

Politics

Accord Bloc of Libyan HCS accuses NOC Chairman of having "conflict of interest"



The National Accord Bloc of the High Council of State announced on Wednesday that it had submitted a report to the Attorney General against the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Oil Corporation (NOC), Farhat Bengdara, accusing him of holding the citizenship of another country, which "makes him lose the Libyan citizenship," demanding an investigation into "conflict of interest" and suspicions of corruption related to oil contracts that were signed in the past years. This accusation came in a statement issued by the Bloc following developments related to the NOC and the energy file in general. The Bloc said that it had submitted an official complaint to the Attorney General "attached with documents indicating that Bengdara holds the citizenship of another country, which deprives him of Libyan citizenship according to the law, prevents him from holding any position or job, and is considered a

perpetrator of crimes punishable by law," according to the statement. It also stressed the rejection of what it described as "attempts to make the energy file dependent on specific countries through suspicious appointments and contracts," which it said represented a threat to energy security. The National Accord Bloc also stressed that it had written to the Attorney General to investigate a conflict of interest behind deals signed by Bengdara with companies from the same country of his second citizenship - without naming those countries. It renewed its demands to "scrutinize the deals that were signed in recent years without regard to legislation or Libyan interests," calling on the Attorney General and the regulatory agencies to urgently investigate the suspicions of corruption affecting oil contracts.

NOC Chairman Bengdara had previously faced accusations of corruption and squandering the state's interests to foreign countries and companies after the spotlight was shed on the Hamada oil field development contract, which gives the coalition of foreign companies contributing to the project 40% of its revenues: a deal that was considered a dangerous precedent in the Libyan oil sector, especially with the companies' ability to implement the development process without the need for foreign partners. The accusations resurfaced after the recent spread of Bengdara's support and marketing of the UAE company ADNOC's desire to sell its stake in LERCO, the operator of the Ras Lanuf oil refinery, to an anonymous partner, which many considered an insult to the State of Libya if the country agreed to the sale without knowing the identity of the buyer.

Politics

US Treasury sanctions a trader shipping Captagon from Syria to Libya



The US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned 11 individuals and entities supporting the regime of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad through the facilitation of illicit financial transfers and trafficking of illegal drugs, as well as the extraction and export of Syrian commodities, including the drug of Captagon, a highly addictive amphetamine-type stimulant trafficked illegally throughout the Middle East and Europe, referring to three shipments seized in Libya coming from Syria. The US Treasury cited the name Mahmoud Abulillah Al-Dj as being responsible for leading the operations behind multiple Captagon shipments, including the Noka shipment seized by Greek authorities and three shipments that were seized in Libya.

"Al-Dj also serves as the exclusive agent for designated Syrian airline Cham Wings in Libya. Al-Dj used his Syria-based company Al-Ta'ir Company (Al-Ta'ir) to receive cargo tied to Captagon shipments and open a major smuggling line linking Lattakia to Benghazi, which has resulted in huge profits for Captagon traffickers." The Treasury's statement said. It added that Al-Dj registered an additional company, FreeBird Travel and Tourism (FreeBird), after he was convicted for drug smuggling in Libya and Al-Ta'ir became subject to legal prosecution for human trafficking and drug smuggling. OFAC is designating Al-Dj pursuant to E.O. 13582 for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or ser-

vices to or in support of, the government of Syria. OFAC is designating Al-Ta'ir and FreeBird pursuant to E.O. 13582 for being owned or controlled by, or having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, Al-Dj. Last December, a study prepared by the American non-governmental organization "The Century" said that the drug trade is the fastest growing trade in Libya, saying it had become an integrated center for the drug trade across continents. It specifically referred to Captagon smuggled from Syria, estimating the size of the drug industry being smuggled from Syria to countries in the region at about 10 billion dollars. It stated that evidence indicates the possibility that manufacturing devices are already in use inside Libya.



