

IRANEWS Felicitates Its Shiite Readers and All Muslims on the Auspicious Birth Anniversary of First Imam of Shiites, Imam Ali (A), and Father's Day. The Next Issue Will Hit The News-Stands on Saturday

IRAN NEWS

In a Telephone Conversation, the Iranian and Chinese Deputy Foreign Ministers Discussed the JCPOA And Ways to Resolve Issues Around the Iranian Nuclear Deal

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Iran Not to Back Down On Its Right to Peaceful Nuclear Technology

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the Islamic Republic will not back down on its right to peaceful nuclear technology and will continue its progress in this field in line with the country's present and future needs.

"Like other issues, the Islamic Republic will not back down on the nuclear issues [in the face of Western pressures] and will continue to march forward on the basis of the country's present and future expedencies," Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks during a Monday evening meeting with members of the Assembly of Experts in Tehran.

Underlining the fact that Iran will never move toward development of nuclear weapons, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution said, "What prevents the Islamic Republic from building nuclear weapons is the Islamic way of thinking and principles, which prohibit production of all kinds of weapons, including nuclear or chemical, which would be used to massacre ordinary people."

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IAEA Nuclear Inspections Blocked Under Additional Protocol

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has stopped the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Safeguards Agreement that allowed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to carry out short-notice inspections of the country's nuclear facilities, following a deadline set by Tehran for the removal of US sanctions.

Talking to reporters, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif confirmed that the implementation of the Additional Protocol had been stopped as of Tuesday morning.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's permanent representative to Vienna-based international organizations, also announced late on Monday that all the IAEA's additional access to the nuclear sites would be halted by midnight.

"As of 12:00 p.m. local time (2030 GMT), we have nothing called obligations beyond the Safeguards Agreement," he said. "Necessary orders have been issued to nuclear facilities."

Zarif pointed out that Iran will continue to implement its commitments under the NPT Safeguards Agreements and cooperate with the IAEA.

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Path of Martyr Soleimani and Resistance to Be Continued



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says Iran will continue down the path of resistance that his predecessor, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, pursued prior to his assassination by the United States.

"We will continue down the path of Martyr Soleimani with honor and pride, and will stand against the oppressors of the world," Brigadier General Esmail Qa'ani said Tuesday at a conference in Tehran on Iran's legal and international claims related to the eight-year Iraqi war on Iran during the 1980s.

"The path of resistance is growing stronger every day, contrary to the situation of the Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that of the Zionist regime, which has been building a wall around itself for security," he added.

General Soleimani, the former commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, was assassinated along with his Iraqi trenchmate Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of the Popular Mobilization Units, in a U.S. drone strike ordered by ex-president Donald Trump near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

Qa'ani further said General Soleimani spoke to the enemies with the strongest language and that his greatest weapon was his logic and power of expression.

The anti-terror commander was directly engaged in the fight against the terrorists, he said, adding, "He spoke to everyone in their own language."

Speaking at the same event, Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri said General Soleimani had been carrying Tehran's message to Riyadh at the time of his assassination.

"He was a foreign guest in Iraq. He was carrying a message in response to an [earlier] message of Saudi Arabia and the Iraqi prime minister. He had openly entered Iraq on a civilian passenger plane. He was not hit with an ordinary bomb, but with a bomb that is used to target armored equipment," he said.

"The bomb that hit General Soleimani's car can cut 30 centimeters deep into steel.... They committed such a crime to tear their bodies apart," he added.

Seoul Says Iran's Assets to Be Unlocked Through Consultations With U.S.

SEOUL (Yonhap) - The Iranian assets locked in South Korea will be released after consultations with the United States, the foreign ministry said Tuesday, after Iran claimed it has reached a deal with Seoul on how to transfer and use the frozen money.

According to Iran's government website, the agreement was reached Monday (Tehran time) during the meeting between Iran's Central Bank Gov. Abdolnaser Hemmati and South Korean Ambassador to Iran Ryu Jeong-hyun.

It said that the two sides agreed on the destinations for the transfer and that the Iranian central bank informed Seoul of the amount of the money it wants to be transferred.

Tehran has been pressuring Seoul to unblock about \$7 billion of its assets frozen in two South Korean banks due to U.S. sanctions. Seoul has been in talks with Washington on ways to release the money without violating the sanctions, including expanding humanitarian trade with the Middle Eastern country.

"Our government has been in talks with Iran about ways to use the frozen assets, and the Iran side has expressed its consent to the proposals we have made," the foreign ministry said without providing further details of the proposals.

"The actual unfreezing of the assets will be carried out through consultations with related countries, including the United States," the ministry said.

Earlier this month, a foreign ministry official said Seoul was finalizing talks with Washington about using some of the frozen funds to pay Tehran's U.N. dues in arrears, to which the Islamic republic has also agreed.

To facilitate the trade with Iran of humanitarian items, such as medicine and medical equipment, South Korea has been seeking to use a Swiss channel backed by the U.S., known as the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA), to use the money through Swiss companies' sales of goods to Iran.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

U.S. Chess Game With Turkey Has No Checkmate

In line with his usual ambitions in the region, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has dragged retaining his geographical expansionist strategy of his country into a chess game with the U.S. that it can lead to a no-win game for both sides for years.

The political differences of these old allies undergo has today become subjected to the support of Russia, partly Europe, from Turkey, and Americans in the arms confrontation with Russians and in making the NATO spiritless have taken the unilateralism road that they are even unable to cope with Turkey in the regional interactions. The U.S. support of Kurds will not even give Turkey enough time for slow respiration. Now one should wait and see if Turkey and the U.S. are engaged in a long term game which will have no victory for anyone of them, indeed who will be the real winner at the margins of this game?

The website of American think tank Brookings Group in an article has given attractive descriptions that it is not pointless knowing that it more exposes the tough condition of the U.S. even in wrestling with Turkey. It writes, "The Biden Administration will likely have five crises on its agenda which have tested the U.S. relations with Turkey in recent years: purchase of Russian S-300 missile system by Turkey and as the result the U.S. sanctions on Turkey; the issue of Syrian Kurds; the crisis of Eastern Mediterranean; the case of state-owned Halk Bank of Turkey regarding violating the U.S. sanctions against Iran; and Biden's view regarding the exit of Turkey from democracy all and all are important topics that neither is Turkey ready to come along with it in favor of the U.S., nor is the U.S. ready to withdraw from its hegemony over one of its allies during the Cold War."

Former U.S. President Donald Trump neutrally protected Turkey against several punitive action. On January 19, 2021, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in response to a question about the purchase of S-400 missiles by Turkey from Russia called Turkey as the U.S. strategic partner (the policy of carrot). And this indicates the new U.S. administration's approach towards Turkey. But on the other side, in almost all polls conducted in Turkey, Turkish people have considered the U.S. at the top of the threats against the national security.

The dominating climate on the public opinion in Turkey has forced President Erdogan and his government to reduce the ties with the West, and he has even showed tendency towards the East and the Westerners are concerned about this untold but quite obvious event.

