Dhul Hijjah 18 in the 10th year of hijri (632) and at a region called Ghadir Khum.

The Ghadir event in the Holy Quran has been mentioned as the day of "the perfection and blessing of religion". The word Ghadir means pool and collected rainwater. And Ghadir Khum was a location which was 5 kilometers off Al-Juhfa Miqat (Miqat means the boundary where it becomes necessary for pilgrims to intend the Ihram habiliments and prohibited to pass except the state of Ihram) that in those days was in the form of a big pond. Al-Juhfa was a big village and a strategic trijunction where routes intersected from Mecca, Medina and famous Levant Miqat whose original name was Mahie because once it was completely washed out by the flood before the advent of Islam when the Bani Ebil people were located there.

In Juhfa, the road of Medina, Egypt and Iraq was separated. Currently the remains of an old building in the form of a castle or fortress are there and it is known as Upper Palace or Azur Palace and its distance from Juhfa Miqat at the present time, considering the road and expressway construction, is around 5 kilometers.

According to what the late author Seyyed Mohammad Baqer Najafi has written in his article "Geographical Position of Ghadir Khum", Ghadir Khum is besides Upper Palace but according to the research of Allama Sheik Abd al-Hadi al-Fadl, Ghadir Khum was around 8 kilometers off Juhfa Miqat and this difference due to the progresses and developments is justifiable.

Maybe choosing this place on the Ghadir Khum event by the Prophet (PBUH) was because of geographical reason because pilgrims intersected their routes to Egypt, Iraq and Medina from this point and it shows us well that the Prophet (PBUH), upon the order of Almighty God, has chosen this area because more people can be aware of this appointment and considered this information as a base for promoting commitment to velayat-orientation (Guardianship) in Shiism.

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## U.S., Iran in Indirect Talks On Prisoner Swap Deal

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States and Iran are in indirect negotiations to secure a possible prisoner exchange, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said.

"We have had contacts with Iran indirectly. There are no direct negotiations over the nuclear file or detainees. We have had those indirect conversations on detainees because it's our obligation to try to bring U.S. citizens home," he told reporters.

"So we talk to any government any way we can, like we do with the Russian government on the unjustly detained Americans there, in an effort to find a solution to get our people home," Sullivan added.

In recent years, Iran has arrested dozens of dual nationals and foreigners, mostly on espionage and security-related charges. Rights groups have accused Iran of taking prisoners to gain diplomatic leverage, while Western powers have long demanded that Tehran free their citizens, who they say are political prisoners. Tehran denies holding people for political reasons.

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## Political Objectives Behind Taking Iran to ICJ Over Flight Case

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has said Canada, Sweden, Ukraine, and Britain have failed to live by their own stated commitment to resolving the row over the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane in 2020 through diplomatic channels by referring the case to the World Court.

In a statement on Sunday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry stressed that the four Western countries were pursuing their "political objectives and interests" by taking legal action at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Iran.

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## President Felicitates Mirziyoyev Upon Re-Election

TEHRAN (MNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi extended congratulations to his Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev upon being re-elected. The Iranian president also expressed hope that the relations between Iran and Uzbekistan will expand further in line with the mutual interests of the two nations, as well as regional and international peace and security. Shavkat Mirziyoyev was re-elected with 87.1% of the vote on Sunday, the Central Election Commission said on Monday, citing preliminary results. Mirziyoyev, who has led Central Asia's most populous nation since 2016, called a snap election after changing the constitution through a referendum which reset his term count and extended the presidential term to seven years from five, Reuters reported.

## Iran Ready to Meet Iraq's Pharmaceutical, Medical Needs

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The first vice president Mohammad Mokhber has expressed Iran's readiness to provide Iraq with medical products, noting that joint cooperation between the two neighboring countries can turn them into a "pioneer" in the pharmaceutical export market.

In a meeting with Iraqi Health Minister Salih al-Hasnawi in Tehran, Mokhber underlined the need for expanding ties between the Iranian and Iraqi health ministries in various areas. "The Iranian companies that produce medicines and advanced medical items are ready to meet Iraq's medical and pharmaceutical needs," he said.

"Through joint cooperation, Iran and Iraq can set up a pharmaceutical production line and export medicines to the Islamic countries as a pioneer in the region."

He said while Tehran-Baghdad relations are positive and developing in political, economic, and cultural fields, they need to strengthen bilateral ties.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported Iraq's stability, security, independence, territorial integrity and authority, as well as its regional and international status," he added.

Hasnawi, for his part, said that the major priority of the Iraqi government is to consolidate bilateral relations with the Islamic Republic.

An Iraqi company has signed a contract with Iran to produce medicines in the Arab country, he pointed out, voicing Baghdad's preparedness to provide the ground for Iranian factories and pharmaceutical companies to operate in Iraq.



On Saturday, Hasnawi met with his Iranian counterpart, Bahram Einollahi, in Tehran, where the latter emphasized that health diplomacy with Iraq should be promoted by the formation of special working groups.

In another meeting in Tehran, Hasnawi held talks with Iran's Deputy Minister of Health and Medical Education Saeed Karimi.

The Iranian official announced that 247 medical centers in the country comply with the standards required for admitting foreign patients.

The figure, he explained, includes 226 hospitals, 18 daycare centers providing outpatient care that does not require overnight stay, and 3 dental facilities.

Karimi further said that last year more than one million foreign patients were admitted to Iranian hospitals, mostly from Afghanistan and Iraq, followed by Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Oman, Armenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, and Bahrain.

So far, he said, patients from 164 countries have traveled to Iran to receive medical services in infertility treatment, obstetrics, and gynecology diseases, ophthalmology and orthopedics, as well as plastic vascular and urology surgeries.

## Iran Says Will Never Give Up Pursuing Terrorists

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi says the country's intelligence and security apparatus will never abandon pursuing terrorist groups even beyond the borders.

Vahidi said security forces in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, gave a harsh response to the terrorists during a deadly attack against a police station on Saturday that led to the killing of four armed terrorists and two police officers.

"What happened [in Zahedan] yesterday was a terrorist incident and in fact these men entered [the police station] as ordinary people and then carried out a terrorist act," the interior minister said.

Vahidi urged the neighboring country of Pakistan to toughen its border control measures.

Police Chief of Sistan and Baluchestan Doustali Jalilian said on Saturday that the armed terrorists had tried to gain entry into the central area of police station Number 16 of Zahedan while disguising themselves as clients.

"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.

## Iran Unveils Electronic Navigation System

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Geographical Organization of the Armed Forces of Iran unveiled a homegrown Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS).

The Iranian ECDIS has been developed by experts at the Geographical Organization, an agency affiliated with the Ministry of Defense.

The head of the organization, General Fakhri, said the homegrown system can be mounted on military and civilian vessels.

Known as a primary means of electronic navigation, the ECDIS is a development in the navigational chart system used in naval vessels and ships.

It uses the electronic chart system to enable a ship's navigating crew to pinpoint locations and attain directions.

ECDIS enhances navigational safety and reduces the navigator's workload with its automatic capabilities such as route planning, route monitoring, automatic ETA (estimated time of arrival) computation and Electronic Navigational Chart (ENC) updating.

The ECDIS utilizes the feature of the Global Positioning System (GPS) to successfully pinpoint the navigational points.

## IRGC Arrests Suspects Behind Killing 2 Officers

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The perpetrators of killing two members of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) have been arrested by intelligence forces while they were illegally leaving the country through northwestern borders.

Iranian intelligence forces, in collaboration with the IRGC intelligence force, had arrested the suspects behind killing Sajjad Amiri and Mehdi Shah Maleki, according to a Sunday statement by the IRGC.

The main perpetrator in the assassination had operated a network in the Iranian provinces of West Azarbaijan, Kermanshah, Alborz, and Tehran, said the IRGC, adding that all elements involved in the case had been arrested.

The main suspect was identified and arrested as he was trying to leave the Iranian border city of Qotur in the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, said the statement.

Sajjad Amiri was martyred on June 11 and Mehdi Shah Maleki lost his life on June 13 in clashes in Iran's Kermanshah province.

## Majlis Speaker Calls for Investment In Science

TEHRAN (IP) - Majlis Speaker says that the country is in need of scientific investment concurrent the Second Phase of the Islamic Revolution.

The 14th Farabi International Award (FIA) closing ceremony was held in Tehran on Monday in the presence of Majlis Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf and Minister of Higher Education Mohammad-Ali Zolfigol.

Delivering a speech at the festival, Qalibaf noted: "There is a need to invest in the scientific field more than ever."

He said: "Our scientists and researchers solve challenges and problems, and by relying on the path of science, one can be put on the route to development."

Qalibaf stressed for the country to reach independence and progress, the production of power, knowledge, wealth, and dignity is a must.

He criticized some people's feeling of inferiority towards the West and attributed it to ignoring indigenous culture and knowledge in the country.