Politics

First Turkish Airlines' flight touches down in Libya after 10-year hiatus

After a hiatus that lasted about 10 years, Turkish Airlines launched on Thursday its first flight to Mitiga International Airport in the Libyan capital Tripoli, following the signing of two memoranda of understanding between the Libyan Civil Aviation Authority and Turkish Airlines. The Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah hailed the landmark achievement, praising the efforts of all those involved in paving the way for the resumption of flights, adding that this event constituted

another indicator of the stability of Libya. Following the landing of the first Turkish Airlines' flight in Tripoli, Turkish Airlines' General Manager Bilal Ekşi announced in a press conference that the company would fly three flights per week to Mitiga Airport in the Libyan capital, confirming that other flights would soon be landing in Benghazi's Benina Airport and Misrata Airport. Last Sunday, the Government of National Unity announced that Turkish Airlines would resume its flights to Libya after a hi-

atus of about ten years. Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah considered the return of Turkish flights "an additional indicator of strengthening the state of stability in all its forms despite the challenges," praising "the efforts of the transportation and civil aviation sector, and everyone who contributed to facilitating air transport movement, as well as achieving the technical requirements for the return of major companies to the country."

Politics



PM: Taxing foreign currency exchange transactions is stealing 26% of Libyans' savings

The Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah criticized the decision to impose a tax on foreign exchange transactions, saying this was an individual and unfortunate decision and adding that "they want to steal 26% of the Libyans' savings, and everyone must reject it." This rejection came in his speech at the first Misrata Ramadan Season Festival, in which he said: "Libya is fine... They want to mislead us just as they hid the billions that were lost from the accounts of the Central Bank in the past years... Who held them accountable? Hold them accountable... You must hold them accountable. Hold those who squandered our money accountable." He added that 80% of the Libyan revenues "went into the pockets of citizens", and the

rest was used for projects, expressing his readiness to be held accountable to the people. "The country is experiencing all kinds of stability despite the attempts of some to restrict it, and our will is strong to maintain the stability we have achieved." He added. On March 15, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aqila Saleh, issued a decision, based on the Central Bank Governor's proposal, to impose a 27% tax on the official exchange rate of foreign currencies for all purposes until the end of the year 2024. The Central Bank of Libya directed the commercial banks to implement the decision, while Dbeibah confirmed that he did not accept the decision, warning of the "negative effects" of the tax on Libyans.

Politics



Sheikh El-Gharyani urges Muslims: Prioritize Gaza aid over Umrah

Libya's Grand Mufti, Sheikh Sadiq El-Gharyani, says that helping the people of Gaza should be a priority over other good deeds, such as repeating the Umrah pilgrimage. During his weekly program "Islam and Life" on Wednesday, the Mufti underscored that competing to perform Umrah amidst the ongoing genocide against the Palestinians reflects a lack of foresight. Sheikh El-Gharyani renewed his call for Muslim nations to boycott brands supporting Israel, emphasizing that funds directed towards them are utilized to kill and starve the population of Gaza. He called on all those wishing to support the "mujahideen" to deliver funds directly to Hamas rather than handing aid to the Americans "who are involved in the Gaza genocide alongside the Zionists."

The Mufti underscored that aiding the people of Gaza does not necessitate convoys and border crossings but requires an end to hostilities. According to the latest update from the Gaza Health Ministry on Monday, the death toll from Israel's ongoing offensive on the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, has risen to at least 32,333 Palestinians. The statement reported that within the last 24 hours alone, 107 Palestinians were killed and 176 others injured. The conflict, now in its 171st day, has resulted in the internal displacement of 85% of Gaza's population amid severe shortages of essential resources such as food, clean water, and medicine. Additionally, the United Nations reports that 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been either damaged or destroyed as a result of the Israeli war.

Economy

Libyan-German business and investor forum set for June



The Ministry of Economy and Trade disclosed on Wednesday plans to convene a Libyan-German economic forum in the capital, Tripoli, in June, with the participation of business owners and investors from both countries.

The announcement came during a meeting between Minister of Economy and Trade Mohammed Al-Hweij and German Ambassador to Libya, Michael Ohnmacht, in the presence of the Director of Foreign Trade Administration and the Head of the International Coopera-

tion Department at the ministry. According to the ministry on Facebook, the meeting discussed economic and trade cooperation and ways to enhance relations and networking between the private sectors of both countries.

