

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Sunday That
Some 74 More Iranians Died of the
COVID-19 During the Past 24 Hours
Bringing the Total Deaths to 59,483**

IRAN NEWS

**More Than 200 MPs at Majlis in a
Statement Emphasized that Majlis
Decision on Lifting Sanctions
Should Be Implemented by February
23 and the Government Has No
Right to Delay Its Implementation**

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President Upbeat With Financial Management In U.S. Economic War

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday praised accurate management of revenues and expenditure in the critical period of U.S. Economic War and maximum pressure.

Speaking in the 205th session of the economic coordination committee on Sunday, Rouhani said that thanks to accurate planning, especially the arrangements made in the context of the budget plan, the Government managed to coordinate revenues and the expenditures.

He also stressed the importance of rendering urgent aid to quake-hit people in southwestern Iran and assistance to repair the houses damaged by the quake.

Earlier, Rouhani said that Iran's economic relations are entering a new phase and that views of Iranian trade partners have changed.

He said that it is clear that the defeated enemy of the economic war aims to break the country's economic tranquility.

He said that the country's economic situation is improving rapidly, but keeping such development requires calm and peace in the market.

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U.S. Sanctions Inflicted \$1 Trillion Damage on Iran's Economy

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States inflicted \$1 trillion worth of damage on Iran's economy and Tehran expects compensation, its foreign minister said.

Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday after the U.S. takes action to restore Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers through lifting sanctions, Tehran will want to negotiate on the damages it has suffered.

"When we meet, we will raise compensation," Zarif told the state-owned news network PressTV in an hour-long interview.

"Whether those compensations will take the form of reparation, or whether they take the form of investment, or whether they take the form of measures to prevent a repeat of what Trump did," he said in reference to former U.S. President Donald Trump.

Trump unilaterally abandoned the nuclear deal in 2018 and imposed harsh, comprehensive sanctions that targeted all the sectors of Iran's economy.

According to Zarif, Trump reimposed 800 sanctions that were put on Iran before the nuclear deal and imposed 800 new ones, all of which need to be lifted before the U.S. can return to the deal.

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Iran, IAEA Hold Fruitful Talks in Tehran



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's permanent ambassador to the International Organizations in Vienna Kazem Gharibabadi says today's meeting between Iranian nuclear chief and IAEA head has been fruitful.

"Iran and the IAEA held fruitful discussions based on mutual respect, the result of which will be released this evening," Gharibabadi tweeted while also posting several photos of yesterday's meeting.

Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi met and held talks with Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi on Sunday here in Tehran.

Their talks on Sunday revolved around coordinating the simultaneous implementation of the IAEA's Safeguards Agreement and the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, a law passed last December by the Iranian parliament. Grossi arrived in the Iranian capital on Saturday night for talks with Iranian officials at his own request. Upon his arrival to Tehran, IAEA chief was welcomed by the Spokesman for Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi and Iran's Representative in IAEA Kazem Gharibabadi.

Grossi's second visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran since taking office as director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comes amid a countdown to the deadline set by Iran slated for Feb. 23 to end the implementation of Additional Protocol.

Grossi held talks with ar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), after arriving in Tehran.

Grossi was later to meet with Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

In a post on his Twitter account on Friday, Grossi said he would "meet with senior Iranian officials to find a mutually agreeable solution, compatible with Iranian law, so that the @iaeaorg can continue essential verification activities in Iran."

Iran-Led Resistance Axis Key to Defeating U.S.-Israeli Project

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Hezbollah has stressed that "participation in the Iran-led resistance axis" is the best means of defeating the trend of betrayal of the Palestinian cause, which has seen many regional states normalizing their relations with the Israeli regime.

The Lebanese resistance movement's Deputy Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem made the remarks on Saturday, addressing a conference hosted by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip that focused on confronting the normalization trend. "The solution is for everybody to participate in the resistance axis that the Islamic Republic is leading against the American-Zionist project," he said, according to Lebanon's al-Manar television network.

"Within the resistance axis, we should all try to acquire all the instruments of power and armament at their highest level," the official noted.

Last year, the U.S. began mediating détente between some regional countries and the Israeli regime.

The drive saw the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain formally normalizing their ties with Tel Aviv in September. Sudan and Morocco followed suit. Sheikh Qassem said normalization with Israel equals the abandonment of Palestine, which constitutes the Muslim world's "central" concern, and also serves as "the green light" to the occupying regime's expansionist policies by legitimizing its "usurpation-based existence."

The normalization bandwagon set off after the administration of former U.S. president Donald Trump unveiled a hugely controversial plan that it alleged sought to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The scheme, dubbed "the deal of the century" by its proponents, however, provided Israel with some unprecedented concessions at the expense of Palestinians' basic rights. Those included recognizing Israel's claim to the occupied territory on which the regime has been building hundreds of settlements and also its claim over the holy occupied city of Jerusalem al-Quds as its so-called "capital."

All Palestinian factions and their regional and international supporters strongly repudiated both the U.S. scheme and the normalization spree, calling the trend "a stab in the back" of Palestinians and their cause of liberation from Israeli occupation and aggression.

Apparently referring to Palestinians' success in rejecting the American plot, Sheikh Qassem said, "However, the Palestinian nation managed to defeat the 'deal of the century' from within Palestine [itself]."

This, he added, showed that the Arab nations were capable of playing an important role in confronting the campaign of rapprochement with Israel. Sheikh Qassem maintained that frustration of the American plot had already foreshadowed the doom of the normalization trend.

"The countries that have entered the trend of normalization with the Zionist regime will not be reaping any outcome other than regret," the official asserted.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Additional Protocol Is the Revolutionary Address

In the past two weeks that the White House is tottering in an innate confusion for making decisions regarding rejoin to the JCPOA and accepting the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution's demand, both Iran President and the Foreign Ministry Spokesman have announced the firm decisions of the establishment regarding Iran's quitting the additional protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which the country has voluntarily joined it, and they stated that the framework of safeguard will be the base of ties between Iran and the IAEA. The deadline for implementing this decision was yesterday (February 21) and as the result, the Islamic Republic of Iran announces its pullout from the additional protocol as of today.

Iran Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh last week and during his press conference and on the set February 21 deadline by Majlis stated, "Minor technical issues should be asked from the spokesman of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) but if the other signatories of the JCPOA do not implement their obligations by February 21, the government will be obliged to stop voluntary implementation of the additional protocol of the IAEA." He also reminded, "This move does not mean stopping the safeguard monitoring and it does not mean cessation of all monitoring. Indeed, Iran is a member of the safeguard and NPT but the additional protocol which had been voluntarily accepted will be ceased."

This issue from the view of the Islamic Republic of Iran of course is very crystal clear that all actions are reversible and the condition for its reversibility will be that all signatories of the agreement should be committed to their obligations. So this issue that Iran's stance regarding its peaceful nuclear activities has remained unchanged should be emphatically repeated in order that the P5+1 signatories cannot muddy the ground for the IAEA. Recently, Iran Deputy Foreign Minister Syed Abbas Araqchi in an interview officially announced, "The JCPOA without lifting sanctions will be of no value."

By the way the foreign ministry spokesman regarding the recent remarks of the Minister of Intelligence, stated: "Iran's position has not changed and is committed to the peaceful nature of all nuclear activities, and this position has not changed, and the Supreme Leader's fatwa on the nuclear weapons as a forbidden act remains in place." On the transparency of the Islamic Republic of Iran's activities as well as Iran's recent letter to the IAEA regarding the confidentiality of information, Khatibzadeh said: "This letter is not our first but I hope it would be the last one. We had the utmost cooperation. The information has been leaked several times in the past. The agency is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of documents. These documents are essentially confidential otherwise Iran's activities are clear. We are sorry for some serious negligence in the information provided to the agency in the past. This letter has just been a reminder of the IAEA's responsibilities."

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Iran-Cuba Joint COVID Vaccine to Get Result Ahead of Others

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Deputy Health Minister said that joint coronavirus, COVID-19, vaccine production between Iran and Cuba will get the result ahead of other vaccines and will be used sooner than other vaccines as well.

Iranian Deputy Health Minister said that joint production of coronavirus, COVID-19, vaccine between Iran and Cuba will get the result ahead of other vaccines and will be used in the country sooner than other vaccines as well.

Speaking among reporters on Sunday, Dr. Iraj Harirchi reiterated that the jointly production of COVID-19 vaccine between Iran and Cuba will reach the final result ahead of other vaccines. With the studies made in this regard, the vaccine production between the two countries may enter implementation phase before Iranian month of Ordibehesht (April) in the next Iranian calendar year (to start May 20).

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FM Raps West, IAEA Hypocrisy Over Israel's Expansion of Nuclear Site

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has lashed out at European leaders and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for turning a blind eye to the Israel regime's quiet expansion of the highly-secretive Dimona nuclear facility in the Negev Desert while targeting Tehran's nuclear program.

"Israel is expanding Dimona, the region's only nuclear bomb factory," Zarif said in a post on his Twitter account on Saturday.

Tagging U.S. President Joe Biden, the IAEA, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the top Iranian diplomat tweeted, "Gravely concerned? Concerned? A little? Care to comment? I thought so."

Zarif's tweet came after newly-released satellite images have revealed that the Israeli regime — the sole possessor of nuclear arms in the Middle East — is conducting "significant" constructive activities at the Dimona nuclear facility.