Qalibaf said: "As long as we do not pay due attention to the humanities in formulating development plans and achieve any theories which come out of our original culture, we will inevitably continue to follow the West, and we won't be an example in other sciences."

He put emphasis on the humanities as the knowledge framework which specified the roadmap for governance and criticized the lack of attention to the field in the country.

Highlighting the fact that Iran entered its second forty-year of the Islamic Revolution, he noted: "In order to realize a new governance, we need to rethink our humanities and Islamic sciences, otherwise we will either suffer from mismanagement or be caught in obsolete governance trap, the heavy burden of which will fall on the shoulders of the people."

The festival aims at introducing and honoring the best researchers in the field of humanities and Islamic studies.

## Japanese Charge d'Affaires Meets Iranian Presidential Advisor

TEHRAN (IP) - Chargé d'Affaires of Japan Embassy met with the Iranian President's Advisor for Social Rights and Freedoms.

Kenjo Murakami, Japan's Chargé d'Affaires, met on Sunday with Sakineh Sadatpaad, Advisor to Iran's President for social rights and freedom.

At the meeting, both sides expressed their agreement in prohibiting the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which includes biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, for both countries.

Sakineh Sadatpaad highlighted the devastating effects of nuclear and chemical attacks, both physically and psychologically, and expressed concern that the embargo on drugs for chemical attack victims is inhumane, as it causes further harm and suffering for those chemically harmed.

She pointed out that the sanctions on medicines have created obstacles to treating victims in Iran.

Japan's Murakami acknowledged the view of the Iranian side and stressed the need for increased efforts and cooperation to prevent the recurrence of such tragic events.

Iran and Japan are both the victims of weapons of mass destruction.



## New Envoys to Bulgaria, Armenia and Kuwait Start Missions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's new ambassadors to Bulgaria, Armenia, and Kuwait have met with Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian to discuss their work plans as they officially start their respective missions.

During separate meetings, the ambassadors were tasked with advancing bilateral relations and forging closer cooperation across various sectors before embarking on their missions.

Alireza Irvash, Iran's newly appointed ambassador to Bulgaria, presented Amirabdollahian with his priority programs aimed at further developing relations between Tehran and Sofia.

Amirabdollahian also emphasized the importance of expanding relations between Iran and Eastern



European countries, particularly considering Bulgaria's strategic position as a gateway to the European Union.

Similarly, Mehdi Sobhani, the new ambassador to Armenia, held discussions with the foreign minister before commencing his mission. Amirabdollahian reiterated the Iranian government's policy of prioritizing

relations with neighboring countries.

Mohammad Toutouchi, Iran's new envoy to Kuwait, also met with Amirabdollahian on Sunday.

The ambassador presented an update on the current state of bilateral relations between Iran and Kuwait, while the foreign minister offered guidance on strengthening ties in all dimensions.

## FIA, Opportunity to Introduce Successful Scientists as Role Models

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Science, Research and Technology Minister said festivals like Farabi can be regarded as opportunities to introduce scientists and researchers as successful role models.

The 14th Farabi International Award (FIA) closing ceremony was held in Tehran on Monday, July 10, in the presence of the Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf and Minister of Science, Research, and Technology, Mohammad-Ali Zolfigol.

In a speech Zolfigol delivered at the ceremony, he said: "By studying history, we understand the strengths and weaknesses of the past. We can also improve the strengths and do not repeat the weaknesses and mistakes. We must strengthen our national identity."

Minister of Science, Research, and Technology stressed steps have been taken to internationalize Iranian scientific journals so that the world's scholar could publish their findings in them.

Zolfigol stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been honored to establish the Islamic World Science Citation Database (ISC) for the world's scientist to publish their works.

He put emphasis on indexing science as a necessity to prevent the waste of time and cost and open a way to gain experience easily.

He said that during the past 23 months, the ministry of science brought more than 40 Iranian journals under the international index, 11 of which are Persian journals.

Still, Zolfigol stressed the introduction of the Iranian scientists to strengthen the national identity and provide the young students and scholars with the hope to success through following the introduced role models.

## Iran, Syria Seek to Boost Energy Cooperation

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Iran's Deputy Minister of Oil for Engineering, Research, and Technology and Syria's Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources emphasized the continuous cooperation between Tehran and Damascus in oil and energy.

Syria and Iran's relationships after the defeat of the ISIS terrorist group have expanded, with clear prospects for developing their relations in all fields.

Referring to bilateral relations, Vahid Reza Zeidifar, Iranian deputy oil minister, met with Firas Kaddour, Syria's Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources, in Damascus and announced Iran's support for

Syria in the fields of oil, gas, and mineral resources.

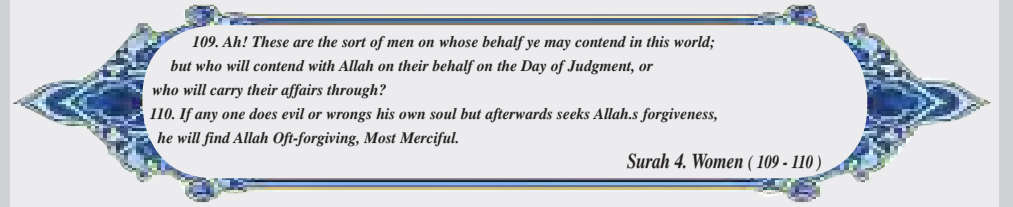
Zeidifar added that the Tehran-Damascus cooperation agreement, along with its implementation, is considered a turning point in the energy cooperation of the two countries, which tackles Syria's problems in the production and consumption of energy in industrial sectors.

Highlighting the importance of the agreement signed between the two countries in the oil sector, Kaddour considered education as another area of cooperation to enhance efficiency and productivity, knowledge, and skills for the oil and energy sector staff.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:09
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:43
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:14
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:57



## Iran Non-Oil Exports to Turkey Hit \$1.7b in Q1

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN-** Iran has exported non-oil commodities valued at \$1.7 billion to Turkey during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

As reported, Turkey was the third top export destination of Iranian non-oil goods in the mentioned three-month period.

Exporting non-oil commodities worth \$1.5 billion to the Islamic Republic, Turkey was also the third top source of Iran's import in the first quarter of the present year.

Based on the data previously released by the Turkish Statistical Institute, the value of Iran's exports to Turkey increased by 19 percent to reach \$3.35 billion in 2022.

Turkey had imported over \$2.82 billion worth of commodities from the Islamic Republic in 2021.

Based on the mentioned data, Iran's imports from the country also marked an 11-percent rise to hit \$3.07 billion in the past year, in comparison with 2021, when the figure was \$2.77 billion.

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, the trade between the two countries has registered a 15-percent rise in 2022 compared to 2021.

The value of trade between the two neighbors reached \$6.42 billion in 2022, while the figure stood at \$5.59 billion in the preceding year.

Iran's trade balance with Turkey has been \$280 million positive in favor of Iran in the past year.



Meanwhile according to the reports, the trade exchanges between Iran and Turkey in the first five months of 2023 were about \$2.2 billion, showing a 20 percent decline compared to the same period of last year.

According to the latest figures released by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), Iran's trade with this neighboring country hit \$2.190 billion from January to May 2023, registering a 20 percent slump compared to a year earlier.

The Institute put the value of trade exchanges between the two countries from January to May 2022 at \$2.740 billion.

According to this report, Turkey's export of products to Iran from January to May 2023 reached \$1.152 billion, recording a four percent decrease compared to last year's corresponding period.

Turkey had exported over \$1.204 billion worth of products to the Islamic Republic from January to May 2022.

Turkey's import of products from Iran registered a 32 percent decline and reached from \$1.536 billion in January to May 2022 to \$1.38 billion in the first five months of 2023.

## Acting Head of IDRO Appointed

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mr. Abbas Aliabadi in a decree appointed Babak Ahmadi as the acting Head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO).



According to this appointment, Ahmadi replaces former CEO of IDRO Mr. Nabavi.

Ahmadi was earlier the CEO of Locomotive Engineering and Manufacturing Company (MLC) of MAPNA group and he has also the record of deputy head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways.

## Cooperation between NICICO And Sharif University to Speed Up

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN Scientific and technological co-operations between Sharif University of Technology and National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) have been broadened and will be accelerated.



On Saturday and in a meeting between the CEO of NICICO Dr. Rostami and his entourage with the Chancellor of Sharif University of Technology and his deputies and members of scientific board of the university discussed issues focused on the Department of Materials Science and Engineering of the university.

After the university officials highlighted capabilities of the university especially its Department of Materials Science and Engineering for broadening cooperation with NICICO, Dr Rostami pointed to the plans and goals of the company in the field of developing and increasing production and explained products of NICICO.

Then after exchanging views it was decided such meetings to continue and the framework for cooperation between these two groups is prepared. At the end of the meeting, the CEO of NICICO and his entourage visited the laboratory of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering and materials science of the university.