Al-Hweij emphasized the importance of the forum and its role in strengthening ties between financial and commercial institutions.

He also directed the relevant departments to cooperate with the German

Embassy's commercial office and other relevant bodies to prepare for the forum and support Libyan and German businesses participating in the event.

The statement also quoted the German Ambassador reaffirming his country's support for achieving economic stability in Libya and enhancing trade and investment relations, emphasizing the interest of German companies in expanding cooperation with the Libyan private sector and contributing to the reconstruction and economic development plan.



Economy

Mellitah Oil Company finishes re-drilling well in El Feel field

The National Oil Corporation (NOC) announced on Tuesday that Mellitah Oil and Gas Company had completed re-drilling the fifth well (FB-21HOR-ST2) in the El Feel field, and testing it with a production capacity of about 3,820 barrels of oil per day.

The NOC Chairman praised the operator's management committee and all employees of Mellitah Oil and Gas Company who contributed to achieving this work, which will improve and raise the level of oil production in the country, according to the corporation's statement.



Economy

Minister of Economy reviews economic diversification plan with Expertise France

The Minister of Economy and Trade, Mohammed Al-Hawij, has discussed with the Director of Programs at the Expertise France the follow-up of the economic diversification plan implemented by the Ministry's Investment and Private Sector Development Department, in cooperation with the Expertise France.

The two sides reviewed the completed stages of the project, which aims to support and develop the trade, investment, industry and agriculture sectors and enhance their role in developing the national economy and shifting towards a green economy in cooperation with all relevant parties.



Economy

Baker International eyes opportunities in Libya, meets with PM

A team from Baker International Company presented a visual proposal to the Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity outlining areas of collaboration and proposed cooperation with Libyan institutions.

The team expressed their interest in operating within Libya given the current stability and seriousness in the country.

The President of Baker International Company, Douglas Baker, and the accompanying delegation met with Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah on Tuesday during their visit to Libya to discuss avenues of cooperation and investment.

PM Dbeibah reiterated his support for the presence of foreign companies in Libya and emphasized cooperation and partnership in various fields, particularly renewable energy and gas production.

Baker International Company is an American oilfield services company that provides products and services to the oil and gas industry, including well drilling, production, and reservoir consulting.



Economy

PC, CBL discuss implementing currency levy

The Vice-Chairs of the Presidential Council, Abdullah Al-Lafi and Musa Al-Koni met with the Governor of the Central Bank of Libya, Siddiq Al-Kabeer, on Tuesday to discuss the executive steps regarding the decision to determine the value of the levy imposed on foreign currency sales.

The parties discussed measures to correct distortions in the Libyan economy and address the consequences of their implementation.

They also reviewed financial and economic developments in the country and ways to improve living conditions amidst the rising costs of daily living, particularly during the month of Ramadan.



Economy

CBL discusses raising its cadres efficiency in cooperation with Germany

The Governor of the Central Bank of Libya (CBL), Al-Siddiq Al-Kabir, has met with the German Ambassador to Libya, Michael Ohnmacht, to discuss training and raising the cadres of CBL in cooperation with its German counterpart.

Both sides reviewed issues of common interest, including the CBL role in maintaining financial sustainability, and supporting efforts to develop disclosure and transparency, in addition to the developments in the CBL unification file and the unified budget for the year 2024.



Health

Tripoli to organize International Conference on ophthalmology next May

Tripoli Eye Hospital will organize a scientific conference next May with the participation of a number of specialists and doctors from Libya and a number of Arab and foreign countries.

The Director of the Eye Hospital in Tripoli, Rania Al-Khoja, said in a statement to the Libyan News Agency, that the scientific conference will be held on May 9-10, with the participation of a number of specialists and doctors from India,

Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Algeria, and an elite group of Libyan ophthalmologists. She added that the conference will witness the presentation of research and scientific papers that address the latest developments and scientific achievements in ophthalmology with its various specialties, including corneal and retinal transplants, eye oncology, various new treatments, and others, in addition to holding workshops and

discussion panels related to the conference themes.