Iran to Halt Some Voluntary Actions, But Not to Leave JCPOA

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian diplomat says Tehran's move to stop the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol on February 23, 2021 does not mean the country is withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi stressed that no one can question Iran's goodwill with regards to the nuclear deal.

"Iran's move on February 23 does not mean Tehran's pullout from the JCPOA," said Araqchi in an interview on state TV.

He underlined that Iran has always remained committed to its obligations under the nuclear deal as corroborated by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"Fifteen reports by the IAEA confirm Iran's full compliance with the JCPOA, which amounts to documented and conclusive evidence of that claim (Iran's abidance)," said the deputy foreign minister.

"The JCPOA is a handiwork of Democrats many of whom were members of the [US] negotiating team at the time and are now by Biden's side," he explained.

"They are the ones who negotiated the JCPOA themselves, and the deal was signed during their time, and naturally they have the motivation to return to the JCPOA," he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Araqchi rejected out of hand any preconditions by the US for returning to the JCPOA.

"Biden said Friday night that they would return [to the JCPOA] by holding talks with Iran through the P5+1 group. Do they think that through talks we would accept things that we didn't even when we were under maximum pressure?" he said.

"If we wanted to submit to the United States' illegal and illegitimate demands, we would have done so during Trump's tenure," Araqchi noted.



He emphasized that Washington should accept the JCPOA as it is.

The top diplomat reiterated Iran will begin to fully implement its obligations under the JCPOA once the U.S. does so.

"If we are supposed to hold talks in official or unofficial meetings with or without US presence, the topic of discussion will be the JCPOA only, and we won't hold any negotiations on the 'JCPOA Plus' or anything else," Araqchi noted.

He also lambasted the three European state parties to the nuclear deal for failing to make good on their commitments.

"After the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, the Europeans stepped in and asked us to stay in the nuclear deal, so that they would compensate for the U.S. absence and find practical solutions," he explained.

He said Iran gave the Europeans one year to deliver on their obligations, but they failed to. After Europe failed to fulfill its obligations, said Araqchi, Iran scaled down its commitment under the JCPOA in accordance with the provisions stipulated in the very same deal.

However, he said, Iran's measures are reversible.

The top diplomat further underlined that Iran's defense capabilities are not negotiable, whatsoever.

World's Political Developments Not to Affect Iran-Russia Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) – An Iranian lawmaker says the amicable and strategic ties between Tehran and Moscow will not be affected by any political change across the world.

"Political changes in any part of the world have no effect on Iran-Russia bilateral relations.... Countries like Russia advocate multilateralism," Spokesman for the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Abolfazl Amouei said.

He referred to a recent visit by Iran's parliament speaker to Moscow and the handing of the Iranian Leader's message to the Russian government and said that such developments that came a few days after the change in the White House, show that any political change in any part of the world would not affect bilateral relations between Iran and Russia.

Amouei pointed to Iran's consistent diplomacy in foreign relations, saying, "We are ready to talk to all countries that treat Iran on the basis of mutual respect and accept the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"There has always been an anti-domination approach in Iran's foreign policy," Amouei said, adding that in this regard, any country that does not seek hegemony and dominance in its relations will be welcomed for talks by Tehran.

The lawmaker noted that Iran, as a powerful country in West Asia, attaches great importance to its ties with all independent countries, such as Russia and China, since they hold similar views toward international relations and counter the American and Western hegemonic policies.

"There is a common view between Iran and countries such as Russia and China, and they also advocate multilateralism."

Iran the Leading Country in Handicrafts



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicraft said that Iranian artists' display of art had made Iran the world's leading country in handicrafts.

Speaking in the celebration of the 5th Fajr Festival of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts, which was held on Saturday at the National Museum of Iran, Pouya Mahmoudian said: "The 5th Fajr Festival of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts was held while facing many difficulties."

Mrs. Mahmoudian added that the festival was an opportunity to showcase Iranians' art, love, and skill to the world. "The artists' works have placed Iran on top of the cities and villages of the world," she highlighted, adding: "The message of the 5th Fajr Festival of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts is that creating the artworks continues during these most difficult days, and we are proud of what we saw at the exhibition."

Meanwhile Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism said the latest achievements in handicrafts were presented well in the 5th Fajr Handicrafts Festival.

Speaking on the sidelines of the closing ceremony of the 5th Fajr Handicrafts Festival, Ali Asghar Mounesan considered this festival's role important in introducing the Iranian handicraft to the world and stated that the festival had achieved its goals.

He stated that the artists who participated in the festival were good, and the side exhibition was held according to the health protocols. He noted that new ideas had been introduced in the festival, which would further enhance Iranian handicraft's position.

Trump Administration's Actions Disgraced U.S. Worldwide

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian vice president says the United States lost all grace across the world as a result of actions by its former President Donald Trump.

Es'haq Jahangiri said what the Trump administration did "discredited" Washington.

"The new U.S. administration should know that everything the country's previous administration did has disgraced the United States in the world and undermined its credibility," Jahangiri underscored.

"Even U.S. allies kept telling us that they were against Trump's moves," he added.

"Even when Trump wanted to activate the trigger mechanism against Iran and reinstate UN Security Council resolutions, only the US president himself and one of his associates voted for it, and all other UN Security Council member states such as the European countries, China, Russia and other countries adopted a position in favor of Iran," Jahangiri explained.

The vice president then recalled the Trump's illegal and unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"The U.S. president pullout out of the JCPOA and imposed cruel sanctions against the Iranian nation, then they claim to be supporters of human rights," he said.

Jahangiri said the U.S. even prevented Iran from importing medicines to tackle the coronavirus outbreak.

He then urged Washington to return to its obligations under the nuclear deal and lift sanctions against Iran.

"After sanctions are lifted and this is verified, Iran will immediately return to all its commitments under the JCPOA," he said.

Majlis Seeks to Solve People's Problems by Interacting With Gov't

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker said the parliament has been seeking to solve the people's problems by interacting with the government.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf stated that the country's entire budget inherited decades of governments' economic performance.

He noted that the New Year's budget bill has more serious problems than previous years' bills and could endanger people's livelihoods.

He pointed out that the Integration Commission had made important reforms in favor of the people in this budget, but in the end, the government is the executor of the budget.

Qalibaf added: "The MPs decided to leave the bill's

amendments to the government, and the parliament just makes the necessary changes as a result of this process and consultations."

The government took a step in favor of the people, and the parliament took several steps so that the disputes would not prevent the people from solving their problems. Of course, this budget is not desirable for the parliament, but maximum amendments have been applied.

He added that MPs would make the final decisions in the budget review sessions.

Regarding the Sisakht earthquake, Qalibaf called on the government to work with the executive apparatus to rebuild and solve the people's problems.

De Palma-Fratta Perform Two Concerts in Tehran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - With two exclusive classical music concerts, Italian duo, Dino De Palma (violin) and Gianna Fratta (piano), completed a tour in Iran marked

by warm reception and considerable public interest.

The first concert was hosted on February 19 at the Residence of the Italian Ambassador in Tehran, Giuseppe Perrone, while the second one was held at Vahdat Hall on the occasion of the 36th edition of the Fajr Music Festival.

The concert at the Italian Residence, with a limited audience due to Covid19 pandemic prevention protocols, was streamed live on the social media channels of the Italian Embassy. The second concert, held the next day, was one of the most remarkable and anticipated appointments of the Fajr Music Festival.

This year presence from abroad was extremely limited because of the pandemic. However, the Italian duo decided to participate in person and performed a live concert at Vahdat Hall.

The participation of Mr. De Palma and Ms. Fratta in this edition of the Fajr Music Festival and the concert at the Residence - Ambassador Perrone stressed - are a sign of the extremely close bonds of friendship between Italian and Iranian peoples and a confirmation of the depth of



artistic and cultural ties between the two countries.

The classical music repertoire performed by the duo at the Residence included "Dance Macabre" by C. Saint-Saens, "Czarda" by V. Monti, "Variations on one String from G. Rossini's Mosè" by N. Paganini, Italian Opera Medley and "Summer" from A. Vivaldi. The Vahdat Hall's highlights were "Scherzo in C Minor" by J. Brahms, "Sonata n. 3 in C Minor" by E. Grieg and "Variations on a Theme from Rossini's Mosè" by N. Paganini.

Enemy Pushed Out of Region after Iran War Games

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said several massive military exercises launched by Iran in recent weeks have forced the enemy to leave the region.

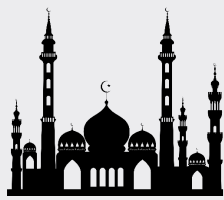
In a meeting with a senior Iranian cleric in Qom on Sunday, the top general highlighted the Iranian Armed Forces' success in overcoming the enemy's mounting pressures over the past two years after the U.S.' withdrawal from the JCPOA and the subsequent escalation of sanctions.

"The enemy ultimately left the region with humiliation and its dreams did not come true," Baqeri said.

He added that the Iranian Armed Forces staged 10 war games on Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei's orders after the previous U.S. president Donald Trump mounted pressures during the last two months of his tenure and made a series of moves in the region.