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Iran Allocates 200m Euros for Promoting Exports to Africa

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's National Development Fund (NDF) has opened a €200 million credit line for the country's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) to use for developing exports of commodities and services to African countries.

The mentioned fund has been allocated as part of a \$2-billion support package which has been allocated by NDF for developing the country's non-oil exports, Farzad Piltan, the director-general of TPO's Office of Arabian and African Countries said.

"The board of directors of the National Development Fund has approved this fund and it has scheduled to notify the relevant agencies for its implementation after the plan is reviewed and finalized in the next meeting of the African headquarters headed by the First Vice President," Piltan stated.

According to the official, despite all the opportunities and capacities for mutual cooperation, the development of economic and trade ties with Africa has been facing some problems such as lack of planning, lack of recognition and interest by the private sector organizations such as chambers of commerce and trade unions, lack of appropriate infrastructure and lack of government resources and facilities.

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Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

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Gov't Welcomes Leader's Order On Need for Lifting Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani said that his government warmly welcomes the order of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei about lifting sanctions.

In a statement, the government warmly welcomed the order of Ayatollah Khamenei for acting in unison on the implementation of Majlis (parliament) law.

The government highlighted that the Islamic Republic of Iran's negotiations and agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was entirely in accordance with the country's constitution and laws, especially the resolution of the Supreme National Security Council.

U.S., Western Gov'ts Violated Human Rights In Iran-Iraq War

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi said on Tuesday that Iran must reveal to the world that how the U.S. and the Western governments violated Human Rights during the 8-year imposed war to achieve their evil wishes.

In a conference on legal and international claims on the Holy Defense (8-year Iran-Iraq war) said that human community must have power of reason and analysis in order that the dominant system cannot pursue its own interest in the name of supporting people.

He underlined that the Holy Defense, Islamic Revolution and the Iranian nation's struggle must be depicted and introduced to the world and generations, because the modern ignorance doesn't want our youth, students and seminary scholars to have analytical power; they want to be the only narrator of history.

Noting that the role of Saddam Hussein's accomplices during the 8-year war should be explained, he stressed that the list of political, armed and financial assistance given to Saddam by the Western Governments.

If an indictment is to be brought and all crimes by U.S. and other Western states like Germany and France be listed, that would a thick and lengthy indictment that must be put before international justice, Raisi added.

"The so-called Human Rights advocates and lawyers must visit our war veterans and see how they have been suffering from complications for 30 years and agonies from chemical weapons and nerve agents and their mothers and wives share desperation," the Judiciary Chief said.



He added that millions of Iranian people damaged by the imposed war must one day go to law before an international court, although today it is not possible because of the dominant system.

The top justice official opined that the media empire of the foes today seeks a modern ignorance that is different from the old ignorance in that is armed with science and technology.

Pointing to the official announcement of assassination of the late General Qassim Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis by the U.S. Government, Raisi called on the lawyers around the world to rise against state terrorism.

He elaborated that the U.S. officials confessed that ISIS was created by the U.S. and the Zionist Regime; however, those who rose to fight ISIS were assassinated by the former U.S. administration.

Iran Is Winning Economic War

TEHRAN (IP) - Addressing the cabinet meeting, President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran's assets to be released in some countries and as a result, some sanctions problems had been resolved.

In the beginning of the meeting, the Governor of the Central Bank Abdolnaser Hemmati presented a report on his recent talks and agreements reached with representatives of South Korea, Japan, Iraq, and Oman on how to use Iran's blocked assets in these countries.

Then rReferring to the agreement, Rouhani said: "Now we are witnessing the defeat of the enemy in the imposed economic war and the ineffectiveness of sanctions, and the maximum resistance of the people against this full-scale war of the enemy has been achieved to its goals."

He added: "Undoubtedly, releasing of Iran's assets, which was illegally blocked, will provide openings in the economy." Rouhani stated: "Any action that harms economic stability is a betrayal of the people and the economy."

In the meeting, the Ministry of Science also reported on the measures taken to implement the preferential trade arrangements (PTAs) with the Eurasian Union and the amount of trade and exchange with the countries of the Union and the start of negotiations on a free trade agreement with the Union.

According to the report, Iran's exports to the Eurasian region have increased by 30% following the implementation of the preferential trade agreement.

"Iran has always used peaceful diplomatic means and de-escalation to achieve this goal, and the preferential trade agreement with the Eurasian Union has been one of the most beneficial and effective measures in the field of international trade in recent years," Rouhani said.

The President stressed: "We should introduce Iran as a reliable and predictable country in international society and trade interactions", emphasizing: "We should use Iran's successful experience of preferential trade with Eurasia to increase Iran's presence in new markets and cooperation to expand investment, transportation, cleanliness and banking, energy and other business, regional and global interactions."

Tehran, Tokyo Discuss Using Iranian Resources in Japan to Buy Vaccine

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Governor of Central Bank of Iran Abdonnaser Hemmati and Japanese ambassador in Tehran discussed the methods of using Iranian banking resources in Japan, including purchase of COVID-19 vaccine, on Monday.

In a meeting that was held at the request of the Japanese Embassy, Hemmati referred to the previous meetings with Japanese high-rank officials about his emphasis that the era of maximum pressure of the previous U.S. administration U.S. is over and said that friend countries should regardless of political pressures keep their cooperation.

Stressing that the Iranian resources in Japan should be used, Hemmati added that Japan should be innovative in this regard.

Japanese ambassador thanked Central Bank of Iran for accelerating payment of Iranian companies to Japanese parties and suggested that the Iranian resources in Japan be used for purchasing COVID-19 vaccine, stressing that the Japanese Embassy in Tehran will try to create a connection between central banks of the two countries for facilitating financial and banking affairs.

Tehran, Rome Stress Political Solution to Syria Crisis

TEHRAN (IFP) - Ali-Asghar Khaji, a senior assistant to the Iranian foreign minister in special political affairs, has held a virtual meeting with the Italian Foreign Ministry's Special Envoy for Syria Paolo Dionisi.

During the Monday talks, the Iranian official touched upon his participation in the recent meeting, in Sochi, of senior experts of Turkey, Russia and Iran, the three guarantors of the Astana format.

He noted the delegates exchanged views on the different dimensions of Syria developments in the Sochi meeting where the participants also emphasized the need to settle the Syria crisis politically, help resolve humanitarian problems and keep fighting terrorism.

The three countries also issued a statement supporting a political solution and the continuation of work by the Syrian Constitutional Committee, Khaji added.

The Iranian official expressed hope a trip to Damascus by UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen, which started on February 3, 2021, will give fresh impetus to intra-Syrian talks and lead to the holding of the sixth meeting of the committee in the near future.

Dionisi, in turn, highlighted Iran's status as well as the important and constructive role of talks between the three guarantors of the Astana format in working out a political solution to the Syria crisis.

