

World News Roundup



This June 28, 2016 file photo shows an archaeologist taking notes at an ancient Philistine cemetery near Ashkelon, Israel. Human remains from an ancient Philistine cemetery have yielded precious bits of DNA that researchers say help prove the European origin of the enigmatic nemeses of the Biblical Israelites. (AP)

Archaeology

Origin European

Philistine genes help solve mystery: study

JERUSALEM, July 4, (AP): Goliath the Greek? Human remains from an ancient cemetery in southern Israel have yielded precious bits of DNA that a new study says help prove the European origin of the Philistines — the enigmatic nemeses of the biblical Israelites.

The Philistines mostly resided in five cities along the southern coast of what is today Israel and the Gaza Strip during the early Iron Age, around 3,000 years ago. In the Bible, David fought the Philistine giant Goliath in a duel, and Samson slew a thousand of their warriors with the jawbone of an ass.

Many archaeologists have proposed they migrated to the coast of the ancient Near East during a period of upheaval at the end of the Late Bronze Age, around 1200 B.C.

The Philistines emerged as other societies around the eastern Mediterranean collapsed, possibly because of a cataclysmic intersection of climate change and man-made disasters. Philistine ceramics bear similarities to styles found in the Aegean, but concrete evidence of their geographic origins has remained elusive.

Now, a study of genetic material extracted from skeletons unearthed in the Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon in 2013 has found a DNA link. It connects the Philistines to populations in southern Europe during the Bronze Age.

The study, spearheaded by researchers from Germany's Max Planck Institute and Wheaton College in Illinois, was published Wednesday in the research journal *Science Advances*.



Cline

Temple

The biblical account relates that the Philistines originally hailed from a distant isle. An Egyptian temple built by Ramesses III bears reliefs of battles with "Sea Peoples" who appeared on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. One group listed in the Egyptian text is strikingly similar to the Hebrew name for Philistines. Excavations of Philistine sites have found ceramics and architecture that differed from those of their neighbors in ancient Canaan.

But archaeologists can't be absolutely certain that different pots mean different people.

Eric Cline, an archaeologist from George Washington University specializing in the Late Bronze Age in the Near East, said conclusive evidence has eluded scientists until now — even if the material remains have indicated that the Philistines migrated to the Levant from the Aegean around 1200 B.C.

Cline, who was not involved in the study, is the author of "1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed", which examines the period when the Philistines arrived. He called the paper's findings "extremely exciting and very important" by helping resolve the long-standing mystery about their origins.

"We were all hoping that it might be possible to get genetic information like this," he said. "Now we have scientific confirmation from DNA that the Philistines do indeed most likely come from that region."

The researchers looked at DNA from 10 skeletons excavated from the ancient cemetery in Ashkelon, one of the Philistine seaports.

Using Carbon-14 dating technology, three were determined to be from the centuries before the Philistines' presumed arrival around 1200 B.C., four were from the period immediately afterward, and three dated to centuries further on, the late Iron Age.

The study found that the remains dating to the early Iron Age — the period associated with many of the stories involving Philistines in the Bible — were genetically distinct from their Levantine neighbors, and had close similarities with populations in southern Europe.



Smoke billows from the volcano on the Italian island of Stromboli on July 3. The news agency ANSA says that some 30 tourists jumped into the sea out of fear after a series of volcano eruptions on the Sicilian island of Stromboli. Civil protection authorities said a hiker was confirmed killed by the eruptions Wednesday. (AP)



Widodo



Hamilton

Discovery

Indonesian president sued: Environmental groups sued the Indonesian president and several government officials on Thursday over worsening air quality in the capital, Jakarta, one of the world's most congested cities.

Jakarta is consistently ranked among the top 10 most polluted cities in the world, according to Air Visual, a Swiss-based group that monitors air quality.

Pollution levels in the city of over 10 million have spiked in recent weeks to nearly five times the level recommended by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"We are suing the government so they will investigate where the pollution comes from and take actions based on their findings," climate campaigner Bondan Andriyano told journalists at a central Jakarta district court.

Greenpeace and Jakarta Legal Aid Foundation are suing President **Joko Widodo**, the environment minister and home minister and three governors on Java island, including that of Jakarta.

Representatives for Widodo and Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan were not immediately available for comment.

In recent weeks, Jakarta's PM2.5 levels — the amount of tiny particulate matter under 2.5 micrometers found in every cubic meter of air — have reached as high as 152. Anything above 35 is considered "unhealthy" by the EPA.

Some residents have complained of respiratory problems.

"I can see so much haze at night," said 23-year-old Cintya Ladyana who lives on the 25th floor of an apartment building in western Jakarta. "I have also caught the flu and cough." (RTRS)

Alarm over 6 whale deaths: A half-

Environment

'Without climate action, economic growth will be reversed'

India plans \$330 bln renewables push

NEW DELHI, July 4, (RTRS): India said on Thursday it needs \$330 billion in investments over the next decade to power its renewable energy dream, but coal would remain central to its electricity generation.