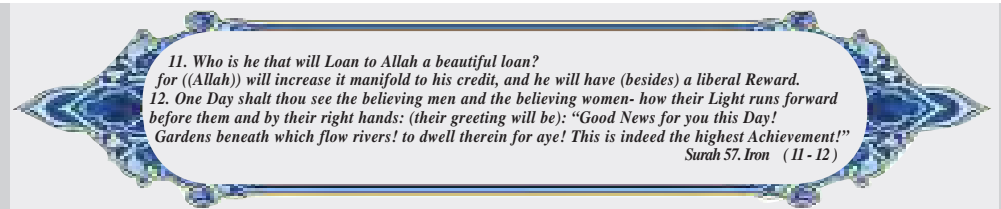
The commander said the unplanned military exercises by Iran, which included various missiles, drones, as well as maritime and air defense systems, put an end to the "enemy's mischief in the region".

The enemy was forced to leave the region, while Iran's security was preserved very well, he added.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:17
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:17
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:41



Ground Ripe for Launching Megastores In Latin America

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of the Commission for Trade Development and Non-Oil Export Development of Iran Chamber of Cooperatives Babak Afghahi believes the ground is ready for Iran to launch megastores in the Latin American states, adding that the work on promoting Iranian goods in those countries continue.

Speaking to ILNA, Afghahi said that before launching chain stores or centers for direct sales of Iranian goods, it requires infrastructures and thorough studies.

He also delved into more details of launching a direct shipping line to South Africa and Latin American countries in near future and said the line is to be launched aimed at reducing the cost of trade between Iran and its exporting destinations in Africa and Latin America, adding that the requests for launching this shipping line have come from cooperatives of Iran and those countries as well as different trade layers of the countries.

He noted that currently most of Iran's cargos are exported to those countries via cross stuffing in Jebel Ali (changing containers); it means cargos are exported to the UAE and Jebel Ali and through cross stuffing they are exported to the target destinations and this increases the cost of transshipment very considerably and it also increases the trade risk between Iran and other countries.

Afghahi noted that for this reason after talks with the CEO of Islamic Republic of



Iran Shipping Line Group (IRISL), it was decided to launch a direct and regular line between Iran, Africa and Brazil.

He went on to say that Iran's private sector is to export its goods via the southern ports with a stopover in one of the ports of South Africa and then they will be sent to the ports of Latin American states. He reiterated that this direct line can give services on weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis.

On the date of the first dispatch, Afghahi said as soon as the capacity of the 50,000-ton vessel is completed, the operation of this direct shipping line will begin.

He said in Latin America, countries like Brazil, Venezuela and Ecuador and some more countries will be the destinations of this ship during the journey, adding that of course the trade volume with Brazil is incomparable with other countries in this region.

He also said that Brazil is one of Iran's major trade partner in supplying basic goods and livestock input and this move will definitely lead to the increase in imports of the livestock input, adding "our slogan is even if all the world sanction us, only trade and connection with Brazil is enough for us."

Afghahi further said that the trade volume between Iran and Brazil is some \$3b per year and Iran mostly imports livestock input, corn and soybean meal from Brazil.

Regular Shipping Line Connects Bandar Abbas to Syria

IIRAN (IP) - The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line Organization announced a regular shipping line from Bandar Abbas to the Syrian port, Latakia.

Abdullah Hassoumi said: "To support the country's exports and according to the plans made, a special shipping line for export cargo will start operating on March 10 between Bandar Abbas and Latakia.

He added: "Export cargo will be shipped by bulk carriers of the bulk carrier company, regularly and once a month from Iran to Syria and vice versa by multi-purpose ships."

The CEO also stated that the first shipment would be dispatch to Latakia port on March 10, saying: "Traders and owners of goods can proceed with the ordering process in coordination with the public freight transport of this company."

Hosoumi went on to say: "If business owners support the shipping line, it will be possible to transport cargo up to twice a month," he added.

He noted that the shipping line's purpose is to increase the national fleet share in the market for export and import cargo in the face of sanctions.

Iran Ranks First in Astrakhan Trade Turnover

TEHRAN (IP) - The Islamic Republic of Iran won first place with the largest volume of commercial cargo transportation in the Russian ports of Astrakhan last month (January).

The amount of cargo handling in Astrakhan ports in January 2021 increased by about 27%, compared to the same period in 2020, reaching 262 thousand tons. However, the above index has been declining in other parts of Russia.

Public Joint-Stock Company of Astrakhansky Port Company (Solyanka Port), 53% of the shares belonging to the Islamic Republic, gained the first rank among Astrakhan ports by loading

and unloading 54,000 tons of goods during the same period.

The private joint-stock company, "Astrakhan Seaport" with 46 thousand tons and the "Central Cargo Port" as an LTD company, won the first to third ranks in the province, respectively with 25 thousand tons.

According to the Ministry of Industry of Astrakhan's official statistics, the port of Solyanka was ranked first among 15 active ports on the Volga River and the region of Olia and the Republic of Dagestan in 2020, both in terms of cargo tonnage and several berths.

Rises in Weekly and Monthly Trades on IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) enjoyed significant growth in its last week as well as in its last month trade.

According to a report by the public relations and international affairs office of the IME, the IME witnessed trade of 718,966 tons of commodities last week with a total trading value of nearly \$443m.

As per report, on the mineral and industrial trading floor of IME some 396,872 tons of commodities worth nearly \$272m were traded.

On this floor, the IME sold 377,074 tons of steel, 9,200 tons of copper, 7,280 tons of aluminum, 150 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 18 tons of precious metals concentrate, 60 tons of lead, 3,000 tons of zinc and 24 kg of gold bars.

Next trading floor was the oil and petrochemical with 415,410 tons of commodities sold on its both domestic and export pits valued at nearly \$170m.

Commodities purchased on this floor included 64,300 tons of vacuum bottom, 91,597 tons of bitumen, 85,334 tons of polymeric products, 39,033 tons of chemicals, 26,500 tons of lube cut, 3,795 tons of base oil, 30 tons of argon, 350 tons of insulation and 6,500 tons of sulfur.

Moreover, the IME saw trade of 5,884 tons of various types of commodities on its side market.

Meanwhile within the last Iranian calendar month which ended on February 18, the IME sold 2,960,000 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$1,620m, showing 2 and 16 percent of growth in volume and value of trades respectively. As per report, the mineral and industrial trading floor witnessed trade of 1,349,000 tons of commodities worth more than \$875m.

This floor was a platform to sell 236,000 tons of steel, 26,040 tons of copper, 54 tons of precious metals concentrate, 510 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 24,500 tons of aluminum, 500 tons of coke, 18,100 tons of zinc, 50,000 tons of iron ore concentrate, 100 tons of cast iron, 50 tons of lead and 65 kg of gold bars.

In addition to that, the IME traded on both domestic and export pit of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 1,589,000 tons of commodities worth more than \$740m.

Commodities sold here were 494,337 tons of bitumen, 331,664 tons of petrochemicals, 152,840 tons of chemicals, 13,382 tons of base oil, 423,050 tons of vacuum bottom, 18,790 tons of sulfur, 200 tons of argon, 250 tons of insulation and 159,500 tons of lube cut.

Last but not least, the exchange saw trade of 21,645 tonnes of commodities on its side market.



Tehran, Rome Explore Ways Of Expanding Economic Ties



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Ambassador of Italy to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone in meeting with Head of Iran Chamber of Cooperative (ICC) Mr. Bahman Abdolli explored ways to boost economic relations between the two countries especially between their cooperative sectors.

According to the report, Peronne and Abdollahi discussed ways of boosting economic interactions between the two countries in the cooperative sector due to the good cooperation capacity of Italy's Cooperative Federation (Legacoop: Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue).

In the meeting, Abdollahi welcomed the Italian diplomat and briefed him of potentials of Iran's cooperative sector. He then said cooperative in Iran enjoys an old background and Iran's cooperative can cooperate with Italy in the fields like agriculture, agro products, industry, petrochemical, handicraft, and construction.

He also expressed the interest of ICC for boosting cooperation with Legacoop, adding that according to the plans, a memorandum of understanding is to be signed between ICC and Legacoop for boosting cooperation.

Abdollahi then pointed to the outbreak of the coronavirus and said in the current pandemic condition, the virtual capacities are used for communication with Italian cooperatives, and then dispatch of trade delegation will be put on the agenda. In the meeting, it was also decided that Italy's commercial secretary and head of international affairs of the ICC could arrange holding some webinars for expanding cooperative interactions between Iran and Italy.

Chadormalu's Martyr Fakhrizadeh Solar Power Plant Inaugurated

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – As the first project, the Martyr Fakhrizadeh solar plant of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company (CMIC) was inaugurated by Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mr. Alireza Razm Hosseini at the proximity of Combined Cycle Power Plant of Chadormalu in the town of Ardakan.



In a ceremony held in the presence of Industry Minister, the CEO of CMIC Mr. Naser Taghizadeh and some of Yazd Province officials, the solar power plant was inaugurated as part of the company's developmental projects.

The project was inaugurated after Mr. Taghizadeh read a report regarding the projects and plans of the company in line with its extensive development and creating value in the investment and continuation of record breakings in production in the steel and processing units of Chadormalu.

Then Industry Minister Razm Hosseini hailed the effective actions of the CEO of Chadormalu Company in playing the social responsibility and its strong determination for improving the social and cultural indexes in the region, and announced his support of such projects and development programs in the country which plays a key role in the national economic growth.

The minister added that despite sanctions and resulted economic hardship in Iran, the country has progressed considerably in the industry sector as so far some \$3b has been saved because of indigenizing the industrial parts.

Razm Hosseini termed the role of mines as the infrastructure of developing industry in the country, adding that soon the plan for privatizing the delayed mines would be announced.