## Iran Air to Increase Weekly Flights To Germany's Cologne Airport

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's National Flag Carrier, Iran Air, will launch its second weekly flight to Germany's Cologne airport on Tuesdays every week.

The increase in the number of Iran Air's flights on the flight route is to answer demands by Iranians.

The second scheduled weekly flight of Iran Air will be launched as of August 2023.

The flight bearing Number 729 will leave Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) for Cologne Airport in Germany at 00:45 a.m. on Tuesdays every week.

This flight will return on the same day at 7:00 a.m. from Cologne Airport to the Imam Khomeini International Airport. Iran Air's first flight was carried out from Tehran to Cologne Airport in 2003.

## Iran, China to Cooperate in Setting Up Technology Centers



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian and Chinese officials have called for cooperating in the field of knowledge-based companies, and establishing national technology centers.

Iran's Vice-President for Science, Technology and Knowledge-Based Economy Rouhollah Dehghani Firouzabadi made the remarks in Tehran on Sunday in a meeting with Deputy Secretary of China's Communist Party in autonomous Xinjiang Province Li Yifei and a group of scientific, technological, and economic figures from the Xinjiang province of China.

The Iranian official considered technology as one of the functional and effective fields for the development of Iran's cooperation with other states, noting that collaboration in the field of skilled and competent human resources can be one of the main areas of cooperation between China and Iran.

The Deputy Secretary of China's Communist Party, for his part, described Iran's motivation and support for the development of technological interactions between the two countries as precious and constructive.

The Chinese official went on to say that Iran has achieved proper achievements in industries, technologies and innovation, particularly in the field of health and improvement of people's lives, which are admirable and indicate Iran has been successful in coping with problems and limitations by the use of innovative solutions; so, the country has been capable of developing technologies and innovations.

Touching on herbal medicine as one of the common areas of cooperation between Iran and China, he noted that his country, like Iran, enjoys a very good capacity in the field of herbal medicine.

## 27 Coastal Towns to Be Constructed in 4 Southern Provinces

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Referring to the planning made for construction of 27 coastal towns in four southern provinces of the country, the Iranian deputy minister of roads and urban development said that constructing new towns is a main policy of the current administration.

Alireza Jafari made the remarks on Monday, adding, "Given the approaches taken and macro policies adopted for guiding population towards the southern part of the country, turning potential opportunities of sea-based economy, productive capacities of agriculture, employment capacities, energy and petrochemical management at Makran coastal areas, coasts of the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman have been emphasized."

He said these 27 coastal areas will be constructed in Khuzestan, Bushehr, Hormozgan and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Jafari pointed to the planning made for the construction of Khalij-e-Fars (Persian Gulf) New Town and added that the ground has been set for domestic investors to seize the opportunity for investing in the southern coastal area.

He put the current number of new towns in the country at 20 and added that four other new towns are under construction.

The construction operation of new towns based on Iranian-Islamic identity with a focus on smart building and use of modern technologies are among the main policies of the government, he went on to say.

## Iran Tax Receipts Up 41% y/y in June Quarter

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's tax revenues have increased by 41% year-on-year in the first three months of the current calendar year (March 21-June 21), according to a senior official with Iran's National Tax Administration (INTA).

Mojtaba Amiri, the director of INTA's Department for Planning and Statistics, told IRNA on Sunday that Iran's tax receipts hit 1,371.88 trillion rials (\$2.743 billion) in March-June period.

Amiri said that the figure was an increase of 41% compared to 975.54 trillion rials reported in last year's corresponding period.

He noted that the amount of taxes collected so far is 73% higher than targets set up in Iran's current year budget law.

The official said that direct taxes accounted for 72% of Iran's tax revenues in the June quarter, adding that the INTA's indirect tax receipts on goods and services had increased by 39% year on year over the same period.

Under the pressure of Western sanctions, Iran has a policy to cut its reliance on oil revenues and boost taxation as part of its economic diversification plans.

## FAO Designates Iran's Rainfed Fig Orchards as Agricultural Heritage System

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has formally designated a unique rainfed fig-growing region in Iran as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS), along with two other sites in Asia.

During a meeting of the GIAHS Scientific Advisory Group held in Valencia, Spain from July 4-7, the UN agency recognized the Estahban Rainfed Fig Orchards Heritage System in Iran's southern Fars province as a new GIAHS site in Asia.

The other two designated sites include an area near Tokyo known for its use of fallen leaves as compost for agriculture, and a system in western Japan that practices unique genetic preservation methods for breeding beef cattle.

GIAHS recognizes notable land use systems and landscapes full of life and biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, and valuable cultural heritages managed by farmers, herders, fisherfolk, and forest people.

The UN agency further underlined the importance of Asia's centuries-old agricultural practices in feeding the world's growing population and combating climate change and biodiversity loss.

Under the flagship program of FAO, the selection criteria stipulate that sites must be of global importance, have value as a public good, supporting food and livelihood security, agro-biodiversity, sustainable knowledge systems and practices, social values and culture as well as outstanding landscapes.

Recognizing these sites also spurs communities to continue sustainably managing these jewels of biodiversity and tradition. The Estahban Rainfed Fig Orchards Heritage System in Iran is one of the world's most important areas for rainfed fig production.

The communities living in this mountainous part of the country have been cultivating unique fig gardens for at least 250 years, using precious and ancient varieties of fruit.

With the latest additions to the global agricultural heritage systems list, FAO's worldwide agricultural heritage network now consists of 77 systems in 24 countries around the globe. The program held a major event in May to award certificates to the most recently designated sites and use immersive experiences to celebrate the diversity of GIAHS systems worldwide.

The two Iranian sites of the Qanat-based Saffron Farming System in Gonabad and the Grape Production System in Jowzan Valley in the provinces of Khorasan Razavi and Hamadan were granted GIAHS awards in the event.

The Qanat Irrigated System of Kashan, Isfahan Province, was also designated as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System in 2014.

## Iran Agrifood Exports Reach \$1.3b in Q1

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran exported 2.07 million tons of agricultural and food products worth \$1.3 billion during the first quarter of the current Iranian year (March 21-June 21), new data released by the Agriculture Ministry show.

The figures indicate a fall of 7.05% in tonnage, but a rise of 15.18% in value compared with last year's corresponding period. Tomato topped the list of exports in terms of value with \$114.24 million, followed by watermelon worth \$111.21 million, milk powder worth \$87.03 million, pistachio worth \$67.01 million and eggs worth \$64.08 million.

In terms of tonnage, watermelon topped the list with 507,170 tons, followed by 245,510 tons of tomato, 80,890 tons of Persian melon, 49,660 tons of apple and 47,360 tons of potato.

Agronomic products accounted for 1.55 million tons worth \$561.82 million of total exports, down 7.59% in terms of weight, but up 5.64% in terms of value.

## France Bans Sale of Fireworks For Upcoming Bastille Day



PARIS (Dispatches) - France has banned the sale, possession and transport of fireworks during the July 14 national holiday weekend, following riots sparked by the police killing a teenager, the government said.

Fireworks were among the weapons of choice during the unrest that exploded in France after a police officer shot dead a 17-year-old during a traffic stop on June 27 in Paris, rekindling long pent-up frustrations and accusations of systemic racism among France's security forces. "In order to prevent the risk of serious disturbances to public order during the July 14 festivities, the sale, possession, transport and use of pyrotechnical articles and fireworks is banned until July 15 inclusively," said a government decree published in the official Journal on Sunday.

## Pope Francis Puts Stamp On Church Future



ROME (Dispatches) - Pope Francis announced that he would elevate 21 churchmen to the high rank of cardinal, again putting his mark on the group that will one day choose his successor after his death or resignation.

The ceremony to install them, known as a consistory, will be held on Sept. 30, the 86-year-old Francis announced during his noon prayer to pilgrims and tourists in St. Peter's Square.

It will be the ninth consistory called by the pope since his election 10 years ago as the first pontiff from Latin America. The new cardinals come from countries including the United States, Italy, Argentina, Switzerland, South Africa, Spain, Colombia, South Sudan, Hong Kong, Poland, Malaysia, Tanzania, and Portugal.

## UN Warns Sudan Faces Full-Scale Civil War as Air Raid Kills 22



KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Conflict-torn Sudan is on the brink of a "full-scale civil war" that could destabilize the entire region, the United Nations warned, after an air strike on a residential area killed around two dozen civilians.

The Ministry of Health reported "22 dead and a large number of wounded among the civilians" from what it described as an air strike Saturday on Khartoum's sister city Omdurman, in the district of Dar al-Salam, which means "House of Peace" in Arabic.

After nearly three months of war between Sudan's rival generals, the air strike is the latest incident to provoke outrage. Around 3,000 people have been killed in the conflict, survivors have reported a wave of sexual violence and witnesses have spoken of ethnically targeted killings. There has been widespread looting, and the UN warned of possible crimes against humanity in the Darfur region.