He underscored that the Italian government backs Pedersen's international initiatives as well efforts made within the framework of the Astana format on Syria.

He said Rome is keen on contributing to the process of establishing peace in Syria through the cooperation of other international players as well as Iran.

The Italian official said confidence-building among Syrian groups on the one hand, and between the Syrian government and international parties on the other is necessary.

At the conclusion of the talks, the two sides stressed the need to move forward with regular talks and consultations.

President Congratulates Japan National Day

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Hassan Rouhani in a message to Prime Minister of Japan Yoshihide Suga offered congratulation on Japan National Day and assured that historical and friendly ties will develop.

While the world in involved with COVID-19 pandemic and the international community has undergone dramatic political and security developments, fortunately Iran and Japan are developing relations, the message reads.

It shows both sides' determination and efforts for developing cooperation in different fields.

Meanwhile, in a separate message to Emperor of Japan Naruhito, Rouhani congratulated His Eminency on National Day of Japan and Naruhito's birthday.

He hoped for boosting friendly ties between Iran and Japan.

Tehran, Sofia Discuss Closer Cooperation on All Fronts

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran and Bulgaria have held the second round of their political consultations at the level of deputy foreign ministers in a virtual meeting.

During the Monday talks, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi and his Bulgarian counterpart Georg Georgiev exchanged view on issues pertaining to bilateral ties as well as regional and international issues.

The two sides also discussed developments pertinent to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The Iranian official emphasized the significance of preserving the JCPOA as a diplomatic accomplishment in the contemporary era, saying Iran's key condition for the full implementation of its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA is the United States' unconditional return to the nuclear deal and its lifting of all sanctions against Iran.

He stressed Iran's move to scale down its commitments under the JCPOA is in keeping with the provisions of the very same agreement and came in reaction to Washington and Europe's failure to make good on their obligations.

Araqchi touched upon a rise in trade exchanges between Iran and Bulgaria over the past year, and underlined the need to tap into all potentialities to enhance mutual economic transactions.

The two officials also stressed the importance of promoting bilateral parliamentary ties.

The Bulgarian official, in turn, underlined the need to use diplomacy to settle differences.

Georgiev underscored his country together with the European Union had been opposed to the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA from the outset, and tried to save the JCPOA.

The top diplomat said he would be pleased to see Bulgaria's relations with Iran expand on political, economic, cultural and international fronts.

The two sides also emphasized the need to boost cooperation in tourism after the coronavirus pandemic is over.

U.S. Recent Measures Utterly Insufficient

TEHRAN (MNA) – A spokesperson with the Iranian Government says recent steps of the new US Administration towards Iran are insufficient.

Speaking in his weekly presser, Ali Rabiei pointed to the withdrawal of Trump Administration's request for activation of the snapback mechanism in the UN Security Council and also lifting of restrictions on Iranian diplomats in the United Nations, adding, "Although we embrace such late measures and assess them as U.S. return to a constructive path, such measures are utterly insufficient."

Tehran expects that U.S. officials would adhere in practice to their words and this will not happen unless Washington 'immediately and completely' implement the UNSCR 2231, he stressed. Iran has always been ready to resume diplomacy with JCPOA members with goodwill so as to make sure the full implementation of the agreement, said Rabiei.

Asked about EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell's proposal for U.S. presence in JCPOA meetings as a guest, the spokesperson said "Talks between Iran and America are possible only within the JCPOA framework but as America has not returned to the deal yet, it cannot use the mechanisms defined within the JCPOA."

"What we are reviewing is Europe's proposal for holding an unofficial meeting for dialogue, not negotiation, between Iran and 4+1 and the U.S. as a guest. We consider Mr. Borrell's proposal good and in the framework of his efforts to maintain the JCPOA."

FM Slams Foreign Meddling, Arms Sales in Region

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has slammed Western countries for their unjustified presence and intervention in the Middle East and for selling weapons to regional regimes.



Speaking at a conference in Tehran on Iran's legal and international claims related to the eight-year Iraqi war on Iran during the 1980s, Zarif said United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 598 (1987) includes an important Article on regional security that was added to the document at the request of the Islamic Republic.

"We should tell those who accuse us of misbehaving in the region that you are the ones who have created misery in our region... You are the ones who came to this region and are committing murder and causing destruction" in the Middle East, he said.

"Why should the region need 100 billion dollars in weapons sales a year? 25 percent of the world's arms trade takes place in our region, and everyone is involved. Now, France wants to try to use the gap that may have been created between Saudi Arabia and the United States to sell more weapons to Saudi Arabia, and this has become a concern for regional security. Who do you think you are fooling?" Zarif added.

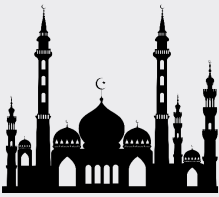
Elsewhere in his remarks, the top Iranian diplomat said the 1980-88 war that Iraq imposed on Iran amounted to an act of aggression, during which the regime of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein committed war crimes against the Iranian nation.

There is no doubt that Saddam's invasion of Iran violated the peremptory norms of international law, Zarif said, adding, "A widespread military attack on the Islamic Republic of Iran, a country that had just entered the stage of building the state [following] the Revolution..., is both a criminal and aggressive act. It has aggressive intentions and no justification."

He also denounced Iraq's failure to register Iranian captives, its use of chemical weapons and large-scale bombardment of residential areas.

"Therefore, an act of aggression took place with the aim of expansionism, not repelling a problem. It was carried out under special regional and international conditions to gain concessions, thus it is considered an act of aggression by any definition. It witnessed a widespread resort to measures that are condemned in all international regulations and are even known as war crimes," he said. Zarif further referred to UNSC Resolution 479, which was adopted on September 28, 1980.

He said the resolution is "a permanent stain of shame" in the history of the Security Council as it failed to call for a retreat at a time when Iraq had occupied more than 2,000 square kilometers of Iranian soil. "Iraq was a major supporter of human rights resolutions against Iran, just as today the murderous and child-killing regime of Saudi Arabia is a main supporter of human rights resolutions against Iran," he said.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

12:17

18:13

05:15

06:39

15. "This Day shall no ransom be accepted of you, nor of those who rejected Allah." Your abode is the Fire: that is the proper place to claim you: and an evil refuge it is!"

16. Has not the Time arrived for the Believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the Truth which has been revealed (to them), and that they should not become like those to whom was given Revelation aforetime, but long ages passed over them and their hearts grew hard?

For many among them are rebellious transgressors.

Surah 57, Iron (15-16)

Tourism Industry
Suffers 22,000b Tomans of
Loss Due to COVID-19

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN -Minister of Culture, Tourism and Handicrafts Ali-Asghar Mounesan says the country's national tourism industry has been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and it has suffered losses around 22,000b tomans.

Addressing the International Tourism and Handicrafts Exhibition, Mounesan said national tourism industry badly hit by the outbreak of the virus and the industry suffered losses around 22,000 tomans. He expressed hope by production of domestic COVID-19 vaccine, tourism in the country once again would pick up.