The solar power plant of Chadormalu with the capability of tracing the sun from east to the west can produce energy 30 percent more than the fixed solar power plant and some 1650b rials has been invested on its construction and it has been built and come on stream in the industrial complex of the company Pars CPG Company, an affiliate company to Chadormalu Group.

Iran Working With Swiss Agency to Obtain Labels For Food Designations



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran is using the services of a major Swiss intellectual property agency to protect four major food designations as it seeks boosted international trade for those products under geographical indications (GIs).

A senior Iranian agriculture ministry official said on Saturday that Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property would grant the property rights to the four Iranian food products as part of a trade agreement between Iran and Switzerland.

The signature products are saffron from Ghayenat, a county on the Iran-Afghan border, raisins from Malayer, a city in western Iran, pistachio grown in Rafsanjan, a town southeast of the country, and Piarom dates from Hajjiabad, near the Persian Gulf, according to Mohammad Khaledi, head of the economic affairs office at the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad (MAJ).

Khaledi said that Iranian and Swiss officials had held a virtual meeting to report on their progress on GI labeling for the four food designations.

"The policy adopted by the MAJ is to move away from the traditional or conventional agriculture toward a commercial one with a focus on value chains and contract farming," said Khaledi.

GI gives certain qualities or a reputation to products with a specific geographic origin. The label guarantees that the product is authentic by the means of the land it has been produced in. The protection then boosts the trade value of the products and lead to more incomes for countries selling them.

Iran has rarely used a robust GI system for many of its world-famous farming and handicraft products and certifications planned to be granted by the Swiss authority can lead to a major boom in trade for those higher-value crops.

Biden Approves Major Disaster Declaration for Texas

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Joe Biden has approved a major disaster declaration for Texas which has suffered widespread power blackouts and water shortages during a deadly deep freeze, the Federal Emergency Management Agency said on Saturday.

Millions of residents in the United States' biggest oil and gas producer have dealt with power outages, and nearly half of Texas' residents on Friday had to endure disrupted water service. Nearly two dozen deaths have been attributed to the storm and a frigid snap. The action makes federal funding available to individuals across the state, including assistance for temporary housing and home repairs and low-cost loans.



Sudan, Ethiopia Trade Barbs Over Border Dispute

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Sudan has accused Ethiopia of an "unforgivable insult" in its sharpest statement yet since a decades-old border dispute flared late last year.

Clashes erupted between Sudanese and Ethiopian forces over Al-Fashqa, an area of fertile land settled by Ethiopian farmers that Sudan says lies on its side of a border demarcated at the start of the 20th century, which Ethiopia rejects.

In a statement on Thursday, Ethiopia's foreign ministry said it believes "the conflict being trumpeted by the Sudanese government's military wing could only serve the interests of a third party at the expense of the Sudanese people".



Cypriots Defy Ban to Protest Again Over Corruption, Coronavirus Curbs



NICOSIA (Reuters) - Thousands of Cypriots protesting against coronavirus restrictions and corruption held a peaceful march on Saturday in defiance of a ban on gatherings.

The event, held following a violent crackdown by police of a previous protest which triggered widespread criticism last week, saw marchers holding flowers and banners parade through a central thoroughfare in the capital Nicosia to the island's parliament.

Protesters wearing face masks were observed at a distance by police.

Cyprus, which has fared better than most countries in handling the pandemic, has been in and out of lockdown for about a year. However, disclosures of perceived corruption from a passport-for-investment scheme has fuelled public discontent.

"I feel like my future is just hanging by a thread. There are no jobs, but those governing and their buddies are getting rich," said one protester identified only as Ioanna, 24.

A smaller protest held on Feb. 13 was met with a heavy-handed response by police, who clashed with demonstrators and deployed water cannon. The incident triggered a police inquiry and admissions by the island's justice minister that some scenes showed a disproportionate reaction.

On Saturday, the water cannon was kept at a distance, parked about two kilometres away within the medieval walls of the capital Nicosia.

The passport scheme was abruptly pulled by authorities last year after the Al Jazeera news network showed individuals allegedly willing to facilitate citizenship for a fictitious investor with a criminal record, and which they subsequently denied. The scheme is also being probed by an independent board of inquiry.

"Down with the Junta of the Partitionist," read one banner, with the word "partitionist" a play on the name of President Nicos Anastasiades, referring to the ethnic division of the island populated by Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Thai Protests Outside Parliament After PM Survives Vote

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Hundreds of protesters gathered outside Thailand's parliament after Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and nine ministers survived a parliamentary no-confidence motion on Saturday after a four-day censure debate.

"It was a disappointment, but expected," protest leader Attapon Buapat said.

Over 1,000 protesters rallied outside the parliament gates. Organisers gave assurances the protest would not turn violent.

"We want a peaceful protest," protest leader Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanakul told reporters after speaking to the police. "There is no reason for police to break up this demonstration."

Earlier, lawmakers voted in favour of Prayuth and other ministers, which had been widely expected.

Navalny Loses Appeal Against Jail Term

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny lost his appeal on Saturday against what he said was a politically motivated decision to jail him for nearly three years, but said his faith in God and belief in the rightness of his cause was sustaining him.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic, was jailed earlier this month for parole violations that he said were trumped up. Western countries have condemned the case and are discussing possible sanctions on Russia.

A Moscow court swiftly rejected Navalny's appeal on Saturday, while shortening his original jail term by six weeks. The original term was 3-1/2 years.

But with the amount of time he had already spent under house arrest taken into account, it amounted to around two years and eight months. His lawyer said on Saturday he would now spend a little over 2-1/2 years behind bars and that his legal team would try to challenge the decision to reject his appeal.

Navalny responded sarcastically to the ruling, which paves the way for him to be transferred from an infamous Moscow jail to a prison camp. "They've reduced the sentence by 1-1/2 months. Great!" he said from a courtroom glass cage.

Navalny's allies reacted with anger. "The court decision to keep Alexei in jail says only one thing. There is no law in Russia right now," staff at Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, who investigate alleged official corruption, wrote on Twitter.

Navalny, 44, had earlier told the judge he was not guilty of parole violations as a previous court had found.

He returned to Russia last month from Germany, where he had been recovering from a near-fatal poisoning in Siberia in August with what many Western nations said was a nerve agent.

He said he had been unable to report to the Moscow prison service last year because he had been convalescing in Germany at the time.

"I don't want to show off a lot, but the whole world knew where I was," Navalny told the judge.

He said he had no regrets about returning to Russia, that his belief in God helped sustain him, and that "strength was in truth".



Three Separate Kabul Explosions Kill 5, Wound 2

KABUL (Dispatches) - Three separate explosions in the Afghan capital Kabul killed at least five people and wounded two others amid a surge in violence in the war-torn country.

Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said the first two explosions took place 15 minutes apart and a third targeting a police vehicle occurred two hours later. No group immediately claimed responsibility.

It was not immediately clear what caused the blasts. The majority of attacks in the capital in recent months have been sticky bombs – explosive devices with magnets that are attached to vehicles and detonated by remote control or timer.

The second explosion targeted a car in a northwestern Kabul neighbourhood in which national army soldiers were travelling, killing two soldiers. A civilian passer-by was also killed.

The third explosion destroyed a police car in western Kabul, killing two police officers. Meanwhile, the first blast targeted a civilian car and wounded both travellers inside the vehicle.

Kabul police said investigations were under way.

Afghanistan has seen a nationwide spike in bombings, targeted killings and violence on the battlefield as peace negotiations in Qatar between the Taliban and the Afghan government have stalled.

The ISIL (ISIS) group's local affiliate has claimed responsibility for some of the attacks, but many go unclaimed with the government putting the blame on the Taliban.

The armed group has denied responsibility for most of the attacks.



Myanmar Police Kill 2 in Bloodiest Day of Anti-Coup Protests

YANGON (Dispatches) - At least two people have been killed and several wounded in Myanmar's second city of Mandalay when security forces opened fire to disperse people protesting against the country's military coup, according to emergency service workers and other witnesses.

The deaths on Saturday marked the bloodiest day in more than two weeks of large demonstrations against the February 1 military takeover, which deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The military authorities have responded with increasing force to the protests, deploying troops against peaceful rallies and firing tear gas, water cannon and rubber bullets, with isolated incidents of live rounds being used.

In Mandalay, a shipyard raid turned violent on Saturday when security forces opened fire on demonstrators trying to stop the arrest of workers taking part in the growing anti-coup movement. The clash started with the demonstrators flinging rocks, but authorities retaliated by opening fire, sending them fleeing in fear.

"Two people were killed," said Hlaing Min Oo, the chief of a Mandalay-based volunteer emergency rescue team, adding that one of the victims, who was shot in the head, was a teenager. The death toll was confirmed by another emergency worker on the scene, who declined to

be named for fear of repercussions. "One under-18 boy got shot in his head," the worker told AFP news agency.

In addition to the deaths, which were also reported by local media, Ko Aung, leader of the Parahita Darhi volunteer emergency service agency, told Reuters news agency 20 people were wounded. At least five people were injured by rubber bullets and had to be carried away in ambulances, according to an Associated Press news agency journalist who witnessed the violence.

Local media reported more than a dozen people were arrested after the clash.

"They beat and shot my husband and others," a resident told AFP in tears. "He was standing on the side and watching the protest but the soldiers took him away."

Later on Saturday, the European Union's foreign policy chief condemned the violence and said the bloc will "take appropriate decisions".

"I strongly condemn the violence against peaceful civilian protestors by the military. I urge the military and all security forces in Myanmar to immediately stop violence against civilians," Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative and vice president, tweeted.