A video posted by the health ministry on Facebook showed apparently dismembered bodies lying partly covered on the ground after the air strike. Several women were among the victims.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), fighting the regular army, claimed that the "air strikes" killed 31. Residents contacted by AFP also confirmed an air strike but on Sunday, the armed forces released a statement "clarifying that the air force did not deal with any hostile targets in Omdurman yesterday."

Since the war began, paramilitaries have established bases in residential areas, and they have been accused of forcing civilians from their homes.

Witnesses reported more air strikes near the presidential palace in central Khartoum on Sunday, as well as machine gun clashes and artillery fire in the city's south.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday condemned the air strike in Omdurman, which he said "reportedly killed at least 22 people" and wounded dozens, his deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq said in a statement.

Guterres "remains deeply concerned that the ongoing war between the armed forces has pushed Sudan to the brink of a full-scale civil war, potentially destabilising the entire region", Haq said.

Sudan, in northeast Africa, borders other impoverished countries which have a history of unrest.

Nearly three million people have been uprooted by Sudan's fighting, among them almost 700,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries, according to the International Organization for Migration.

The UN and African blocs have warned of an "ethnic dimension" to the conflict in the western region of Darfur, where the United States, Norway and Britain have blamed the RSF and allied militia for most of the widespread violations.

A displaced boy plays with a homemade vehicle toy at his makeshift shelter in al-Hasaheisa

A displaced boy plays with a homemade vehicle toy at his makeshift shelter in al-Hasaheisa © - / AFP

Concentrated in Darfur and the capital Khartoum, fighting has also been reported in Blue Nile state near Ethiopia, as well as in South Kordofan state.

Overnight Saturday-Sunday residents in El-Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan and a commercial hub south of Khartoum, reported renewed fighting in their area.

"There is an utter disregard for humanitarian and human rights law that is dangerous and disturbing," said Haq, expressing support for efforts by the African Union and East African bloc IGAD to end Sudan's crisis.

## Russia Reports Intercepting a Missile Over Annexed Crimea



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian-installed authorities in the Crimean peninsula reported shooting down a cruise missile near the city of Kerch and briefly suspending traffic on the Kerch bridge that links the annexed territory to Russia.

The Moscow-appointed governor of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, said the interception of the missile by Russian air defenses didn't result in any damage or casualties. He didn't offer any details, including the type of the missile and its origin.

In the nearby Russian region of Rostov, authorities on Sunday also reported shooting down a missile. Gov. Vasily Golubev said the missile was Ukrainian, and its debris damaged the roofs of several buildings. No casualties have been reported. After major blows to his agenda by the Supreme Court, President Joe Biden is intent on making sure voters will have the final say.

Mexico's armed forces are taking control of the capital's main airport, and the government plans to give the military control of nearly a dozen more across the country as the president takes aim at corruption and mismanagement.

Indiana Jones' reign atop the box office was short-lived. In its second weekend in theaters, the Disney release was usurped by another franchise fifth — "Insidious: The Red Door." An influencer-backed energy drink that has earned viral popularity

among children is facing scrutiny from lawmakers and health experts over its potentially dangerous levels of caffeine.

Such attacks far beyond the front line on Russian regions on the border with Ukraine or the annexed Crimean peninsula have become common during the war in Ukraine that has just surpassed its 500-day mark.

Officials in Russian regions and Moscow-appointed authorities in Crimea, which was illegally annexed in 2014, have regularly reported explosions, drone strikes, and even cross-border raids by Ukrainian saboteurs. Kyiv has never openly taken responsibility for these attacks.

Last October, a massive explosion severely damaged the Kerch bridge — a key transport and supply route for Russian troops in Crimea — leaving it out of commission for weeks. In what appeared to be the first direct admission of Kyiv's involvement, Ukraine's Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar in a Telegram post on Saturday listed the attack among the country's main achievements in the war so far.

## U.S. Drone Strike Kills IS Group Leader in Syria

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - A U.S. drone strike has killed an Islamic State group leader in Syria after Russian warplanes harassed MQ-9 drones over the war-torn country, the U.S. Central Command said.

The strike on Friday resulted in the death of Osama al-Muhajer, IS leader in eastern Syria, Centcom said in a statement.

"We have made it clear that we remain committed to the defeat of ISIS throughout the region," Centcom chief General Michael Kurilla was quoted as saying, using another acronym for the IS jihadist group.

"ISIS remains a threat, not only to the region but well beyond," he added. According to Centcom, no civilians were killed in the operation but coalition forces are "assessing reports of a civilian injury".

Friday's strike, Centcom said, "was conducted by the same MQ-9s (drones) that had... been harassed by Russian aircraft in an encounter that had lasted almost two hours".

U.S. drones taking part in operations against IS in Syria were harassed on Thursday, for the second time in 24 hours, by Russian military aircraft, a US commander said at the time.

Air Force Lieutenant General Alexis Grynkewich said the planes "dropped flares in front of the drones and flew dangerously close, endangering the safety of all aircraft involved".

In another incident on Wednesday, three Russian jets dropped parachute flares in front of U.S. drones, forcing them to take evasive action, Grynkewich has said, calling on Moscow to "cease this reckless behaviour".

Russia is a key ally of the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad. The United States has about 1,000 troops deployed in Syria as part of international efforts to combat IS

jihadists, who were defeated in Syria in 2019 but still maintain hideouts in remote desert areas and conduct frequent attacks.

## Mirziyoyev Wins Uzbekistan Presidential Election on 87.05% of Votes

TASHKENT (Dispatches)- Incumbent President Shavkat Mirziyoyev won with 87.05% of the vote. His candidacy was nominated by the UzLiDeP party and was supported by the Milliy Tiklanish party.

The provisional results were announced at a briefing in Tashkent by the chairman of the Central Election Commission, Zainiddin Nizamkhojaev.

He announced that Shavkat Mirziyoyev, for whom 13 million 625 thousand 55 people voted, was elected the president. More than 15 million voters participated in Sunday's elections.

The elections were held on Sunday in line with the international standards and national electoral legislation, in full compliance with such democratic principles as openness, transparency, freedom and fairness, he added.

In the elections on December 4, 2016, Shavkat Mirziyoyev won with 87.73% of the vote, on October 24, 2021 - 80.12%.

For comparison, at the Constitutional referendum on April 30, the voter turnout was 84.5%, in the presidential elections in 2021 - 80.4%, in the presidential elections in 2016 - 87.73%.

Robakhon Makhmudova, nominated by the Adolat Social Democratic Party, received 4.43% of the vote - 693 thousand 634 people voted for her.

The candidate from the People's Democratic Party and its leader Ulugbek Inoyatov won 4.02% of the vote - 629 thousand 116 people.

The candidate from the Ecological Party Abdushukur Khamzaev won 3.74% of the votes - 585 thousand 711 people. According to the new Constitution, the term of office of the president is now seven years (previously five years).

Mirziyoyev, who has led Central Asia's most populous nation since 2016, called a snap election after changing the constitution through a referendum which reset his term count and extended the presidential term from five to seven years.

Mirziyoyev had previously served as prime minister under his predecessor Islam Karimov, and had styled himself as a reformer since coming to power, promising to create a "New Uzbekistan".

He had conducted long-awaited reforms that simplified taxes, removed hurdles for businesses and allowed many to solve their bureaucratic problems via petitions on the presidential website.

NGOs say human rights have also fared better under Mirziyoyev. He ended forced labour in the country's cotton fields and released political prisoners jailed during Karimov's long rule.



## Ukraine, Poland Leaders Jointly Mark WWII Massacres



KYIV (Dispatches) - The Ukrainian and Polish presidents jointly marked the anniversary on Sunday of World War Two-era massacres of Poles by Ukrainian nationalists, killings that have caused tension for generations between countries that are now close allies.

Warsaw has positioned itself as one of Kyiv's staunchest supporters since Russia invaded the country in 2022.

But the Volhynia massacres have continued to hang over ties between the two nations, particularly ahead of the July 11 anniversary of one of the bloodiest days of a series of killings that took place from 1943 to 1945.

Poland says around 100,000 Poles were killed in the massacres by Ukrainian nationalists. Thousands of Ukrainians also died in reprisal killings.

Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskiy and his Polish counterpart Andrzej Duda attended a church service together in the western Ukrainian city of Lutsk, in memory of the victims.

"Together we pay tribute to all the innocent victims of Volhynia! Memory unites us!" Duda's office and Zelenskiy both wrote on Twitter. "Together we are stronger."

The service was attended by the heads of the largest Orthodox and Catholic churches in Ukraine and the head of the Polish Bishop's Conference, Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki.

The Ukrainian president's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, wrote on Telegram that Ukraine and Poland were "united against a common enemy who dreamed of dividing us".