He went on to say that by the boom in tourism, he hopes all types of tourism like ecotourism and agro tourism would boom. He noted several incidents and events had their negative impacts on the tourism but they failed to ground this industry and only slowed down its space of progress.

Mounesan noted that despite all these mishaps, arrival of foreign tourists set a record for the country.

He added that some 23,000b tomans of credit has been earmarked during the 12th government for tourism in the country and some projects are to be inaugurated soon.

He noted that 408 hotels and hotel apartments with 417,000 beds have been built and launched during the current government while the country is

challenging with the sanctions.

Meanwhile Venezuela's Minister of Tourism and Foreign Trade Ali Padron who is in Tehran to attend the exhibition highlighted friendly ties between Tehran and Caracas, saying that Venezuelans see Iran as their home.

Padron met with Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts to sign a memorandum of understanding on a 2020-2024 tourism plan and will visit a number of people involved in Iranian tourism industry.

He will take trips to Kerman and Esfahan provinces to see tourist sites.

He will also tour Golestan Palace, Milad Tower and the National Museum in Tehran.

Tourism Minister of Venezuela is the special guest of the exhibition.

Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, the event is taking place with observing health protocols.

Some 160 tourism companies are present in the exhibition.

MSC Production Capability Far
Beyond Its Nominal Capacity

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) Mr. Hamid Reza Azimian in a specialized meeting dubbed “Interactions Between Fields of Steel and Iron Ore: Challenges and Ways for Exports in the Post-Trump Era” said the production capability of the company is far beyond its nominal production capacity and the company constantly meets the demands of the country regarding its needs to different types of sheet.

He said when the name of MSC comes to the scene, everybody talks about it as the major producer and provider of sheet and types of it.

He went on to say that the Supreme Leader has said the strategic Gureh-Jask crude oil project is the most strategic project of the government, adding that due to the sanctions, this certain type of steel was not sold to Iran but a joint group, comprised of Romanian experts, National Iranian Oil Company and MSC, worked together to produce it.


Azimian went on to say that so far 450,000 tons of this type of steel has been produced and has been handed over to Oxin Steel and to the contractors of the project. He added that recently MSC has produced 300-millimeter slab and in less than 48 hours, the oil ministry announced that the produced slab would be used in the project of transferring oil from the bottom of the sea. He said this slab has now been turned into rolling at Oxin Steel and it is in the stage of signing the deal.

MAPNA Wins
National Organizational
Excellence Award

TEHRAN – MAPNA Group was awarded with the silver statue of the national organizational excellence because of its significant progress.

According to reports, the group, after defining and implementing a set of actions and several improvement projects and by participating in the process of evaluation by the organizers of National Excellence Awards, scored a big win and the jury awarded the group with the silver statue of the Organizational Excellence of the Year. Last year the average level of scores for winning the crystal statue was between 500 to 550 points but this year MAPNA Group in the evaluation scored between 550 to 600 points.

This success is indebted to the efforts of all staff and endeavors of excellence teams as well as strong support of the group and its experts.



Agricultural
Support Services Co.

PERMIT NO : 55/99/28549

DATE : 24/02/2021

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

جهاد کشاورزی

Ministry of
Jihad-e-Agriculture

INVITATION TO RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad of I.R of Iran, is considering the purchase of the below 20 items of formulated pesticides, through renewal of one step international tender.

Item	General Name	Formulation	Quantity(MT)
1	2,4-D+MCPA	67.5% SL (W/V)	100
2	Bromoxynil octanoate+MCPA-2-ethyl ester	40% EC (W/V)	40
3	Bromoxynil+2,4-D	56% EC (W/V)	20
4	Pinoxaden+ safener	5% EC (W/V)	60
5	Pinoxaden+Clodinafop propargyl+Cloquintocet	5% EC (W/V)	100
6	Iodosulfuron-methyl-sodium +Mesosulfuron-methyl+Mefenpyr-diethyl	1.2% OD (W/V)	100
7	Mesosulfuron methyl +Iodosulfuron-methyl sodium+Diflufenican+mefenpyr-diethyl	6% OD (W/V)	50
8	Sethoxydim	12.5% OEC (W/V)	20
9	Clopyralid	30% SL (W/V)	60
10	Propiconazole	25% EC (W/W)	400
11	Epoxiconazole+Tiophanate-methyl	49.7% SC (W/V)	90
12	Cyproconazole+Propiconazole	33% EC (W/V)	40
13	Deltamethrin	2.5% EC (W/V)	600
14	Tebuconazole	2% DS (W/W)	300
15	Tebuconazole	6% FS(W/V)	200
16	Tebuconazole+Prothioconazole	40% FS(W/V)	10
17	Difenoconazole	3% DS(W/W)	150
18	Difenoconazole	3% FS(W/V)	100
19	Carboxin+Thiram	75% WP (W/W)	100
20	Carboxin+Thiram	40% FS(W/W)	80

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents fromWednesday dated 24/02/2021 until Saturday dated 25/02/2021 (7 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 35803978226350065000000000000006.

The bidders are requested to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Mondaydated 05/04/2021 (during official working hours) to our security office located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on Tuesday dated 06/04/2021 at 14:00 PM with the presence of bidder's representatives at our purchasing committee hall (9th floor , no. 1, Fourth Alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

We would like to emphasize that the bid bond amount should be in bank guarantee as follows:

- 1- € 15996 for 2,4-D + MCPA 67.5% SL equivalent to Iranian Rials 4603550000.
- 2- € 12559 for Bromoxynil octanoate+MCPA-2-ethyl ester 40%EC equivalent to Iranian Rials 3614461000.
- 3- € 7805 for Bromoxynil+2,4-D 56% EC equivalent to Iranian Rials 2246189000.
- 4- € 27637 for Pinoxaden + safener 5% EC equivalent to Iranian Rials 7953798000.
- 5- € 42382 for Pinoxaden + clodinafop propargyl+ chocoin toset 5% EC equivalent to Iranian Rials 12197268000.
- 6- € 35574 for Iodosulfuron-methyl-sodium+ Mesosulfuron- methyl+ mefenpyr-diethyl 1.2% OD equivalent to Iranian Rials 10238058000.
- 7- € 19700 for + Mesosulfuron-methyl+ Iodosulfuron-methyl-sodium +Diflufenican+mefenpyr-diethyl 6% OD equivalent to Iranian Rials 5669538000.
- 8- € 7011 for Sethoxydim 12.5% OEC equivalent to Iranian Rials 2017763000.
- 9- € 19271 for Clopyralid 30% SL equivalent to Iranian Rials 5546188000.
- 10- € 52538 for Propiconazole 25% EC equivalent to Iranian Rials 1512020000.
- 11- € 100697 for Epoxiconazole + Tiophanate-methyl 49.7% SC equivalent to Iranian Rials 28980000000.
- 12- € 42982 for Cyproconazole + Propiconazole 33% EC equivalent to Iranian Rials 12370000000.
- 13- € 48222 for Deltamethrin 2.5% EC equivalent to Iranian Rials 13878180000.
- 14- € 49067 for Tebuconazole 2% DS equivalent to Iranian Rials 14121300000.
- 15- € 28562 for Tebuconazole 6% FS equivalent to Iranian Rials 8220000000.
- 16- € 11972 for Tebuconazole + Prothioconazole 40% FS equivalent to Iranian Rials 3445425500.
- 17- € 21140 for Difenoconazole 3% DS equivalent to Iranian Rials 6084000000.
- 18- € 17868 for Difenoconazole 3% FS equivalent to Iranian Rials 5652000000.
- 19- € 31341 for Carboxin+Thiram 75% WP equivalent to Iranian Rials 9019786000.
- 20- € 44940 for Carboxin+Thiram 40% FS equivalent to Iranian Rials 12933485000.