Al-Khoja explained that the conference will include programs that highlight the progress of Libyan doctors in various eye specialties, with the presence of an elite group of ophthalmology pioneers in different countries to enrich the conference and demonstrate Libya's role.

Health



Leading Egyptian spinal cord transplant team visits Benghazi Medical Centre

An Egyptian medical team specializing in spinal cord transplantation visited Benghazi Medical Center on Sunday to assess the potential and requirements for spinal cord transplantation in Libya.

According to a statement by the Ministry of Health in the parallel government, the Egyptian team comprises four leading doctors in the spinal cord transplantation field, who were the first to start spinal cord transplantation in Egypt with very high success rates.

The medical team toured the Benghazi Medical Centre, including the intensive care units, accommodation facilities, surgical operation theatres, analysis laboratory, drug bank, and accommodation and surgical operation rooms.

The Egyptian team also visited the Children's Hospital and the October 15 Hospital to identify the best departments in these hospitals for conducting spinal cord transplantation surgeries.



Health

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Minister of Economy reviews economic diversification plan with Expertise France

An Italian medical team performed Sunday scoliosis correction surgeries for muscular dystrophy patients at the Misrata Medical Center.

The Misrata Center said in a brief statement that the surgeries were conducted under the supervision of the Treatment Services Support and Development Agency on the sidelines of the International Conference on Localization of Treatment sponsored by the Government of National Unity under the slogan "Settlement of Treatment Locally - Restoration of Life."

Meanwhile, an Egyptian medical team specializing in spinal cord transplantation visited Benghazi Medical Center on Sunday to study the possibilities and requirements for spinal cord transplantation in Libya.



Education

Ministry of Education announces midterm exam schedule

The Ministry of Education has announced the midterm examinations schedule for the second semester.

All exams, including the primary and secondary education certificate tests, will start on Sunday per the Ministerial Decision No. 1046 of 2023.

The second semester began on January 21st and will conclude on May 2nd. The end-of-semester examinations will take place from May 5th to May 16th for students transitioning between primary and secondary education stages. Additionally, the second round of tests will occur from June 23rd to July 24th.

As for the first round of examinations for the certificates of both primary and secondary education stages, they will be held from May 19th to May 30th, and the second round from June 30th to July 11th.



Sports

Libya beats Burkina Faso in a football friendly

Libya's national football team began its training camp in the Moroccan city of Casablanca with a win against Burkina Faso 2-1 as part of the teams' preparations for the resumption of the qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup.

Libya's Faisal Badri opened the scoring in the 34th minute, but

Burkina Faso equalized the score in the 41st minute with a goal by Traoré, before Libyan midfielder, Omar Al-Khoja, had scored the winner.

This is the seventh win out of ten matches under the supervision of Serbian coach "Micho", with three draws.

Libyan national team will conclude its Moroccan camp by playing Togo at the end of its preparations for the third and fourth rounds of the 2026 World Cup qualifiers, where it will play Mauritius and Cape Verde on June 5-8 in the fourth group.



Migration

65 bodies of immigrants recovered in Al-Shuwayrif area

The Criminal Investigation Agency has announced the recovery of 65 bodies belonging to illegal immigrants from Wadi Al-Jahriya in the Al-Shuwayrif area, southwest of Libya.

The agency pointed out that a specialized team took DNA samples from the bodies, explaining that the team buried the bodies in the designated cemetery in the presence of the relevant authorities.



Opinions

Political motives behind the imposition of new foreign exchange tax

By Abdullah Alkabar,
a Libyan political writer and commentator

Despite all alternative proposals, and warnings, from economists who are well aware of the repercussions and consequences of the new foreign exchange tax, the Governor of the Central Bank, Al-Siddiq Al-Kabir, insisted on implementing his decision to devalue the Libyan dinar against foreign currencies, after obtaining permission from Speaker of the House of Representatives, Agila Saleh, who was swift in issuing his approval of the measure. This step did not come as a collective position, neither from the Board of Directors of the Central Bank, nor from the House of Representatives, but rather the two heads agreed the measure for political reasons, without ignoring the economic crisis, which is the most prominent natural result of the ongoing political and legislative crisis in the country.