The energy guzzling country wants to raise its renewable energy capacity to 500 Gigawatts (GW), or 40% of total capacity, by 2030. Renewables currently account for 22% of India's total installed capacity of about 357 GW.

"Additional investments in renewable plants up to year 2022 would be about \$80 billion at today's prices and an investment of around \$250 billion would be required for the period 2023-2030," according to the government's economic survey presented to parliament on Thursday.

India wants to have 175 GW of renewable-based installed power capacity by 2022.

The investment estimate reflects the magnitude of financial challenges facing one of the world's most important growth markets for renewable energy, with government data indicating a growth slowdown in private and capital investments in the year ended March 2019.

India, which receives twice as much sunshine as European countries, wants to make solar a cornerstone of its renewable expansion, but also wants to make use of its cheap and abundant

coal reserves, the fifth-largest in the world.

The annual economic survey warned India against abruptly halting coal-based utilities, citing risks to its banking sector and the stability of the electricity grid.

"It may not be advisable to effect a sudden abandonment of coal based power plants without complete utilization of their useful lifetimes as it would lead to stranding of assets that can have further adverse impact on the banking sector," the survey said.

Thermal power plants account for 80% of all industrial emissions of particulate matter, sulphur and nitrous oxides in India.

India, one of the world's largest coal producers and greenhouse gas emitters, estimates coal to be its energy mainstay for at least the next three decades.

The country's coal use rose 9.1% to nearly a billion tonnes in 2018-19.

The survey said it would be difficult for a growing economy like India to migrate to renewable power supply unless "sufficient technological breakthrough in energy storage happens in the near future".

Environmentalists worry that India's rising use of coal at a time when many Western nations are rejecting the dirty fossil fuel will hamper the global fight against climate change, despite

the country's commitment to renewable energy.

Also:

LONDON: Without rapid transformation of global economies to largely eliminate climate-changing emissions, countries face economic decline as the costs of wilder weather and other threats soar, British economist **Nicholas Stern** warned on Wednesday.

"There is no high-carbon growth story in anything like the medium or long term," he told business and government officials at an innovation forum held as part of London Climate Week events.

The growing climate threat "creates an environment so hostile that growth will be reversed," said Stern, who chairs the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment in London.

Unexpectedly rapid change is already underway in some parts of the global economy, with car manufacturers now discussing the end of the internal combustion engine, he said, and renewable energy cheaper than fossil fuels in many places.

But while efforts to shift economies are accelerating, they are still "not nearly fast enough", he said.

Around the world, "you have to go zero right across the board, country by country, sector by sector. Basically you need to go to zero everywhere" in terms of emissions, he said.

dozen North Atlantic right whales have died in the past month, leading scientists, government officials and conservationists to call for a swift response to protect the endangered species.

There are only a little more than 400 of the right whales left. All six of the dead whales have been found in the Gulf of St Lawrence off Canada, and at least three appear to have died after they were hit by ships.

The deaths have led scientists to sound the alarm about a potentially catastrophic

loss to the population. The deaths are especially troubling because they include females, said **Philip Hamilton**, research scientist with the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life at the New England Aquarium.

"If we're going to have deaths, they just can't be female," Hamilton said, adding the population is down to only about 100 reproductive females. "We need a different system."

Right whales have suffered high mortality and poor reproduction in recent years,

particularly in 2017. The whales appear to be traveling in different areas of the ocean than usual because of food availability, said Nick Record, senior research scientist at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in Maine.

That shift, linked to the warming of the ocean, has apparently brought whales outside protected zones and left them vulnerable, he said. (AP)

Selling of antiquities condemned: Egypt has condemned the London-based Christie Auction House selling of scores of Egyptian artifacts as an illegal action that violates international cultural heritage protection conventions.

The sale of the Egyptian artifacts, which include a 3,300-year-old head sculpture of the Egyptian boy Pharaoh Tutankhamun is a violation of all relevant international conventions, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday.

The French-owned British auction house sold on Wednesday a collection of 32 Egyptian artifacts and planned to sell two others on Thursday, including the brown quartzite statue of Tutankhamun which Egypt claims was smuggled from Karnak Temple in Luxor.

It regretted that that sale of the historically significant artifacts today despite the official requests from the Egyptian ministries of foreign affairs and antiquities to both the UK Foreign Office and Christie Auction House to stop or at least delay the auction until reviewing its ownership documents.

The Christie Auction House had failed to provide Egypt with the official documents of the artifacts, it stated. (KUNA)



A 3D printed recreation of the ancient Lion of Mosul, which was destroyed by the Islamic State group at the Mosul Museum in Iraq, is displayed as part of the 'What Remains' exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London on July 3. The exhibit, which runs from July 5 until Jan 5, 2020, explores why cultural heritage is attacked during historical and contemporary conflicts. (AP)