The bid bond value will be in Euro or in equal value of any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, www.sanarate.ir. It should be noted that this site lists the currency transactions, executed in Integrated Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 15/02/2021.

For more information, you may refer to our website www.assc.ir, and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

PR & intl Affairs Dept of Agricultural Support Services Company(ASSC)

Uganda's Wine Withdraws Election Result Challenge

KAMPALA (Reuters) - Opposition leader Bobi Wine said on Monday he was dropping a legal challenge to Uganda's presidential election results that handed victory to incumbent Yoweri Museveni, saying Supreme Court justices hearing the case were biased.

Museveni, a former guerrilla leader who has led the East African country since 1986, was declared winner of the Jan. 14 election with 59% of the vote, while Wine was given 35%. Wine, 39, a pop star and lawmaker whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, has rejected the results and said he believed victory was stolen from him. He asked the court to overturn the results on several grounds including widespread use of violence.



Sweden Charges Man With Spying for Russia

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Sweden has charged a 47-year-old man with spying for Russia by selling information for several years to a Russian diplomat.

Prosecutor Mats Ljungqvist said in a statement on Monday that the unidentified man had worked as a consultant at several Swedish companies where he had illegally obtained and sold information, placing the country's security at risk.

"While a consultant at his former workplaces, I allege that he obtained material with the purpose of providing information to a foreign power, in this case, Russia," said Ljungqvist. "The man was apprehended whilst meeting a Russian diplomat where he had just received 27,800 Swedish crowns [\$3,360] from the diplomat."



Thousands of Algerians Hit Streets on Protest Anniversary



ALGIERS (Dispatches) - Thousands marched in Algeria's capital and other cities Monday to mark the second anniversary of the "Hirak" protest movement that forced longtime president Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power.

"We are not here to celebrate, but to demand your departure," protesters shouted, referring to a government they see as little different from the one Bouteflika headed for two decades.

Monday's mass rally in Algiers was the largest since weekly Hirak demonstrations were suspended in March last year in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Police were deployed in force in the capital, where they set up security checkpoints and carried out identity checks around key flashpoints while helicopters hovered overhead.

At least 59 people were arrested across the North African country, including 26 in Algiers, according to the CNLD prisoners' rights group and AFP journalists. "The fateful hour has arrived," read one banner brandished by demonstrators, while others waved Algerian and Berber flags.

Police tried to block protesters from gathering around the Grand Post Office, which was at the heart of the mass protests that kicked off in Algiers and several other cities on February 22, 2019 to oppose Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term.

Outside the capital, marches were also being held in Annaba, Oran, Setif and Mostaganem, according to witnesses and social media accounts.

Demonstrators kept up their protests after Bouteflika's resignation, demanding a sweeping overhaul of a ruling system in place since Algeria's independence from France in 1962.

They only suspended marches last March due to coronavirus restrictions, but calls have recently circulated on social media for a return to the streets.

On the eve of the anniversary, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune -- elected in December 2019 on a very low turnout in a poll boycotted by the protest movement -- announced a limited government reshuffle, in a bid to head off renewed rallies.

The reshuffle saw few major changes by Tebboune, who was once a prime minister under Bouteflika.

Among those retained are Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad and Justice Minister Belkacem Zeghmati, who is seen as a symbol of Algeria's judicial crackdown on protesters and opposition activists. Tebboune also signed a decree dissolving parliament, clearing the way for early elections, but no date has yet been set.

In a gesture of appeasement on Thursday, he announced pardons which have led so far to the release of almost 40 pro-democracy activists, including opposition figure Rachid Nekkaz and journalist Khaled Drareni, who has become a symbol of the struggle for a free press.

Zaki Hannache, a 33-year-old activist, said Hirak supporters were unimpressed by the president's reshuffle and his call for early legislative polls.

EU Agrees to Sanctions on Myanmar Military, Russian Officials

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - European Union foreign ministers have agreed to impose sanctions on Myanmar's military over its coup earlier this month and withhold some development aid, as well as blacklist Russian officials for the jailing of Kremlin critic Alexey Navalny.

The bloc's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Monday the EU would not curb trade ties with Myanmar as that could hit the general population.

"We took the political agreement to apply sanctions targeting the military responsible for the coup and their economic interests," Borrell said. "All direct financial support from our development system to the government reform programs is withheld."

The military on February 1 arrested civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a coup that has drawn widespread international condemnation. It has since launched an increasingly bloody crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators who have taken to the streets en masse to denounce the takeover.



The United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States have all announced targeted sanctions on Myanmar's military leaders, including Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Despite the growing backlash, the military -- known locally as Tatmadaw -- has ignored calls for a return to civilian rule, saying it will hold new elections and hand over power to a winner.

Separately, European diplomats told AFP news agency the sanctions against Russian senior officials would target four people deemed responsible for persecuting Navalny, using the EU's new human rights regime adopted last year.

The diplomats did not name the targeted individuals but the limited move looks set to disappoint those calling for a tough response against Moscow.

Navalny's associates and European lawmakers had urged the ministers meeting in Brussels to go after oligarchs accused of funding President Vladimir Putin's rule.

Rockets Target U.S. Embassy in Iraqi Capital

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - A volley of rockets on Monday targeted the high-security zone in the Iraqi capital that is home to the U.S. embassy, the military and security sources said.

The attack is the third in a week to target Western diplomatic, military or commercial installations across Iraq after months of relative calm.

At least two rockets landed within the perimeter of the Green Zone, where the American and other foreign embassies are based, according to a statement by Iraq's security services.

A security source within the Green Zone said the C-RAM anti-rocket defence system deployed at the U.S. embassy did not fire because the rockets were not projected to land within the diplomatic compound. A security source told AFP at least one rocket hit the headquarters of Iraq's National Security Service near the US diplomatic mission, damaging several cars parked there.

A U.S.-led coalition deployed in Iraq since 2014 to help local forces fight jihadists also operates a base near the American embassy.

"The coalition reports no damages or injuries," coalition spokesman Wayne Marotto said on Twitter. At least one other rocket crashed into the nearby residential district of Harithiya, the military said.