He said a meeting in Brussels of EU foreign ministers on Monday "will discuss ... the latest events in Myanmar to take appropriate decisions".



UN Report Finds Trump Ally Violated Libya Arms Embargo

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Private security contractor and ally of former U.S. President Trump Erik Prince violated a United Nations arms embargo on Libya, UN investigators have found in a report detailed by U.S. media on Friday.

The confidential report to the Security Council, obtained by the New York Times and the Washington Post, said that Prince deployed a force of foreign mercenaries and weapons to strongman Khalifa Haftar, who has fought to overthrow the UN-backed Libyan government, in 2019.

The \$80 million operation included plans to form a hit squad to track and kill Libyan commanders opposed to Haftar -- including some who were also European Union citizens, the New York Times said.

Prince, a former Navy SEAL and the brother of Trump's education secretary Betsy DeVos, drew infamy as the head of the Blackwater private security firm, whose contractors were accused of killing unarmed Iraqi civilians in Baghdad in 2007.

Four who were convicted were pardoned by Trump last year.

The accusation exposes Prince to possible UN sanctions, including a travel ban, the Times said.

Prince did not cooperate with the UN inquiry and his lawyer declined to comment to the New York Times, it added.

An AFP request for comment to the Hong Kong-based Frontier Services Group, for which Prince is a board member and deputy chairman, went unanswered.

Oil-rich Libya has been torn by civil war since a NATO-backed uprising led to the toppling and killing of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011.

The country has in recent years been split between a Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, and an eastern-based administration, backed by Haftar, who has faced charges of war crimes. Then-President Trump in 2019 praised the strongman for his role in "fighting terrorism" in Libya.

A new interim executive for the country was chosen on February 5 by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in Switzerland, comprising 75 participants selected by the UN to represent a broad cross-section of society.

Haftar has pledged his support for the initiative.





Zaferanieh Apt (\$3000)
300sq.m, 4bdrs
S/pool, S, J
L.balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Jordan Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
green garden
Fully Furn

Parsian

Farmanieh (\$2400)
250sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, & F.F

Elahieh Apt
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg
F.F (\$1800)

Velenjak bldg (\$10000)
5stoery, 20bdrs, S/p
pkg lots, yard, F.F

Jordan Apts
(\$1400) 140sq.m, 2bdrs
(\$2000) 220sq.m, 3bdrs

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Brazilian Economy Shrinks 4% in 2020

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - The FGV's GDP Monitor shows that economic activity shrank by 4% in 2020. The data was released today, February 19th, by the Brazilian Institute of Economics of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (Ibre/FGV).

In terms of production, among the three major sectors (agriculture and livestock, industry and services), only agriculture and livestock grew in the year (2%). Meanwhile, in terms of demand, all components shrank, particularly household consumption, with a 5.2% drop in the year.



World Bank, IMF to Consider Climate Change in Debt Reduction Talks

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The World Bank is working with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on ways to factor climate change into the negotiations about reducing the debt burdens of some poor countries, World Bank President David Malpass told Reuters in an interview.

Three countries — Ethiopia, Chad and Zambia — have already initiated negotiations with creditors under a new Common Framework supported by the Group of 20 major economies, a process that may lead to debt reductions in some cases.

Malpass said he expected additional countries to request restructuring of their debts, but declined to give any details.

The coronavirus pandemic has worsened the outlook for many countries that were already heavily indebted before the outbreak, with revenues down, spending up and vaccination rates lagging far behind advanced economies.

China, the United States and other G20 countries initially offered the world's poorest countries temporary payment relief on debt owed to official creditors under the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI). In November, the G20 also launched a new framework designed to tackle unsustainable debt stocks.

Malpass said the Bank and the IMF were studying how to twin two global problems — the need to reduce or restructure the heavy debt burden of many poorer countries, and the need to reduce fossil fuel emissions that contribute to climate change.

"There's a way to put together ... the need for debt reduction with the need for climate action by countries around the world, including the poorer countries," he said, adding that initial efforts could happen under the G20 common framework.

Factoring climate change into the debt restructuring process could help motivate sovereign lenders and even private creditors to write off a certain percentage of the debt of heavily-indebted poorer countries, in exchange for progress toward their sustainable development and climate goals, experts say.

The World Bank and the IMF play an important advisory and consultative role in debt restructuring negotiations since they assess the sustainability of each country's debt burden.

Many developing countries require huge outlays to shore up their food supplies and infrastructure as a result of climate change. Governments must also spend a large amount on alternative energy projects, but lack the resources to pay for those needed investments. "There needs to be a moral recognition by the world that the activities in the advanced economies have an impact on the people in the poorer economies," Malpass said.

"The poorer countries are not really emitting very much in terms of greenhouse gases, but they're bearing the brunt of the impact from the rest of the world," he added. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva earlier this month told reporters about early-stage discussions underway about linking debt relief to climate resilience and investment in low-carbon energy sources.

Doing so, she said, could help private sector creditors achieve their sustainable development targets, she said. "You give the country breathing space, and in exchange, you as the creditor can demonstrate that it translates into a commitment in the country that leads to a global public good," she said.

BOK Tipped to Freeze Key Rate at Record Low Next Week

SEOUL (Yonhap) -- The Bank of Korea (BOK) is expected to freeze its policy rate at a record low of 0.5 percent next week, as a third wave of coronavirus infections hammered consumption and job markets, a poll showed Saturday.

In a survey by Yonhap Infomax, the financial news arm of Yonhap News Agency, all 15 analysts polled predicted the BOK will freeze the base rate at its rate-setting meeting next Thursday.

They also forecast the BOK to stand pat on the rate during the remainder of this year.

To boost the pandemic-hit economy, the BOK cut the key rate to the all-time low in May last year after delivering an emergency rate cut of half a percentage point in March last year.

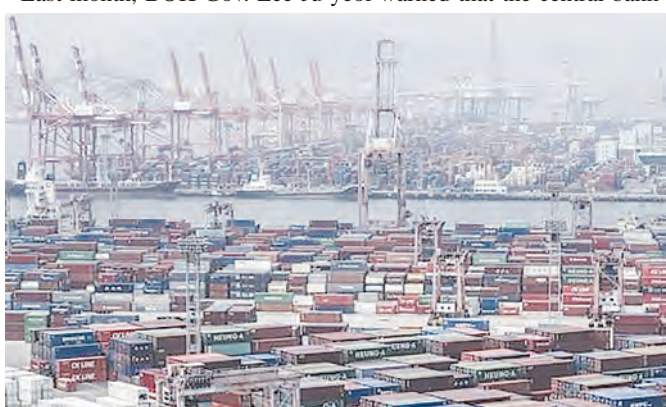
Experts said the rate freeze is anticipated next week, as economic uncertainty lingers amid a fresh surge of virus cases, while booms in asset markets, including the housing and stock markets, have warranted close watch.

"It would be difficult for the BOK to change its monetary policy at a time when the recovery of the real economy is delayed," Kyobo Securities analyst Baek Yoon-min said.

South Korea's economy contracted 1 percent last year, marking the worst performance in over two decades, but it appears to have returned to a growth track on the back of a mild recovery in exports.

It is slightly better than the BOK's projection of a 1.1 percent contraction for last year.

Buoyed by ample liquidity and cheap loans to fight the pandemic, South Korea's benchmark stock index jumped about 30 percent last year. Last month, BOK Gov. Lee Ju-yeol warned that the central bank was watching risks of financial imbalances, saying the speed of a stock rally was too quick.



Taiwan Raises 2021 Economic View as Q4 Growth Jumps

TAIPEI (Reuters) - Taiwan's economy will grow at its fastest pace in seven years in 2021, the statistics office said, upgrading its economic outlook as a strong rebound in exports and demand for chips helps the island shake off the blow from the coronavirus crisis.

Gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to expand 4.64% this year, the Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics said on Saturday, up from a forecast made in November for 3.83% growth, which would also have been its fastest since 2014.

The revision came as the statistics office roughly doubled its export growth forecast for this year, with global demand for the island's technology products buoyed by a work-from-home boom during the COVID-19 pandemic.

GDP rose by a revised 5.09% in the fourth quarter from a year earlier, the strongest quarterly growth in a decade and up from a preliminary reading of 4.94%, the agency added, as Taiwan's economy performed better than many regional peers.

It also revised up GDP for last year to 3.11%, from an initial 2.98%, the first time Taiwan grew faster than its giant neighbor and largest trading partner China in a full-year since 1990.

The agency said the COVID-19 pandemic has brought strong global demand for electronics, thanks to the growing need for people to work and study from home to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections.

Taiwan's semiconductor firms will continue to expand investments at home to provide chips for 5G, cars and high speed computing, it added.

Argentina Desperately Needs Agreement with the IMF

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - One of Argentina's largest creditor groups have slammed the government, criticising the "erratic" policies of the Alberto Fernández administration and accusing it of dragging its feet during debt talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The comments come just five months

after the Ad Hoc Group of Argentina Exchange Bondholders agreed to sign up for the government's offer to restructure US\$65 billion in foreign debt.

"With a multi-decade restructuring of its external debt burden at low interest rates, agricultural commodity prices near record highs and a natural rebound in economic activity from pandemic lows, Argentina should be benefiting from significant tailwinds," the group said in a statement.

"However, since the government concluded its historic restructuring of international and domestic foreign currency bonds in September, local macroeconomic conditions have continued to deteriorate."