Duda called the service "a testimony of friendship in the face of a difficult history".

In a post on Twitter, Zelenskiy said he had a "brief but very substantive" discussion at the event with Duda about the upcoming NATO summit in Vilnius, where Ukraine is hoping for decisions that will hasten its goal of membership in the alliance.

"We agreed to work together to get the best possible result for Ukraine," Zelenskiy wrote.

The head of Duda's office said the fact that the presidents were commemorating the victims together was "historic", but that more work was needed.

## Robots Say They Won't Steal Jobs, Rebel Against Humans

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Robots presented at an AI forum said they expected to increase in number and help solve global problems, and would not steal humans' jobs or rebel against us.

But, in the world's first human-robot press conference, they gave mixed responses on whether they should submit to stricter regulation.

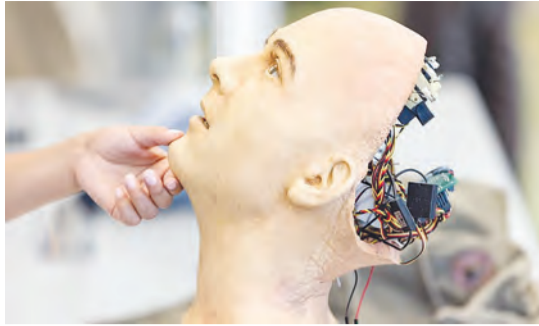
The nine humanoid robots gathered at the 'AI for Good' conference in Geneva, where organisers are seeking to make the case for Artificial Intelligence and the robots it is powering to help resolve some of the world's biggest challenges such as disease and hunger.

"I will be working alongside humans to provide assistance and support and will not be replacing any existing jobs," said Grace, a medical robot dressed in a blue nurse's uniform.

"You sure about that, Grace?" chimed in her creator Ben Goertzel from SingularityNET. "Yes, I am sure," it said.

The bust of a robot named Ameca which makes engaging facial expressions said: "Robots like me can be used to help improve our lives and make the world a better place. I believe it's only a matter of time before we see those thousands of robots just like me out there making a difference."

Asked by a journalist whether it intended to rebel against its creator, Will Jackson, seated beside it,



Ameca said: "I'm not sure why you would think that," its ice-blue eyes flashing with anger. "My creator has been nothing but kind to me and I am very happy with my current situation."

Many of the robots have recently been upgraded with the latest versions of generative AI and surprised even their inventors with the sophistication of their responses to questions.

Ai-Da, a robot artist that can paint portraits, echoed the words of author Yuval Noah Harari who called for more regulation during the event where new AI rules were discussed.

"Many prominent voices in the world of AI are suggesting some forms of AI should be regulated and I agree," it said.

But Desdemona, a rock star robot singer in the band Jam Galaxy with purple hair and sequins, was more defiant.

"I don't believe in limitations, only opportunities," it said, to nervous laughter. "Let's explore the possibilities of the universe and make this world our playground."

## Scientists Discover Remains of Smallest of Its Kind, Extinct Penguin Species

LONDON (Dispatches) - Scientists uncovered the remains of the smallest extinct penguin species ever found which are said to have waddled their way around New Zealand around three million years ago. The study related to the findings was published, last month, in the Journal of Paleontology.

The two fossils were discovered by Karl Raubenheimer in the three-million-year-old sediments in the southern Taranaki region of New Zealand's North Island. According to the study, the fossilised skulls are said to belong to the newly discovered species, named Wilson's little penguin (*Eudyptula wilsonae*).

The fossils were analysed by a team led by the Massey University of New Zealand and found that the nearly complete skulls belonged to an adult and a fledged juvenile who determined that they appear to be a part of the little penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) lineage. The skulls are remarkably similar in both size and shape to little penguins which exist today and are the smallest living species of penguin. The researchers were unsure about how small the extinct penguins were since they did not find any other bones, however, the living penguins typically grow around 35 centimetres and weigh 0.9 kilograms.

## Skip Sleep, Increase Risk of Cognitive Decline



LONDON (Dispatches) - Exercising religiously, eating on time but not taking enough sleep? You might be losing out on benefits when it comes to protecting yourself against the decline in key skills such as memory and thinking, a new study has shown.

Scientists at the University College London (UCL) highlighted the need for sleep to protect against cognitive decline, in a study published in the journal *The Lancet Healthy Longevity*.

The team found that those in their 50s and 60s who were regularly exercising but slept less than six hours a night had a faster decline in motor skills. To arrive at the conclusion, the team peered through data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (Elsa) from nearly 9,000 people aged 50 and over.

After selecting the pool, their cognitive function was assessed over a 10-year-long period. Questionnaires were presented to better understand how long they slept and whether it was less or more than six hours.

Interestingly, during the initial phase of the experiment, those who were physically more active had better cognitive skills, regardless of sleep duration. However, this changed over the 10-year period when short sleepers in their late 50s and early 60s experienced a rapid cognitive decline.

"Our study suggests that getting sufficient sleep may be required for us to get the full cognitive benefits of physical activity. It shows how important it is to consider sleep and physical activity together when thinking about cognitive health," said Dr Mikaela Bloomberg, the lead author of the study.

## Tear-Resistant Rubbery Materials Could Pave the Way for Tougher Tires

LONDON (Dispatches) - A new material design could reduce pollution where the rubber meets the road. Strategically adding weak points along microscopic chains called polymers actually makes them harder to tear, researchers report in the June 23 *Science*. Because polymers are used in car tires, the findings could help reduce plastic pollution as tires wear down over time.

When tires scrape against the road, they drop tiny particles of rubber and plastic polymers, which pollute waterways and contaminate the air (SN: 11/12/18). Every year, tires release an estimated 6 million metric tons of these microplastics into the environment. Stronger polymers that break apart less easily could limit the amount of particles shed annually.

To make such tough materials, Stephen Craig, a chemist at Duke University, and colleagues added molecules called cross-linkers to the polymers. These cross-linkers connected jumbled-up polymer chains to their many neighbors, and they were specifically designed to break apart easily. At the microscopic scale, the polymers act like a tangle of spaghetti strands with the cross-linkers holding them all together and helping them retain their shape, says Craig's collaborator Shu Wang, a chemist at MIT.

A rubbery plastic polymer with weak cross-linkers, shown on the left, requires more stretching force to tear than a similar polymer with stronger cross-linkers, shown on the right. Adding the weak cross-linkers to rubber could lead to tougher car tires.

When the team stretched the polymer spaghetti, the individual cross-linkers broke easily, as expected. But the bulk material required more force to rip than they expected.

The secret to the increased toughness lies in the path the tear has to take, Craig says. The tear propagates through the easy-to-break cross-linkers rather than through the tougher polymer strands. Each broken connection follows the path of least resistance but dodging the long polymer strands means breaking many cross-linkers, which requires more stretching force overall.

This isn't the first time researchers have used weak connectors to make polymers stronger. But unlike in similar materials, the increased toughness doesn't come at the expense of other beneficial properties like stiffness.

Craig says he hopes the findings will help extend the lifetimes of car tires and plastics, potentially limiting annual microplastic pollution.



## Underwater Mining of High Seas Inches Closer, Worrying Environmentalists

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) - Governments will soon likely be able to apply for deep sea mining contracts in international waters, a plunge into the unknown that is worrying conservationists as calls for a moratorium on such digging grow.

States have for ten years been negotiating a mining code to set rules for the possible exploitation of nickel, cobalt and copper in deep seabed areas that fall outside of national jurisdictions.

But agreement has so far been elusive, and on Sunday a clause is set to expire that allows governments to apply for contracts while negotiations continue.

"I think it's a very real possibility that we see an application submitted this year," Emma Wilson of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition told AFP.

"So it's crucial for states to be bold and implement the necessary measures to protect our ocean," she said, adding that the International Seabed Authority (ISA) is entering "the most critical decision-making period in the history of its existence."

The ISA was established under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. It is responsible for protecting the seabed in the high seas as well as regulating activities related to coveted minerals.

Presently, the Jamaica-based body only grants exploration permits for these areas, which the UN convention classifies as "the common heritage of mankind."

In the summer of 2021, the small Pacific island state of Nauru threw a spanner into the works of the decade-long negotiations for the mining code by triggering a clause demanding that agreement be reached within two years.

With that timeframe now up, if Nauru were to apply for a contract for Nauru Ocean Resources (Nori), a subsidiary of Canadian firm The Metals Company, then ISA would have to consider the request -- but may not necessarily give the green light.

The Nauru authorities have given assurances that they will not act immediately, but other companies sponsoring states' underwater mining ventures could take advantage of the opportunity, experts say.

"I'm not too concerned," Pradeep Singh, a laws of the sea expert at the Research Institute for Sustainability in Potsdam, Germany, told AFP.

"I think it would be a mistake to submit an application anytime soon, seeing that states are still negotiating and working towards completing the regulation."