A resident of the area told AFP the rocket damaged a multi-storey parking complex just a few metres from his home.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but the military said it had located the launchpad in a northern district of Baghdad.

The attack comes one week after more than a dozen rockets targeted a military complex at the Arbil airport in northern Iraq where US-led coalition troops are based. Two people were killed, including one foreign contractor based at the airport, who died immediately, and a civilian, who succumbed to his wounds on Monday.

On Saturday, another wave of rockets hit the Al-Balad airbase north of Baghdad, where Iraq keeps most of the F-16s it has purchased from the U.S. in recent years.

China Rejects Uighurs Genocide Charge

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has rejected "slandorous attacks" about conditions for Muslim Uighurs and other minorities living in its Xinjiang region, saying that they enjoyed freedom of religion and other fundamental rights.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi, addressing the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva on Monday, said there were 24,000 mosques in the western region, adding that "basic facts show that there has never been so-called genocide, forced labour or religious oppression in Xinjiang".

"The door to Xinjiang is always open. People from many countries who have visited Xinjiang have learned the facts and the truth on the ground. China also welcomes the High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Xinjiang," Wang said, referring to UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet, whose office has been negotiating terms of access to the country.

Activists and UN rights experts have said that at least one million Muslims are imprisoned in camps in the remote western region.

China denies abuses and says its camps provide vocational training and are needed to fight extremism.

On Monday, the United Kingdom's foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, denounced torture, forced labour and sterilisations that he said were taking place against Muslim Uighurs on an "industrial scale".

"The situation in Xinjiang is beyond the pale," Raab told the Geneva forum where China is among the 47 member states. "The reported abuses -- which include torture, forced labour and forced sterilisation of women -- are extreme and they are extensive. They are taking place on an industrial scale," he said.

Raab called for Bachelet or another independent expert to be given "urgent and unfettered access" to Xinjiang and said that there should be a resolution at the council to this effect.

Last month, a bipartisan commission of the United States Congress said in a new report that China has possibly committed "genocide" in its treatment of Uighurs and other minority Muslims in its western region of Xinjiang. The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) said new evidence emerged in the past year that "crimes against humanity -- and possibly genocide -- are occurring".

In December last year, Human Rights Watch said a big-data programme in China's Xinjiang "arbitrarily selects" Muslims for detention, flagging behaviour such as wearing a veil, studying the Quran or going on a Hajj pilgrimage as reasons for arrest.

U.S. President Joe Biden has endorsed a last-minute determination by the Trump administration that China has committed genocide in Xinjiang and has said Washington must be prepared to impose costs on China.



White Supremacy a "Transnational Threat"



GENEVA (Reuters) - United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Monday that white supremacy and neo-Nazi movements are becoming a "transnational threat" and have exploited the coronavirus pandemic to boost their support.

Addressing the U.N. Human Rights Council, Guterres said the danger of hate-driven groups was growing daily.

"White supremacy and neo-Nazi movements are more than domestic terror threats. They are becoming a transnational threat," he told the Geneva forum. Without naming states, Guterres added: "Today, these extremist movements represent the number one internal security threat in several countries."

In the United States, racial tensions simmered during the turbulent four-year presidency of Donald Trump. His successor Joe Biden has said the Jan. 6 siege of the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters was carried out by "thugs, insurrectionists, political extremists and white supremacists".

"Far too often, these hate groups are cheered on by people in positions of responsibility in ways that were considered unimaginable not long ago," Guterres said. "We need global coordinated action to defeat this grave and growing danger." U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet is to report to the council on March 18 on systemic racism against people of African descent. The global inquiry was launched after George Floyd died in Minneapolis last May when a white police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

Guterres also accused authorities in some countries of using the COVID-19 pandemic to deploy "heavy-handed security responses and emergency measures to crush dissent".

"At times, access to life-saving COVID-19 information has been concealed - while deadly misinformation has been amplified - including by those in power," he said. Guterres warned about the power of digital platforms and the use and abuse of data.

"I urge all Member States to place human rights at the centre of regulatory frameworks and legislation on the development and use of digital technologies," he said. "We need a safe, equitable and open digital future that does not infringe on privacy or dignity."



Shanon
(adviser)

Parsian

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gym, pkg
yard, F.F

Elahieh Villa (\$4000)
1500sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
green yard
Nicely Furn

((\$1800))
Pasdaran
200sq.m, 3bdrs
Ladge balcony
marble fl
storages
pkg, F.F

Aghdasieh (\$2200)
220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/pol
S, J, balcony, pkg, F.F

((\$10000))
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Russia-Germany Trade Turnover Falls to Lowest Level in 16 Years

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The volume of trade between Russia and Germany declined by 22.2 percent in 2020, year-on-year, to €44.9 billion (\$54.4 billion), according to data from the German Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations. The association said the Covid-19 pandemic and political disagreements led to such a massive

reduction in trade turnover between the two nations. "German-Russian trade was at its lowest level since 2005," said Oliver Hermes, the committee's chairman. "2020 turned out to be a very difficult year not only because of the coronavirus, but also due to serious political conflicts that have been noticeably affecting the economy."



COVID-19 Might Widen Wealth Differences in Europe

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to widen wealth gaps in Europe unless policymakers help end the health crisis globally, support economies until the pandemic is over and invest in making economies greener, the International Monetary Fund said.

In a speech to a European Parliament conference on Monday, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva praised EU governments for putting more than 3 trillion euros in fiscal support for firms and households, including job-retention schemes that helped more than 54 million workers.

"But the path to recovery is ... uneven... because of the difference in starting positions, economic structure and capacity to respond, causing inequalities to grow both across and within countries," she said.

She said in the 27-nation EU, countries that are traditional tourist destinations, such as Spain, Greece, and Italy, contracted more than 9% in 2020 compared to an average contraction of 6.4% across the bloc.

According to IMF forecasts, by the end of 2022, per capita income for central and eastern Europe would be 3.8% below pre-crisis projections, compared with a shortfall of just 1.3% for advanced EU economies.

Economists have warned that such divergence would make the economic management of the EU, including the monetary policy of the European Central Bank more difficult and would increase the risk of crises down the road.

"Gradual withdrawal has to follow, not precede, a durable exit from the health crisis. It matters internally, and also in terms of spillovers - a premature tightening of policy when worse-hit economies are still deeply fragile could exacerbate divergence between countries," Georgieva said.

EU finance ministers want to keep the fiscal stimulus for now, but will hold talks in the second quarter on when to start shifting from the current blanket support for all businesses to more a targeted approach as the economy recovers, and how to deal with a wave of bankruptcies expected as a result.

The EU agreed last year to jointly borrow 750 billion euros and spend it via grants and loans on reforms and green and digital investment that would boost potential growth of those most at risk of falling behind.

Georgieva said the coordination of such green and digital investment was the most important action in the long run.

"Our analysis shows that this could boost global GDP over a 15-year period by about 0.7 percent each year, creating millions of new jobs," she said.