The group criticised what it described as "poor policy choices," citing price controls, agricultural tariffs and currency controls, arguing that they were "undermining chances for a sustainable recovery."

The statement went on to argue that Argentina "desperately" needed to reach an agreement with the IMF over its US\$44-billion credit line, issued in 2018 under the Mauricio Macri administration, as soon as possible.

"An IMF program is the only likely source of policy anchors and a credible medium-term framework that can bring stability. However, the government appears to be seriously contemplating delaying an agreement with the IMF in order to have the freedom to continue its unsustainable policies even longer. With reserves already at dangerously low levels, such a strategy amounts to a reckless bet."

Argentina is currently in talks with the Fund over a new financing program, with the country due to begin repayments later this year. Economy Minister Martín Guzmán has expressed hopes that a deal could be sealed by early May, though IMF officials earlier this month cast doubt over that goal, describing it as "ambitious."

Republicans Criticize Biden Plan for Sanctions Over Russian Pipeline

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Biden administration told Congress it would impose sanctions on a Russian ship and company helping to finish a Russian natural gas pipeline, but Republican lawmakers said the move fell far short of what was required to halt Moscow's project.

In a report to Congress, the State Department identified the Russian ship Fortuna and its company, KVT-RUS, to be designated for sanctions under a law adopted in January designed to prevent the completion of the Russia-to-Germany gas pipeline known as Nord Stream 2.

Both entities had already been sanctioned by the former Trump administration, and lawmakers had sent a long list of companies to the administration that they said were conducting work or services that should trigger U.S. sanctions.

None of those companies were named in the State Department report to Congress, which arrived three days past a Tuesday deadline. The State Department's report will be welcomed in Germany, which has lobbied against the sanctions and defended the pipeline as a valuable commercial project that will provide a stable, inexpensive supply of energy.

But the report will likely disappoint governments in Central and Eastern Europe, which strongly oppose the project, arguing it could grant Russia economic leverage over Europe and leave them more vulnerable to pressure from Moscow. Nord Stream 2 would deprive Ukraine of lucrative gas transit fees that generate crucial revenue for the government.

"Whoever is preventing these sanctions from being fully imposed right now is doing Vladimir Putin a favor. From Ukraine's perspective, we simply can't imagine that this is what President Biden wants," said Vadym Glamazdin, a senior official at Ukraine's state energy giant Naftogaz.

The report came as President Joe Biden delivered a speech virtually to the Munich security conference in which he vowed to show resolve against Russia and to bolster the transatlantic alliance.

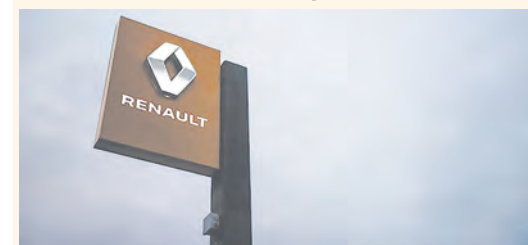
A bipartisan majority in Congress adopted legislation in January, overriding ex-President Donald Trump's veto, that imposed additional sanctions on any companies enabling the completion of the Nord Stream 2 project, including firms insuring or certifying the pipeline.

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, ranking Republican on the House Foreign Relations Committee, accused the administration of failing to carry out the will of Congress.

"Simply put, today's sanctions designations are wholly inadequate," McCaul said in a statement, adding that "congressional intent is clear and cannot be ignored."

"Sanctioning only the Russian pipe-laying vessel Fortuna and its owner, KVT-RUS — which were both already sanctioned by the previous Administration under separate authorities — does not meet that intent," McCaul said.

Renault Flags Difficult Year After Record \$9.7b Loss



PARIS (Reuters) - Renault Chief Executive Luca de Meo warned of lingering headwinds in 2021 as a shortage of electronic chips added to uncertainties, after the COVID-19 pandemic dragged the French carmaker to an 8 billion euro loss last year.

De Meo, who took over in July, is looking at ways to boost profitability and sales at Renault while pushing ahead with cost cuts, and there were early signs of improving momentum as margins inched up in the second half of 2020.

The group gave no financial guidance for this year, although it said it might reach a 2 billion euro cost-cutting target ahead of time, possibly by December.

It struck a cautious note, saying it was focused on its recovery but warned orders had faltered in early 2021 amid enduring pandemic restrictions in some countries.

Renault is facing new challenges as the European Union tightens emissions regulations and after rivals PSA and Fiat Chrysler joined forces to create Stellantis, the world's fourth-biggest automaker.

Carmakers all endured a tough 2020 but a rebound in premium car sales in China towards the end of the year helped companies such as Volkswagen and Daimler to weather the storm.

"The beginning of the year has shown some signs of weakness," De Meo told analysts, adding he hoped for a "positive surprise" in the second half, by which time the chip shortage should have eased.

"2021 should be another difficult year, but we have taken the necessary measures to anticipate and overcome challenges," he said.

Renault estimated the component problems could affect its production by about 100,000 vehicles this year.

The group was already loss-making in 2019, to the tune of 141 million euros, and it took a sharp hit in 2020 as output faltered and dealerships closed during lockdowns to fight the pandemic, which also hurt its Japanese partner Nissan.

Analysts polled by Refinitiv had expected a 7.4 billion euro loss for 2020, after the bulk of the hit was recorded in the first half.

Enemy Afraid of Iran Defense Capabilities

TEHRAN (IP) - The Deputy Chief of Iran's Army for Coordination said that the enemy is afraid of the country's defense capabilities.

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari added: "The enemy knows that if he makes a mistake, he will be severely beaten."

"Defending the security and territorial integrity of the country is obligatory for everyone, just as in the eight years of holy defense (Iran-Iraq war), all

people came to the battlefield and did not allow any part of the country to be occupied by the enemy or the revolution to be threatened," Sayyari noted.

The Deputy Chief of the Army for Coordination, stating that the country's security depends on the actions of the armed forces, added: "The higher the readiness of the armed forces, the more deterrence will be created."



World Tops 200m Vaccine Doses as G7 Boosts Funding

PARIS (Dispatches) - The number of coronavirus vaccine doses administered worldwide passed 200 million Saturday, an AFP count showed, as wealthy G7 countries pledged to more than double aid to support access for the less well-off.

With 45 percent of injections so far among the rich club -- which accounts for just 10 percent of the global population -- the G7 on Friday said its aid to projects like the World Health Organization's Covax now amount to \$7.5 billion.

The increased pledges from the US, Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Japan and Canada came as permanent UN Security Council member Britain showed a draft resolution to other countries on the global body, calling for wealthy nations to share doses with poor and war-torn states.

Seen by AFP, the text "emphasises the need for solidarity, equity, and efficacy and invites donation of vaccine doses from developed economies to low- and middle-income countries and other countries in need."

Meanwhile Russia pressed ahead with its home-grown vaccination programme, saying 120,000 doses of its third authorised coronavirus vaccine, CoviVac, will reach people by March, following in the footsteps of the Sputnik V and EpiVacCorona shots.

The new vaccine, still in final stage clinical trials, was produced by the state-run Chumakov Centre based in Moscow and employed a different method of development from Sputnik and EpiVacCorona, using an inactive virus.

"Today Russia is the only country in which there are already three vaccines for the prevention of Covid infection," Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said.

And New Zealand began what director-general of health Ashley Bloomfield called a "small but important step in a long journey" by launching jabs for high risk citizens and those returning from overseas, along with border and quarantine workers.

Neighbouring Australia is set to start its own scheme on Monday.

In Argentina, health minister Gines Gonzalez Garci resigned late Friday after it emerged that he had been helping friends skip the line for vaccine shots.

President Alberto Fernandez called on him to quit after a 71-year-old journalist, Horacio Verbitsky, announced on the radio that his longstanding friendship with the minister helped him get vaccinated in his office ahead of the general population.

Local media reported that other people close to the government were also vaccinated at the health ministry.

In Romania, the government pushed the country's thousands of homeless people up the priority list for vaccines, placing them on a par with the elderly and the



chronically ill and reaching 300 in the first days of the drive.

"These people are among the most exposed to infection risk. It's hard for most of them to follow infection control measures," junior health minister Andrei Baciut told AFP.

Even as countries move forward with vaccinations, the death toll is ticking upwards, with an AFP tally reaching more than 2.45 million worldwide by 1100 GMT Saturday, with almost 111 million cases.

Despite the still alarming figures, it could be an uphill struggle to get some vaccinated as scepticism remains entrenched.

U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday reassured people the shots were safe as he visited a Pfizer factory in Michigan.

"Please, for yourself, your family, your community, this country, take the vaccine when it's your turn and it's available. That's how we beat this pandemic," he said.

And with vaccines yet to reach the majority of people almost everywhere, countries continue to resort to familiar methods to limit infections.

Meanwhile French health minister Olivier Veran said he had asked a top local official to "toughen up" a curfew in southeastern city Nice and the surrounding Alpes-Maritimes department faced with rising cases -- or even return to a "partial or full lockdown".

Rise in Remittance in 2020: Bangladesh One of Three Large Recipients



DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh became one of the three large remittance-recipient countries that registered a rise in inward remittance last year, according to a new report of the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Last year, Bangladesh received about \$19.8 billion in remittance compared to \$18.4 billion it received the year before, said the report.

The other two countries that saw rise in inward remittance last year are Mexico (\$40.5 billion) and Pakistan (\$24.1 billion). Their inward remittance in 2019 was \$39 billion and \$22.2 billion respectively, added the report which also used World Bank data.