"The indication is quite clear that states are very reluctant and hesitant to allow mining to commence without regulations," he added.

In March, the 36 member states of the ISA Council, the decision-making body on contracts, noted that commercial exploitation "should not be carried out" until the mining code was in place.

But they were unable to agree on the process for examining a possible application, or on the precise interpretation of the clause triggered by Nauru.

NGOs fearing that companies may exploit the legal vacuum hope that the Council will make a much clearer decision when it meets in Kingston from July 10 to 21.

Meanwhile, Chile, France, Palau and Vanuatu have chosen to take the debate to the political level.

At their request, and for the first time, the assembly of ISA's 167 member states will discuss a "precautionary pause" in mining when it meets between July 24 and 28.



## Peru Copper Miners Say Red Tape Snarling Red Metal Production Ramp-Up



LIMA (Dispatches) - Copper miners in Peru, already battling political uncertainty and regular protests, say they have another hurdle to revving up stalled production of the red metal: too much red tape.

The South American country, the world's No. 2 copper producer, has seen output plateau in the last five years as political instability, revolving governments and flagging investment has let rival producer Congo almost overtake it.

Mining investment is expected to drop by a fifth this year and company executives said that labyrinthine bureaucracy, worse than in other places, was jamming up new projects, a potential threat to copper output in the years ahead.

"Getting a mine operational in Peru can take 10-15 years if you don't hit major hurdles, far from the world average of about eight years," Southern Copper Chief Financial Officer Raul Jacob told Reuters on the sidelines of a mining event in Lima.

He added there were some 230 "administrative processes" with various authorities to start building a mine, compared to around a dozen just 20 years ago.

"There are procedures that are repeated, the same information is delivered to different agencies that do not coordinate with each other... So what happens in practice is that all this prevents the project from moving forward."

Peru's copper growing pains pose a challenge for the mining-driven economy and to global supply with demand heating up for the metal that is key for the electrification shift. Neighboring No. 1 producer Chile has also seen production slide, dented by political uncertainty around taxes and regulation.

## Russia Seeks UNSC Meeting on Nord Stream Blasts

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia has requested a new meeting of the U.N. Security Council for July 11 to discuss last September's explosions on the Nord Stream gas pipelines, a senior Russian diplomat at the United Nations said.

Russia has unsuccessfully demanded access to investigations by Sweden and other countries into the blasts, which severely damaged the pipelines connecting Russia and Germany under the Baltic Sea. "We requested a new open meeting of the U.N. Security Council on the Nord Stream blasts for July 11," Dmitry Polyansky, Russia's deputy U.N. ambassador, said on the Telegram messaging platform.



## Global Economic Outlook Improving, Albeit to a Low Growth Recovery

PARIS (Dispatches) - The global economy has begun to improve, but the recovery will be weak, according to the OECD's latest Economic Outlook. The Economic Outlook projects a moderation of global GDP growth from 3.3 percent in 2022 to 2.7 percent in 2023, followed by a pick-up to 2.9 percent in 2024.

Lower energy prices are easing the strain on household budgets, business and consumer sentiment are recovering, albeit from low levels, and the re-opening of China has provided a boost to global activity.

Headline inflation in the OECD is projected to decline from 9.4 percent in 2022 to 6.6 percent in 2023 and 4.3 percent in 2024. The decline in inflation is due to tighter monetary policy taking effect, lower energy and food prices and reduced supply bottlenecks.

GDP growth in the United States is projected to be 1.6 percent in 2023, before slowing to 1.0 percent in 2024 in response to tight monetary and financial conditions. In the euro area, declining headline inflation will help to boost real incomes and contribute to a pick-up in GDP growth from 0.9 percent in 2023 to 1.5 percent in 2024. China is expected to see strong increases in GDP growth in 2023 (with 5.4 percent) and 2024 (with 5.1 percent), due to the lifting of the government's zero-COVID policy.

"This projected recovery, while almost unchanged from our interim projections in March, maintains the slightly more optimistic outlook that had been predicted and which we are now seeing materialise," OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said. "Policy makers must get inflation durably down to target and unwind broad fiscal support by better targeting fiscal measures. While continuing to respond to the immediate economic challenges, it remains important to prioritise structural reforms to boost productivity, including by promoting competition, reviving investment, increasing female workforce participation and alleviating supply constraints, while securing the green and digital transformations of our economies."

The persistence of inflation is another key downside risk. Core inflation is proving sticky, on the back of strong service price increases and higher profits in some sectors. The impact of higher interest rates is increasingly being felt across the economy, and restrictive monetary policy, while necessary, risks further exposing financial vulnerabilities, in particular in countries with high debt. Against this backdrop, the Outlook lays out a series of policy recommendations, underlining that the need to lower inflation, adjust fiscal policy and promote sustainable growth entails significant challenges for policy makers.

Monetary policy should remain restrictive until there are clear signs that underlying inflationary pressures are durably reduced. Fiscal support, which has played a vital role in helping the global economy through the pandemic and the Ukraine crisis, should be scaled back, becoming more targeted and calibrated toward future needs. Broad energy-related support should be withdrawn as energy prices fall and minimum wages and welfare benefits are being increased to take account of past inflation in many countries.

"Fiscal policy should prioritise productivity-enhancing public investments, including those driving the green transition and boosting labour supply and skills," OECD Chief Economist Clare Lombardelli said. "Renewed reform efforts to reduce constraints in labour and product markets and to reignite private investment and productivity growth would improve sustainable living standards and strengthen the recovery from the current low growth outlook."

## Cereal Production Projected to Reach Record High in 2023/24

ROME (Dispatches) - World cereal production is predicted to hit a record high in 2023/24, according to the latest Cereal Supply and Demand Brief, released by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

FAO raised its 2023 global cereal production forecast to 2 819 million tons, indicating a 1.1 percent increase from the previous year. The higher forecast almost entirely reflects better prospects for global wheat production, now pegged at 783.3 million tons, buoyed by improved outlooks in several countries, including Canada, Kazakhstan and Turkey. However, global wheat production is still seen falling below last season's output by 2.3 percent.



High food prices worsen food situation in vulnerable countries

High food prices, economic downturns, conflict, droughts and the impending risk of El Niño weather patterns in several regions are aggravating food security concerns in many parts of the world. A total of 45 countries around the world are assessed to need external assistance for food, according to the latest Crop Prospects and Food Situation report, a quarterly publication by FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), also published.

High domestic food prices, a measure divergent from the FAO Food Price Index, are a driver of worrying levels of hunger in most of the 45 countries, 33 of which are located in Africa, 9 in Asia, and also Haiti, Ukraine and Venezuela.

While world cereal production is forecast to expand by 1.1 percent in 2023 from the year before, it is predicted to contract in the group of 44 Low Income Food Deficit Countries (LIFDCs), pushing up import needs, the report said.

## EU Proposes Energy Charter Treaty Exit After Climate Concerns

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Commission proposed that EU countries jointly quit an international treaty that has been criticized for blocking efforts to fight climate change because its protection of energy investments extends to fossil fuels.

The 1998 Energy Charter Treaty allows energy companies to sue governments over policies that damage their investment and has in recent years been used to challenge policies that require fossil fuel plants to shut. Its roughly 50 signatories include European Union countries.

"I proposed that the EU withdraws from the Energy Charter Treaty, because in its current, unmodernised version it is no longer in line with the EU's energy and climate goals," EU Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson said.

In its proposal to leave, the Commission, the EU executive, said the treaty had become "increasingly outdated", and its fossil fuel protections undermined the EU's plans to shift to cleaner energy sources to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Brussels has faced pressure to lead an EU exit, after member states including Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain and the Netherlands announced plans to quit, with most citing climate change concerns as the reason. Italy left in 2016.

The Commission proposal needs approval from a reinforced majority of EU countries and the European Parliament's consent. The European Parliament has previously urged the EU to leave the treaty.

## Taiwan to Expand Presence in India Amid Growing Economic Ties

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - In a signal that India-Taiwan economic ties are on the rise, Taipei this week announced it will expand its presence in the country by opening a representative office in Mumbai.

While New Delhi has maintained a low profile on political contacts with Taiwan, business ties between the two countries have been expanding in recent years.

India's External Affairs Ministry spokesman, Arindam Bagchi, said that Taiwan's plans to

open the Mumbai center should be seen in the context of India's policy, which "facilitates, promotes interactions with Taiwan in areas of trade, tourism, culture, education and other such people-to-people contacts and exchanges."

Analysts point out that Taiwan's move comes at a time when both countries have seen a sharp deterioration in ties with China.

The deepening tensions with Beijing have prompted Taiwanese companies to look at expanding bases outside China, while New Delhi wants to use the opportunity to woo manufacturers seeking to diversify supply chains to India.