Pakistan to Affirm Trade, Economic Ties With Japan

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan President Dr Arif Alvi has conveyed that the country values the significance of ever affirming ties with Japan since decades.

In an in-person meeting with Ambassador of Japan to the country, Kunioki Matsuda at Aiwan-e-Sadr today, he said Japan holds great potential of assisting Pakistan in various sectors to the Ambassador while President expressed the desire to further affirm trade and economic ties for the mutual benefits of the countries.

President Alvi highlighted that Japan could be facilitated by the country as it is filled with abundant business opportunities especially in sectors like, agriculture, automobile, information and textile.

He acknowledged the Japan's decision to suspend debt repayments under the Debt Service Suspension Initiative.

The President emphasized the need to increase frequency of bilateral exchanges at the highest level to further strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

The Japanese Ambassador greeted the President over the recently concluded Pakistan Navy's Multinational Maritime Exercise Aman-2021, further adding that it brought global recognition to the country.



Taiwan Economic Growth Set to Grow at Fastest in 7 Years

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan's economy, already an outlier last year as Covid-19 tore through most of the world, will grow at its fastest pace in seven years in 2021, the government said, buoyed by global demand for the island's technology products.

Gross domestic product is expected to expand 4.64% this year, the statistics bureau said, up from a forecast of 3.83% growth made in November.

Exports from Taiwan's electronics industry indicate that the economy will rise because of global demand for new technology products, the government office said Saturday. It said the island's signature semiconductor sector should expect growth in shipments for devices that support 5G wireless, the internet of things and high-performance computing. Automotive chips, though backlogged now because of demand for consumer electronics, would offer Taiwan's chipmakers additional revenue.

Taiwan's whole tech hardware supply chain, a hallmark of its economy over the past 40 years, will see demand from consumers worldwide who are adapting to new work and study habits, says Tracy Tsai, Taipei-based research vice president with the market analysis firm Gartner. That demand will create orders for everyday PCs as well as built-in cameras, chips for artificial intelligence and devices that aid with cloud computing, she says.

"If you look at the supply chain from end-user all the way upstream and (contracting) in the middle, they're all related to Taiwan and that's going to have a direct or indirect relation to Taiwan's GDP," Tsai says.

Tech demand would particularly boost Taiwanese billionaire Morris Chang's TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker. PC developer Acer said this month that its January consolidated revenues had risen 73.4% year on year to an eight-year record NT\$23.5 billion. The Taiwanese company pointed to Chromebooks, gaming devices and light notebooks PCs as growth reasons.

Taiwan was largely successful in handling the Covid-19 pandemic, allowing the island to keep production going last year despite business shutdowns and stay-home orders in much of the world. The government in Taipei controlled the spread of Covid-19 in early 2020 through inspections of inbound aircraft, strict quarantine rules and rigorous contact tracing. Taiwan has tallied a cumulative 942 cases and nine deaths.

Goldman Sachs, BofA Upgrade Turkey's Growth Forecasts for 2021

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Goldman Sachs and Bank of America (BoFA) have both revised upward their 2021 forecasts for the Turkish economy, following in the footsteps of other international financial institutions.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), Wall Street bank JP Morgan and British banking giant HSBC had also recently revised up their projections regarding Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP) growth. Wall Street bank Goldman Monday raised this year's expectation to 6% growth from 4%, according to the report prepared by its analysts.

BoFA raised its 2021 growth forecast to 4.6% from 4.1% previously.

Despite signs of a slowdown in the first quarter, year-on-year growth will remain strong at around 5%, the bank said in a note issued on Sunday. BoFA also revised its 2020 growth forecast upward to 2.2% from 1% due to strong demand in the final quarter. JP Morgan earlier this month hiked its forecast to 4.6%, from 3.3% for 2021. It had previously raised the forecast for 2020 to 1.9% from 1.1%.

HSBC last week said it sees the economy expanding by 4.2% on an annual basis this year, revising upward its earlier forecast of 2.1%. It expects the country's GDP to have grown 2% in the whole of 2020, up from its previous forecast of 1%.

The IMF late last month said it sees the economy growing 6% this year, compared with a previous projection of 5%, before settling back to a growth rate of about 3.5% annually from 2022.

It said the country's GDP was expected to have ended 2020 with a growth of 1.2% as it revised upward its previous forecast of negative 5%.

Hit hard in the second quarter of last year, Turkey's economy has rebounded well and should record growth for 2020 as a whole. In a strong rebound in the second half, the country's GDP soared to a more-than-expected 6.7% growth rate in the third quarter of 2020. It had contracted by 9.9% in the previous three months when lockdowns were imposed to curb the initial COVID-19 wave.

Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey's (CBRT) new Governor Naci Ağbal earlier this month said the economy was expected to have grown by 7% to 8% in the last quarter of 2020. This could bring the overall 2020 growth to around 2.5%, he added. Ağbal also said the economy could grow up to 5% in the January-March period, given the economic activity in January and February.

Separate data on Monday showed that the capacity utilization rate in the Turkish manufacturing industry slipped a bit to 74.9% in February but it still is well above the decade low touched in April. Manufacturing confidence in the same period rose to 109.3 points, central bank data said.

OECD Area Economic Growth Slowed in 4Q 2020



LONDON (Dispatches) - The gross domestic product growth of the Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) area slowed to 0.7% in the fourth quarter of 2020 as most countries posted year-on-year declines.

After unprecedented falls in GDP in the first half of 2020 and a rebound in the third quarter, the re-emergence of lockdown measures in late 2020 caused economic growth to slow significantly again in most developed countries. In the euro area and the European Union, GDP contracted in the fourth quarter of 2020 by -0.6% and -0.4% respectively, following rebounds of 12.4% and 11.5% in the previous quarter.

In the OECD's major seven economies, GDP growth slowed to 0.8% during the period.

Economic growth remained positive in Japan (3.0%), Canada (1.9%), the United States and the United Kingdom (1.0% in both countries), and Germany (0.1%).

Italy and France, in contrast, saw GDP decline by -2.0% and -1.3%, respectively, after strong bounce-back in the previous quarter of 16.0% and 18.5%.

For the full year 2020, GDP dropped by -4.9% in the OECD area, which is the largest fall ever recorded since the organisation's inception in 1961.

Almost all countries faced declining GDP in 2020. Among the Major Seven economies, GDP falls ranged from -3.5% in the United States to -9.9% in the United Kingdom. Marked falls in GDP were also recorded in France -8.2% and Italy -8.9%. Last week the OECD reported that the unemployment rate in the area was stable at 6.9% in December 2020, remaining 1.7% above the level observed in February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the labour market.

India to Clear 45 Investments From China

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India is set to clear 45 investment proposals from China, which are likely to include those from Great Wall Motor and SAIC Motor Corp, government and industry sources told Reuters, as military tensions between the two countries ease at the disputed border.