Protesting the legality of this step will have no effect, as long as the judicial authority is not as effective as it should be, in addition to the burden of cases that require great effort and a lot of time to consider and decide on its offices and filings. However, there is hope that the judiciary will quickly step in and nullify the decision.

The political motives for the decision are not a secret to anyone, as Al-Kabir has not been in agreement with the House of Representatives and its speaker for about a decade. Rather, he was dismissed and his replacement appointed more than once, but the position of the High Council of State, based on the terms of the political agreement, was to reject any change in sovereign positions except by consensus of the two chambers. So, the governor was protected from such dismissal.

The escalating dispute between the Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity and the Governor of the Central Bank is the main reason for the new emergency alliance between the Governor and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Governor's accusation of the government's excessive spending without study as being the reason for the financial and economic imbalance that has befallen the state. This, however, raises questions about the Governor's silence throughout the past two years of such spending, because the governor was accompanying the Prime Minister on most of his internal and external tours, and was familiar with all the

contracts concluded by the government, and all pledges and promises made by the Prime Minister!

One of the reasons given by the governor for imposing a fee on foreign exchange sales is "the absence of any reform measures by the government." The truth is that such measures require transparency and cooperation between the Central Bank and the government. In fact, we reckon that no reform will work as long as the state of political stalemate and institutional division continues. Against the backdrop of what is even more dangerous to the state's monetary stability, which is the counterfeit currency offered by the ruling criminal gang in the east of the country, with which it drains millions of dollars from the parallel market.

The most dangerous aspect of the governor's recent statements is what he said about counterfeit currency and parallel spending, both of which the governor levelled the accusations to unknown culprit. This is as if he did not know that the Speaker of Parliament's absurdity is primarily responsible for parallel spending, with his insistence on establishing a new parallel government that facilitates the ruling gang in the east of the country continue to plunder money. The governor must answer this question. Did he transfer money to this government? And if the answer is no. Then, where does it get the money from? In this way, the mystery will end, and we will know everything about this parallel spending.

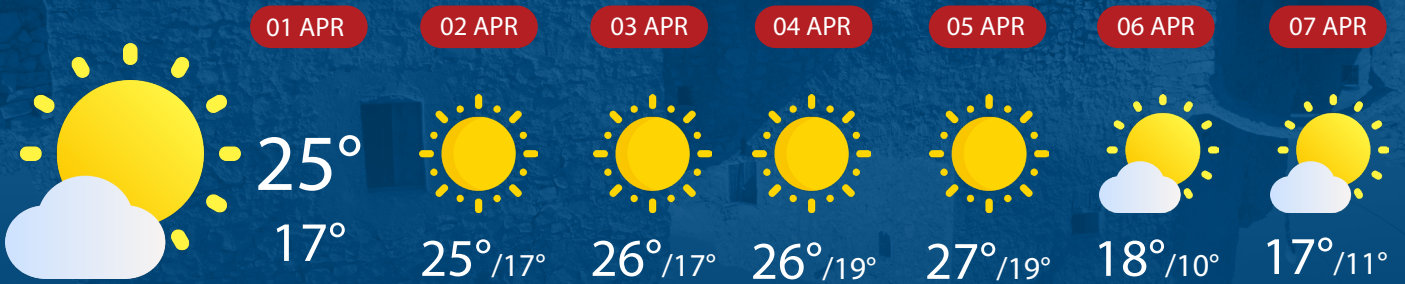
The well-known procedure for combating currency counterfeiting especially denominations of currency that are susceptible to counterfeiting is to impose controls and not accept them for circulation in banks, and to alert people to the need to ensure they are genuine before accepting them. With this procedure, they will be invalidated, and the Central Bank can stop dealing in the denominations that are subject to counterfeiting, and withdraw them from the market temporarily. While, the remaining usual legal procedures should be undertaken by the Attorney General. What are the decisions and actions taken by the Central Bank to combat counterfeit currency? Such an issue we believe is more worthy of attention and focus than pointless disputes with the government.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Libya Observer

Photo of the Week



Tripoli Weather Forecast



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