With the figure of \$19.8 billion, Bangladesh is the eighth highest recipient of remittance among the 10 countries listed by the recently published EIU report -- "Covid-19 and Migrant Remittances: A Hidden Crisis Looming?"

Other large remittance recipients in the list -- India, China, the Philippines, Egypt, Nigeria, Vietnam, and Ukraine -- saw decline in inward remittance last year.

Globally, inward remittance declined by \$50.5 billion last year with countries receiving \$666.2 billion compared to \$716.7 billion the year before, the report said.

"The World Bank estimates that global remittances fell by 7 percent in 2020, surpassing the 5 percent decline seen during the global financial crisis in 2009."

A further 7 percent drop in remittances is expected in 2021, owing to the pandemic's lingering effects on the global economy, the report added.

The EIU study mentioned that in Pakistan and Bangladesh, increased remittance inflows were likely tied to factors unique to 2020. These included the repatriation of overseas savings by nationals returning home after losing their jobs; this trend was especially notable in the Persian Gulf economies, which suffered greatly amid the crash in oil prices and tourism.

The headline rise in remittances was partially also prompted by the shift in flows to formal channels, as travel restrictions complicated the informal transfer of remittances across borders -- effectively meaning that the 2020 rise may be partially explained by an accounting change.

The introduction of new remittance tax incentives by the authorities -- in 2020 by Pakistan and in 2019 by Bangladesh -- could also have boosted flows, but those effects may well be temporary, the report said.

The one-off nature of these factors increases the risk of remittances falling this year. This could be problematic for Pakistan and Bangladesh, which both ran pre-Covid current-account deficits and rely on remittances for a sizeable share of current-account credits.

Germany, Japan Among G7 Nations Unlikely to Fall Into U.S. Anti-China Alliance

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Talking about driving the global economic recovery at the upcoming G7 Summit without China, or even stressing the "China challenge" at the meeting, will be like "navigating in the sea without a compass," giving the bloc's diminishing contribution to the world economy and China's increasing role as a global engine in the post-virus era, analysts said.

Among the G7 countries, European and Asian economies such as Germany and Japan are less likely to be roped into joining the US-led "counter China" alliance, analysts noted.

Such nations, taking into account the level of dependence their economies and industries have on the world's second-largest economy, will trade off between their economic interests and how they maintain relations with their traditional ally, the US, whose reputation sank during Trump's four years of mayhem. The G7 virtual meeting is set to take place on Friday. According to the White House, US President Joe Biden, along with leaders from other G7 nations, will discuss the coronavirus pandemic, the world economy and "dealing with China" during the meeting.

"Biden will also discuss the need to make investments to strengthen our [the US'] collective competitiveness and the importance of updating global rules to tackle economic challenges such as those posed by China," said the White House.

Analysts said Biden's speech at the summit will aim to deliver a clear signal that the economies of the G7 industrial nations will develop in a robust manner and reclaim their leading roles in driving the world's growth.

Also, Washington will attempt to form alliances with the other developed G7 economies to limit or even cut off China's role in the post-virus economic recovery, and suppress China's development in strategically important fields such as 5G and digital industries. "This is not realistic. G7 nations, despite having an edge in technology and the international division of labor, only make up a part of the global economy, and their shares in the global economy are already shrinking," Cui Hongjian, director of the Department of European Studies from the China Institute of International Studies, told the Global Times on Friday.

According to media reports, the bloc's share now only represents 33 percent of the global GDP, while three decades ago, the share was closer to 70 percent. Meanwhile, China -- as the only major economy to expand last year -- is expected to produce 18.6 percent of the world's total GDP in 2020, according to estimates by Statista.

Some analysts described US and other G7 nations as "strange bedfellows," since their perceptions on China, in particular from an economic perspective, are likely to be drastically different, which could ruin the U.S.' hope of forming an alliance to curb China's rise. "Germany might be the first among the G7 economies to not echo the U.S.' call... China is Germany's largest auto market; how could the nation abandon China's sheer market size just for empty promises that the U.S. may walk away from at any time?" a Beijing-based industry observer, who preferred not to be identified, told the Global Times on Friday.

U.S. Sanctions...

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The diplomat said from other signatories of the nuclear deal, China and Russia have been Iran's "friends" during the sanctions era, evidence for which are dozens of sanctions imposed on their individuals and entities.

But Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, the European signatories of the deal together known as the E3, have engaged in no tangible efforts to maintain their ties with Iran, Zarif said.

"The situation Europe has created for itself is that it has to wait for the US to make a decision. It lives at the behest and mercy of the U.S.," he said.

"Now, they should convince the U.S. to come back [to the nuclear deal] at least to allow them ... to maintain their dignity and allow them to fulfil their obligations. That's not a tall order."

Iran's foreign minister said if the U.S. fails to lift sanctions, Iran will continue to boost its nuclear program as per the law but will have no need to leave the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as the nuclear deal is formally known.

"This is not a threat. We are simply exercising the remedial measures foreseen in the JCPOA," he said, adding Iran is only after normalizing economic relations with the world and does not want to engage in "nuclear extortion" as former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has claimed.

Instead, Zarif said, the U.S. is engaging in extortion as it is still preventing Iran from buying food, medicine, and vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The foreign minister also said the U.S. is still blocking Iran's request for a \$5bn loan from the International Monetary Fund to fight the pandemic and is still preventing other countries such as South Korea from paying back billions of dollars' worth of Iran's money. Joe Biden's administration, he said, is still continuing the "maximum pressure" campaign of Trump despite promising to restore the JCPOA.

However, Zarif said Iran will have no need to abandon the nuclear deal.

"We got what we wanted out of the JCPOA. End of [United Nations] Security Council resolutions. End of U.S. lies about our nuclear program," he said, adding Iran is the only country in the world to have its right to enrich uranium recognized by a UN Security Council resolution.

He also said Iran is now much less dependent on oil, so it can continue if the US fails to come back to the accord.

In his interview, however, Zarif said the decision to cut off the cameras installed by the IAEA in Iran's nuclear sites is a technical one that will not be made by him.

"We will be required by law not to provide the tapes of those cameras to the IAEA," the foreign minister added.

Additional Protocol...

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Recently the Supreme Leader in his two speeches has emphasized regarding the JCPOA that (once in a videoconference with the people of Tabriz) "Regarding the JCPOA, we have repeatedly announced the policies of the Islamic Revolution. Today, I only wish to say this: We have heard many nice words and promises, but in practice, they have not been honored and on the contrary, they have acted against those promises. It is no use talking. It is no use giving promises. This time, only actions matter! If we see actions on the part of the other side, we will take action too. This time, the Islamic Republic will not be satisfied with hearing such and such words and promises."



The Supreme Leader in his another speech addressing some personnel of Iran Air Force also said, "If they want Iran to return to its JCPOA commitments, the U.S. has to lift all sanctions. And not just in words and on paper, rather they have to lift them in practice. After that, we will verify and see if they have really been lifted. Then, we will return to our JCPOA commitments."

These two emphatic remarks have caused the U.S. confusion to get more and more. Recently and on the eve of U.S. President Joe Biden's presence in the Munich Security Conference and delivering his speech, some pulses were signaled like the U.S. withdrawal of its request to trigger a "snapback" of Iran sanctions. But three slogans were on Biden's agenda in the conference: Friendship with Europe, competition with China and Russia and confrontation with the Islamic Republic of Iran and it made it clear that no drastic change has happened in the U.S. macro policies. Even if it seems they withdraw by adopting some ways, this would be considered as a tactic and it was nothing but a deceit. But now the task is very clear.

The government and officials consider this Americans' way of performance of call for talks with carrot and stick policy as a threadbare method and they have emphatically repeated that, until the time all sanctions are not lifted in practice and not verified by Iran and its practical verification does not end in six months, they will not be ready to sit at the negotiation table with the U.S. at any condition.

President...

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The enemies are trying to downgrade Iranian's victory in the economic war, he added.

In this meeting, Economy Minister also presented a report on the level of realization of revenues specified in the Budget Law of the current year, especially from the place of tax, sale of bonds, and income from exports.

The Economy Minister, referring to the taxes collected from large taxpayers as well as the collection of arrears, announced the realization of the major part of the revenues specified in this year's budget.

Referring to the realization of the goals of this year's budget in the main area of revenues and expenditures, Iran's President said: "The government's macroeconomic plan for this year, which also includes the budget, was formulated based on the facts and economic capacities of the country."

Iran-Cuba...

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All the vaccines, that are either imported into or produced in the country, are produced according to the guidelines of the National Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters in accordance with the national standards, he emphasized.

About 1.3 million people in the country, who are classified as Group 1 of target society, would be vaccinated against coronavirus before the termination of the current Iranian calendar year (to end March 20, 2021), he said, adding, "Most countries in the world cannot vaccinate their total population by the end of current year in 2021, rather, vaccination would be proceeded gradually in the worldwide."

Froome Comeback Bid to Gather Pace at UAE Tour

PARIS (Dispatches) - Chris Froome will be part of a top-drawer line-up as the four-time Tour de France winner gets his second injury comeback rolling when cycling's first major race of the season, the UAE Tour, starts on Sunday.

The reigning Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar, Quick Step's rising star Joao Almeida and the winner of the UAE race last year, Adam Yates, should feature strongly in what is expected to be a tight struggle in the seven-stage event.