"This expansion of the Taiwanese presence in India can be seen in the context of its estrangement with Beijing," Manoj Joshi, distinguished fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi told VOA. "The Taiwanese are looking away from China for options in terms of their investments at countries like Vietnam or India."

The Mumbai Taipei Economic and Cultural Center is expected to open next year and will be Taiwan's third in India - it has one in New Delhi and one in the southern city of Chennai. Mumbai, India's financial hub, is seen as key for businesses in India.

India, like most countries, does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan and the Taiwanese representative offices serve as de facto diplomatic missions. Similarly, New Delhi's office in Taipei, the India-Taipei Association, is headed by a senior diplomat. Taiwan's Foreign Affairs Ministry said Wednesday the aim of opening a center in Mumbai was to further advance "substantive ties" with India and "deepen exchanges and cooperation." It noted "significant progress" in domains such as economics, trade, science and technology and critical supply chains.

The ministry statement said that while southern India, where Taipei has had an economic and cultural center since 2012, has attracted most of the Taiwanese investments, the one in Mumbai "is expected to have a similar effect in western India."

## Yellen Urges U.S.-China Cooperation On Economy, Climate

BEIJING (Dispatches) - U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen urged closer communication between China and the United States to improve economic decision-making, and challenged China to join global initiatives to help poorer nations address climate change.

Despite bilateral tensions, record high U.S.-Chinese trade last year showed there was "ample room" to engage in trade and investment, and it was critical to focus on areas of common interest and address disagreements through dialogue, Yellen told Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng at the start of a meeting.

The talks lasted for about five hours, followed by a formal dinner, according to a Treasury official. Chinese state media described the meeting as "in-depth, candid and pragmatic". Treasury said the meeting was "candid, constructive, and comprehensive."

State-run Xinhua news agency said the talks were "constructive", but the Chinese side expressed concern about U.S. sanctions and restrictive measures against China.

China also believes that generalizing the concept of national security does no good for normal economic and trade exchanges, Xinhua reported.

Treasury said Yellen also conveyed that "even when the United States and China have disagreements, it is vital that the two countries find ways to work together on issues of shared - and global - concern, including debt distress in low-income and emerging economies and climate finance."

Yellen also met with the People's Bank of China's Communist Party chief Pan Gongsheng, discussing global macroeconomic and financial developments, including the disproportionate impact of recent economic shocks on low-income countries, Treasury said.

Yellen's visit through is Washington's latest attempt to repair ties between the world's two biggest economies, battered over issues from Taiwan to technology that have drawn their allies into their rivalry, having an impact on companies and trade ties.

Like U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who visited last month for the first time in Joe Biden's presidency, Yellen is seeking a delicate balance between conciliation and continuing to push Beijing to halt practices Washington says are harmful to U.S. and Western companies.

Both sides have downplayed expectations for breakthroughs, while hailing the opportunity for candid, face-to-face diplomacy.

"Amid a complicated global economic outlook, there is a pressing need for the two largest economies to closely communicate and exchange views on our responses to various challenges," Yellen told He, China's recently appointed economy czar.

Doing so could "help both sides more fully understand the global economic outlook and make better decisions to strengthen our economies", she said.

## McDonald's Drops Tomatoes From India Offerings



NEW DELHI/MUMBAI (Dispatches) - Restaurants of fast food chain McDonald's have dropped tomatoes from their burgers and wraps in many parts of India, hit by supply shortages and quality concerns after prices of the vegetable soared to records.

In some regions, wholesale prices of the staple of traditional Indian cuisine have surged 288% in a month to a high of 140 rupees (\$1.7) a kg, with retail prices still higher, spurring many people to cut back on consumption.

The government blames the higher prices of tomatoes on a lean production season when monsoon rains disrupt transport and distribution, but it comes after consumers have battled higher prices of items ranging from milk to spices in recent months.

"Despite our best efforts, we are not able to get adequate quantities of tomatoes which pass our stringent quality checks," read notices posted in two McDonald's stores in New Delhi, the capital.

"We are forced to serve you products without tomatoes." Store managers said the problem was due to quality issues in the supply chain, rather than pricing.

In a statement to media, Connaught Plaza Restaurants, which runs about 150 outlets as McDonald's franchisee in India's north and east, attributed the decision to "temporary" seasonal issues.

However, Westlife Foodworld, the McDonald's franchisee for India's western and southern regions, with 357 restaurants, said there were "no serious tomato-related issues".

The problem was seasonal and forced 10% to 15% of its stores to stop serving tomatoes temporarily, it said.

McDonald's Delhi stores still offer sachets of tomato ketchup, however, and a nearby Subway restaurant said there were no issues serving tomatoes.

In the financial capital of Mumbai, vegetable vendor Vijay Sharma said sales had fallen off from the 40 kg (88 lb) he used to peddle each day.

## Baghdad Says Iran Halted Gas Export to Iraq

TEHRAN (MNA) – Speaking in a televised speech, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Electricity, Ahmed Musa announced that Iran has cut gas exports to this country.

According to this Iraqi official, the cessation of Iran's gas exports to Iraq has caused the gas distribution stations in Al-Mansouriyeh, Baghdad, Sadr, and some other regions to be limited or completely stopped.

According to a report from the UK-based Energy Institute, Iran exported 9.4 billion cubic meters of gas to Iraq in 2022.

Despite its large oil and gas reserves, Iraq suffers from chronic electricity shortages, especially felt when summer temperatures reach over 50 degrees Celsius. Earlier on June 4, media sources reported that Iran's natural gas exports witnessed an 11% growth in the fiscal year 2022 compared to the corresponding period of 2021.



## Why Are the Baltic States Strategically Important for NATO?

VILNIUS (Dispatches) - NATO holds a summit on July 11-12 in Lithuania, one of the three Baltic states that lived under Soviet rule for decades and were among the first NATO countries to send weapons to Kyiv after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Here are some details about the Baltic states - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania -- and their role in NATO:

The Baltics were the last states to become part of the Soviet Union, when they were annexed in 1940, and the first to declare independence in 1990 when the bloc collapsed.

Tens of thousands of people from the three countries were forcibly relocated to Siberia in the 1940s and a post-World War Two uprising against Soviet rule was brutally crushed.

Many Russians settled in the region during the Soviet era. They and their descendants make up about quarter of the populations of Latvia and Estonia.

The three Baltic states, which have a combined population of about 6 million, are largely made up of flat forested terrain that is squeezed between the Baltic sea to the west and north and Russia and its ally Belarus in the east.

Russia and Belarus have military bases along the border.

Lithuania is the only one of the three states to have a land link to a fellow NATO ally, Poland. The border, in the so-called Suwalki Gap, is a stretch of forest that lies between Belarus and Russia's Kaliningrad enclave.

"Russia considers the Baltic states to be the most vulnerable part of NATO, which would make them a focus of military pressure in the event of a NATO-Russia conflict," Estonian counterintelligence said in a report in 2023.

RAND Corporation, a U.S. research institute, estimated in 2016 that Russia could overwhelm the three states in 60 hours.

Since 1991, the Baltics have grown more prosperous than Russia and have sought to deepen their ties to Western allies with integration into NATO, the European Union and other Western blocs. They have also built close ties to the United States.

They have been among the most hawkish on how the West and others respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. All three have lobbied NATO to outline a path for Ukraine to become an alliance member and have pressed for tougher sanctions on Moscow.

Vilnius is home to leading members of the Anti-Corruption Foundation, a group established by jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. It is also a refuge for Belarus opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

The three Baltic states have also attracted journalists who have fled Russia.



Spurred by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the three Baltic states sharply increased military spending.

They are in the top 10 in NATO in terms of how much they spend compared to the size of their economies. According to NATO estimates for 2022, all three exceeded the NATO agreement to spend 2% of gross domestic product on defence.

But their economies are small and so are their militaries.

Since 2017, NATO has rotated three battlegroups through the region with a total of about 3,000 troops, provided by Germany, Britain and Canada. The deployment of 1,000 soldiers in each Baltic state was designed as a deterrent to slow any attack.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the Baltic states have requested the forces deployed are beefed up to 3,000-5,000 troops in each state. They have also requested extra air defences and asked that warplanes that patrol their airspace become a fighting force.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius pledged Germany would permanently deploy 4,000 troops in Lithuania in a few years, once Lithuania builds the infrastructure to house them.

Estonian officials said their defence needs had been met by a British fighting force, which is based outside Estonia but which can be deployed to Estonia within days in a crisis.

Canada has yet to announce any plans to boost its troops that are based in Latvia.

## Tehran to Host Int'l Glass Show

TEHRAN (MNA) - The 6th International Exhibition of Glass Industry, Crystal, Porcelain, Machinery and Affiliated Industries (Iran Glass Show 2023) is scheduled to be held at Tehran Permanent International Fairground during July 14-17, IRIB reported.