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Red Star Belgrade Denounce Racist Chants at Ibrahimovic

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Serbia's champions Red Star Belgrade on Friday strongly condemned racists slogans chanted at Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, during their Europa League last 32 first leg with Milan AC.

"Red Star most strongly condemns insults addressed to Ibrahimovic" during Thursday's match, the club said in a statement and apologised to the player, whose father is a Bosnian.

Everton Savor First Win At Liverpool Since 1999

LONDON (Dispatches) - Everton earned their first win at Liverpool since 1999 as the troubled Premier League champions crashed to a 2-0 defeat in the Merseyside derby, while Chelsea's revival under Thomas Tuchel stalled in a 1-1 draw against Southampton on Saturday.

Richarlison gave Carlo Ancelotti's side the perfect start with his third minute strike. Gylfi Sigurdsson's late penalty sealed Everton's first triumph at Anfield in the 21st century.

Having dominated their Anfield clashes with Everton for the last 22 years, Liverpool finished a home derby empty-handed for the first time since Kevin Campbell's winner for the Toffees.

It was also Everton's first victory against their hated neighbours in any venue in 24 matches in all competitions dating back to 2010.

Jurgen Klopp's team have suffered four successive league defeats and a run of just two wins in their last 11 games in the competition has left them in grave danger of missing out on a top four finish.

The Reds are languishing in sixth place and would be five points adrift of the Champions League places if fifth-placed West Ham beat Tottenham on Sunday.

After a run of 68 league games unbeaten at home, injury-ravaged Liverpool have lost their last four on home turf for the first time since 1923.

The sting from defeat in the 238th Merseyside derby will linger even longer given it was a bad tackle from Everton keeper Jordan Pickford in their meeting earlier this season that left Virgil van Dijk sidelined ever since with a serious knee injury.

Without the influential Dutch centre-back, Liverpool have endured a wretched time and their defensive flaws were exposed by Everton after just 145 seconds.

A weak headed Ozan Kabak clearance fell to James Rodriguez, who slipped in a pass behind the on-loan Schalke centre-back and Richarlison ran on to fire an angled drive past Alisson Becker.

Krejciakova, Ram Win Australian Open Mixed Doubles Title

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Barbora Krejciakova and Rajeev Ram won their second Australian Open mixed doubles title in three years on Saturday with a 6-1, 6-4 win over home pairing Sam Stosur and Matthew Ebden.

For Krejciakova it was her third Australian Open title in a row after combining with Nikola Pietrangeli of Croatia to win the mixed doubles a year ago.

She had lost in the women's doubles final with fellow Czech Katerina Siniakova on Friday to Elise Mertens and Aryna Sabalenka, but put her disappointment behind her in just 59 minutes on Rod Laver Arena.

"We had a year off as a team, but she didn't have a year off and won this thing last year," Ram said of Krejciakova at the presentation ceremony.

"Three years running is an amazing job."

Ram has a chance to pick up another Australian Open title on Sunday, when he and Britain's Joe Salisbury defend their men's doubles title against Ivan Dodig and Filip Polasek.

Bayern Munich Crash 2-1 At Frankfurt in Bundesliga

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich crashed to a 2-1 defeat at Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday in the Bundesliga as the world champions showed chinks in their armor before they return to Champions League action next week.

Robert Lewandowski netted his 26th league goal this season for Bayern, but Frankfurt deserved the win thanks to first-half goals by Japan midfielder Daichi Kamada and Amin Younes.

After their 3-3 league draw at home to strugglers Arminia Bielefeld last Monday, Bayern again wobbled ahead of Tuesday's Champions League first leg tie at Lazio.

Frankfurt's win gives hope to Bayern's league rivals as second-placed RB Leipzig can cut Bayern's lead to two points if they win at Hertha Berlin on Sunday.

It was Bayern's third league defeat. Their last, a 3-2 reverse at Borussia Mönchengladbach in January was followed by a shock German Cup defeat at second-tier Holstein Kiel.



decide he had made the right decision and Sigurdsson stroked home the penalty.

Everton are now level on points with Liverpool and have a game in hand on their rivals. Meanwhile, Tuchel remains unbeaten in seven games since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard last month.

But the German endured some of the same frustrations that Lampard suffered earlier in the season as the Blues domination of the ball created little, while one slack moment defensively cost them two points.

On-loan Liverpool midfielder Takumi Minamino did his parent club a favour by opening the scoring with a cool finish after sitting down Edouard Mendy and Cesar Azpilicueta on 33 minutes.

Tuchel sent on Callum Hudson-Odoi for the second-half but was less than impressed with the England international as he was replaced just 21 minutes later by Hakim Ziyech. By that point the visitors were level as Mason Mount converted from the penalty spot after he had been chopped down by Danny Ings.

"We brought in Callum Hudson-Odoi but I was not happy with his attitude, energy and counter-pressing. I took him off and we demand 100 percent," Tuchel said.

"I feel he is not in the right shape to help us. I was not happy with his body language." After losing six consecutive league matches for the first time in their history, even a scrappy point was a welcome boost for Southampton.

Burnley were held to a 0-0 draw by 10-man West Bromwich Albion, who had Semi Ajayi sent off after 30 minutes for denying a clear goalscoring opportunity with a deliberate handball.

The Baggies have won just once in 13 games since Sam Allardyce took charge to remain second bottom and 11 points adrift of safety.

But it was West Brom who had the better chances to take all three points as Mbaye Diagne smashed against the bar, while James Tarkowski cleared Matheus Pereira's shot off the line.



Willian Latest to Suffer Online Racial Abuse

LONDON (Reuters) - Arsenal winger Willian has become the latest Premier League player to be racially abused online and the Brazilian shared screenshots of the messages he received on social media.

The 32-year-old Brazil international was targeted by two different users and he highlighted the messages on Instagram with the caption: "Something needs to change! The fight against racism continues."

Arsenal condemned the abuse and said anybody with a club membership that sends such messages would be banned.

"We all need to work together to drive this behaviour out. This includes clubs, governing

bodies, fans, media and politicians; but requires the help and commitment of social media companies," a club spokesperson was quoted as saying by British media.

"We commit to using our voice and network to strengthen measures and action taken by relevant authorities to punish those responsible for this abuse which affects us all."

Willian is the second Black Arsenal player to face abuse this week after forward Eddie Nketiah was sent a racist message on Twitter ahead of Thursday's Europa League last-32 tie against Benfica.

Other Black players, including Manchester United's Axel Tuanzebe, Marcus Rashford and Anthony Martial, Chelsea's Reece James, West Bromwich Albion's Romaine Sawyers and Southampton's Alex Jankewitz have all been victims in recent weeks, prompting English soccer bodies to put pressure on social media companies to tackle the problem.

Kohli Says He Suffered From Depression

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian cricket superstar Virat Kohli has revealed that he struggled with depression and felt like the "loneliest guy in the world" after failing with the bat during a tour of England in 2014.

Kohli, one of the highest-paid athletes in the world with a net worth of \$26 million, also said that a chat with the legendary Sachin Tendulkar helped him through the mental-health crisis.

The 32-year-old batsman made the revelations on a podcast with English commentator and former cricketer Mark Nicholas.

"I did (feel depressed). It's not a great feeling to wake up knowing that you won't be able to score runs and I think all batsmen have felt that at some stage that you are not in control of anything at all," said Kohli, who is adored by millions of fans for his tough and competitive on-field persona.

"You just didn't understand how to get over it. That was a phase when I literally couldn't do anything to overturn things...I felt like I was the loneliest guy in the world." The Indian skipper averaged just 13.50 from five Tests in that series, which India lost 3-1 after drawing the opener.

Kohli said he felt lonely despite having supportive people in his life.

"Personally, for me that was a revelation that you could feel that lonely even though you are a part of a big group," said the cricketer, who married top Bollywood actor Anushka Sharma in 2017. "I won't say I didn't have people who I could speak to but not having a professional to speak to who could understand what I am going through completely, I think is a huge factor."

Kohli added that he heeded advice from Tendulkar about letting the feeling pass instead of fighting it.



Second Gold For Liensberger In Slalom

ROME (Dispatches) - Austria's Katharina Liensberger upstaged U.S. rival Mikaela Shiffrin to claim her second gold of the world ski championships by winning the women's slalom title on Saturday.

Liensberger, who has already won parallel gold and giant slalom bronze in Cortina d'Ampezzo, recorded the two fastest runs, in 48.48sec and 51.02sec, for a combined winning time of 1min 39.50sec.

It was an astonishing display of controlled aggression from Liensberger down the steep and direct Druscie piste, sun-kissed for the first run but pitched in large part into shade for the second.

"It's amazing," said Liensberger. "It's just incredible."

"I really gave it all today. I worked so hard for it... It's amazing that it all comes back if you really want something the whole universe does (my guess) something, I think, for you."

Liensberger added that of her treble medal haul, slalom gold was ranked the highest.

"Yes it is, especially in the slalom. It was so often so near and so close," she said. "I won this race and it means so much to me."

Slovakia's Petra Vlhova claimed silver, at 1.00sec, with four-time defending champion Shiffrin taking bronze (+1.98) for her fourth medal of these championships.

Shiffrin's medal means she equals Christl Cranz, who won four golds and a silver racing for Germany in the 1930s, for most medals in the women's slalom.

The American's world medal haul now stands at 11, bringing her level with Marielle Goitschel and leaving her behind only Cranz (15) and Sweden's Anja Pearson (13) as female skiers with more medals.