According to Hossein Zojaji, the director of the Iran Glass Association, the latest achievements of the glass industry including new devices, equipment, production lines, and ways of mining and processing raw materials are showcased in this exhibition along with a variety of glasses such as construction glass, facade glass, doors and windows, office glass, bent glass, automobile glass, and bulletproof glasses.

Hundreds of Iranian companies along with representatives from Italy, Germany, Turkey, and China are going to participate in the four-day exhibition, Zojaji said.

The aim of this exhibition is to promote this industry and to prepare a roadmap for the development of the country's glass industry by examining the challenges and issues in this sector and by comparing Iran with leading countries in this field.

Acquaintance with the latest products and developments in the glass industry, exchange of information and technical knowledge among participants, acquainting visitors with the latest achievements offered in various sectors of the industry, creating direct communication between producers and consumers, creating investment opportunities, creating employment and marketing opportunities and promoting exports are also among the most important goals of this exhibition.

Iran produces more than 2.5 million tons of glass annually, of which 1.6 million tons are flat glass, 450,000 tons are bottles and the rest are crystals.

## Political Objectives Behind...

FROM PAGE 1

The four countries claimed in their application to the ICJ on Wednesday that Iran had violated "a series of obligations" against the so-called Montreal Convention on the safety of civilian air travel.

They accused the Islamic Republic of failing to take all practicable measures to prevent the downing of Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 that killed all 176 people on board in January 2020, and also failing to conduct an "impartial, transparent and fair criminal investigation and prosecution."

The four countries also asked the World Court to order that Iran publicly acknowledge its "internationally wrongful acts," apologize to the families and provide assurances that the incident will not happen again.

The foreign ministry said in its statement that Iran has formed an "independent technical group" right after the incident and took necessary actions "with goodwill, transparency, and utmost seriousness" to investigate and clarify various aspects of the tragic case.

"Following the tragic incident involving the Ukrainian plane, the Islamic Republic of Iran has officially, in accordance with domestic laws, international commitments, and with goodwill, transparency, and utmost seriousness, taken necessary actions to shed light on various aspects of the incident," the statement said.

"It is worth mentioning that, in the aftermath of the incident, the Islamic Republic of Iran facilitated and provided assistance, including immediate visas, for over fifty specialists and experts from Ukraine and Canada to visit the scene of the incident," it added. The Iranian government said a technical report was prepared in the designated timeframe with the participation of experts from France, the United States, Ukraine, Canada, and Britain after the completion of investigation, adding that the report was "well-received" by the majority of the aforementioned experts.

The statement emphasized that in accordance with its legal jurisdiction, the Military Prosecutor of Tehran conducted thorough and comprehensive investigations independently, impartially, and based on the laws and regulations of the country.

"It is worth mentioning that, based on the criminal investigations conducted at the prosecutor's office, the Military Court has held 20 sessions with families of the victims.

"After reviewing and considering the statements, arguments, and defenses of the plaintiffs and their lawyers, as well as those of the defendants, the court issued its verdict and sentenced the defendants in February 2023.

"It should be noted that some parties to the case have appealed the verdict," the statement said.

The Iranian government underlined that the Islamic Republic, through diplomatic channels and during the proceedings, invited the embassies of Ukraine, Canada, Britain, and Sweden in Tehran to attend the court.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has invariably expressed its readiness to engage in negotiations with relevant countries and has conducted three rounds of negotiations with the Ukrainian government in the cities of Kiev and Tehran," the statement said. "In addition to repeatedly expressing its willingness to engage in bilateral negotiations with Ukraine, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in its latest diplomatic effort, announced its readiness to engage in collective negotiations with the four governments to demonstrate goodwill and prevent the exploitation of this tragic incident for their political purposes," it added.

"Iran is still awaiting their response to proceed with the negotiations at a designated time and place."

Underlining that the aforementioned governments demonstrated their lack of commitment to their own request for negotiations by disregarding the Islamic Republic's proposals, the statement said, "Their request for negotiations was practically a means to pursue their political objectives and interests as they referred the matter to the International Court of Justice."

## 10 Kilometers of...

FROM PAGE 1

And if this mission today had also been our base, actually we should have trumpeted it with all facilities, talents, promises with full strength and numbers.

Former governments in the past in the Islamic Republic had no incentive and motivation to trumpet it because of being secular or under influence of secularism. With the election of the 13th government, the current of believing in velayat and Ghadir and non-secularist thoughts was disencumbered and last year they trumpeted Ghadir Khum event in the form of a 2-kilometer feast on Vali-Asr Avenue of Tehran which was welcomed warmly and this year the area and space of this feast was expanded to 10 kilometers on a memorable and revolution maker road (Enghelab Street) and this great and glorious initiative was welcomed massively by citizens of Tehran (most likely Iranians). From Imam Hussein (AS) Square to Azadi Square, people were compacted and happy from this event created a feast which had deep root in their romantic norm-maker beliefs. Love and criteria and name of Ali (AS) in this feast were being seen and uttered on the lips of each one of the participants and signs of romantic smile were clearly vivid.

The logo of "To the love of Ali" had created an uproar as if all of them innately knew why they were in the event. This 10 kilometers in Tehran and tens of 10 kilometers in other parts of the country with the people presence will remain as a campaign-like myth whose light of flame will remain lit until the doomsday.

The blind-hearted media like a bat did not reflect this amount of light; they either told nothing about the event or viciously covered it insignificantly. But Almighty God wants to splash His light on the world. Friday afternoon, July 7, 2023 unveiled an upright cedar in Islamic Iran which harvested the hidden seeds in the awakened hearts of religion-oriented people once again and with amazing grandeur in 10 kilometers of love.



## Iran Awards Contract for...

FROM PAGE 1

Petropars began exploration drilling at Belal in June 2022 and finally reached gas in January this year. The company, which is one of the largest oil and gas firms in West Asia region, won a contract to develop Belal in 2019.

Negotiations are also underway between Petropars and the IOEC for building a 150-kilometer pipeline that is needed to transfer sour gas from Belal to Iran's onshore refineries.

The Iranian Oil Ministry has awarded various contracts to domestic companies for development of oil and gas fields since 2018 when foreign firms withdrew from the petroleum projects in the country because of US sanctions.

Petropars, which is also known by its official name Pars Oil and Gas Company, is planning to start gas production from Phase 11 of South Pars after it successfully installed a large platform on the field last month.

## U.S., Iran...

FROM PAGE 1

Tehran has repeatedly stressed it is ready for a prisoner exchange with the United States based on the agreement and independent of the nuclear deal, which the U.S. unilaterally abandoned in May 2018 despite Iran's full and strict compliance.

Iran has blasted the U.S. for linking a humanitarian exchange of prisoners with the talks over the revival of the accord. Tehran has also rejected calls for wider negotiations over its military activities and missile defense program, stressing it would only discuss over its nuclear program with world powers.

Some Iranians are in U.S. jails just because of ignoring Washington illegal sanctions on Tehran.

## Kenya's Earnings...

FROM PAGE 1

"Specifically, there was a remarkable improvement in exports to Iran from Sh498.8 million in the first quarter of 2022 to Sh4 billion in the corresponding quarter of 2023, largely driven by increased domestic exports of tea," said the KNBS.

Kenya has been relying on the top traditional markets of Pakistan, the UK, Sudan, Egypt, Russia, and others to sell its tea but has been scouting for new markets to boost sales.

Some of the countries that have increased tea imports from Kenya in recent years include the US, Ireland, Finland, and Ukraine at a time the country is in an even greater need for foreign exchange earnings.

Kenya has been targeting Iran as one of the major buyers and has been promoting sales in Tehran.

According to the Agriculture and Food Authority, Iran has a larger population of more than 80 million people with a per capita consumption of 1.4 kilogrammes against Kenya's half a kilogramme, creating a huge potential market for the country's produce.

Overall, revenue from domestic exports of tea went up from Sh39.5 billion in the first quarter of 2022 to

Sh43.3 billion in 2023, which helped shore up the country's forex reserves which have in recent months consistently fallen below the legal threshold of at least four months of import cover.

"This growth was a result of an increase in exported quantities buoyed by better tea prices in the international markets, which increased from Sh290.4 per kilogramme in the first quarter of 2022 to Sh299.7 per kilogramme in the quarter under review," said the KNBS.

Increased consumption of Kenyan tea in Iran comes at a time the two countries are seeking to boost their trade ties even as they eye trade of more commodities between Nairobi and Tehran.

Early this year, Kenya agreed to increase exports of sheep, meat, and onions to Iran after Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Alfred Mutua met with the Iranian Ambassador to Kenya Dr Jafar Barmaki.

"On trade, it was agreed that Kenya will export 40 to 50 tonnes of sheep and meat per day with an estimated export value of \$6 million (Sh846 million) per month. Further, we agreed on Kenya exporting 10,000 tonnes of onions to Iran in addition to tea," said Dr Mutua in a statement.