The proposals have been held up since last year after India tightened controls on Chinese investment in the country in retaliation against alleged Chinese troop incursions in the western Himalayan region. China blamed Indian troops for the standoff.

About 150 investment proposals from China worth more than \$2 billion were stuck in the pipeline. Companies from Japan and the U.S. routing investment through Hong Kong were also caught in the cross-fire as an inter-ministerial panel led by the interior ministry increased scrutiny of such proposals.

A federal Home (Interior) Ministry spokesman did not respond to a request for comment on the proposals to be cleared.

Two government sources who have seen the list said most of the 45 proposals set for early approvals are in the manufacturing sector, which is considered non-sensitive in terms of national security. The sources did not elaborate but two other government officials and two industry sources who are privy to the process said proposals from Great Wall and SAIC are likely to be on the list.

Great Wall and General Motors (GM) made a joint proposal last year seeking consent for the Chinese automaker to purchase the U.S. company's car plant in India, in a deal expected to be valued at around \$250-\$300 million.

Great Wall, which plans to invest \$1 billion in India over the next few years, said earlier that establishing operations in the country is a key part of its global strategy. It had planned to start selling cars in India from this year, and was also mulling

bringing in electric vehicles.

Great Wall said it continues to seek relevant approvals and investment clearances. "Should we be granted all relevant approvals, we will push all work forward in India, abiding by the laws and rules laid down by the Indian government," a company spokesman said.

A GM spokesman added: "We continue to seek all relevant approvals to support the transaction."

SAIC, which started selling cars in India in 2019 under its British brand MG Motor, has invested around \$400 million of the nearly \$650 million it has committed to India and would need approval to bring more investment.

SAIC's India unit did not respond to an email seeking comment.



COVID-19 Claims 91 More Lives in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Some 91 more Iranians have died from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) over the past 24 hours bringing the total deaths to 59,663, Iran's Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said on Tuesday.

Some 8,330 new cases of infection with the COVID-19 were found over the past 24 hours, 782 of whom have been hospitalized, Lari said.

She added that with the 91 new victims, the country's total COVID-19 deaths mounted to 59,663.

Lari noted that 1,358,541 patients out of a total of 1,590,605 infected people have recovered or been discharged from the hospitals.

Some 3,696 other COVID-19 patients are in critical condition and being treated in intensive care units, the spokeswoman said.



OPEC, U.S. Oil Firms Expect Subdued Shale Rebound Even as Crude Prices Rise

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC and U.S. oil companies see a limited rebound in shale oil supply this year as top U.S. producers freeze output despite rising prices, a decision that would help OPEC and its allies.

OPEC this month cut its 2021 forecast for U.S. tight crude, another term for shale, and expects production to decline by 140,000 barrels per day to 7.16 million bpd. The U.S. government expects shale output in March to fall about 78,000 bpd to 7.5 million bpd.

The OPEC forecast preceded the freezing weather in Texas, home to 40% of U.S. output, that has shut wells and curbed demand by regional oil refineries. The lack of a shale rebound could make it easier for OPEC and its allies to manage the market, according to OPEC sources.

"This should be the case," said one of the OPEC sources, who declined to be identified. "But I don't think this factor will be permanent."

While some U.S. energy firms have increased drilling, production is expected to remain under pressure as companies cut spending to reduce debt and boost shareholder returns. Shale producers also are wary that increased drilling would quickly be met by OPEC returning more oil to the market.

"In this new era, (shale) requires a different mindset," Doug Lawler, chief executive of shale pioneer Chesapeake Energy Corp. said in an interview this month. "It requires more discipline and responsibility with respect to generating cash for our stakeholders and shareholders."

That sentiment would be a welcome development for the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, for which a 2014-2016 price slide and global glut caused partly by rising shale output was an uncomfortable experience. This led to the creation of OPEC+, which began cutting output in 2017.

OPEC+ is in the process of slowly unwinding record output curbs made last year as prices and demand collapsed due to the pandemic. Alliance members will meet on March 4 to review demand. For now, it is not seeing history repeat itself.

"U.S. shale is the key non-OPEC supply in the past 10 years or more," said another OPEC delegate. "If such limitation of growth is now expected, I don't foresee any concerns as producers elsewhere can meet any demand growth."

Still, OPEC is no rush to open the taps. Saudi Arabian Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said on Feb. 17 oil producers must remain "extremely cautious."

Shale output usually responds rapidly to price signals and U.S. crude has this month hit its highest level since January 2020, topping \$60 a barrel. While shale companies have added more rigs in recent weeks, a tepid demand recovery and investor pressure to reduce debt has kept them from rushing to complete new wells.

"At this price point, any oil production is profitable, especially the relatively high-cost U.S. shale patch," said Stephen Brennock of broker PVM Oil Associates.

"Yet despite these positive growth signals, U.S. tight oil production is far from recovering its pre-COVID mojo."

The chief executive of shale producer Pioneer Natural Resources Co, Scott Sheffield, recently said he expects small companies to increase output but in the aggregate U.S. output will remain flat to 1% higher even at \$60 per barrel.

Last week's severe cold will wreak havoc on oil and gas production as companies deal with frozen equipment and a lack of power to run operations. The largest U.S. independent producer, ConocoPhillips, on Thursday said the majority of its Texas production remained offline.

Chadormalu Sets New Records For Production of Steel, Pellet



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Last month Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company set new records for production of steel and pellet and this achievement was the result of efforts of the committed personnel of the company and through using hot iron sponge.

According to reports, with melting 97,024 tons of steel, some 121 tons of steel ingots was produced and this is for the first time the ingot steel production in the company surpasses 95,000 tons.

This achievement has been retained while the testing stage and launching the hot charge system for tentative production of hot iron sponge in the Mega Module Direct Reduction Plant of Chadormalu have been successfully tested.

It is expected in the upcoming months the installation stages could be finished for a sustainable production and the hot charge system could also fully join the circuit.

It is noteworthy to say that in December, the steel ingot production capacity of the company reached 93,250 tons.

Meanwhile in the past 11 months, the pelletizing unit of the company set a new record for production beyond expectations and it surpassed the nominal production capacity and it produced 150,000 tons more of pellet comparing to the same period last year.

MBI Offering Services Based on Advanced International Banking System

TEHRAN – The CEO of Bank Melli Iran (BMI) says two services "Melli Plus" and "Digital Branch" are two unique products competing with the achievements of the advanced global banking system and said he has honor that the bank can offer the up-to-dated banking products and serve its customers.

Addressing the "Melli Show 4", Dr. Mohammad Reza Hosseinzadeh said that this event is a venue for displaying the latest services of the bank in the digital banking sector as well as displaying the genuine progresses in this field.

He added that while the country is struggling with the Coronavirus pandemic, two novel products of BMI can

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help to cut the chain of this sinister disease.

He termed "Melli Plus" a genuine example of products related to the future banking in the world and expressed his satisfaction that such a product is unveiled at the "Melli Show 4".

Hosseinzadeh reiterated that experts of the bank have been working for more than one year and a half on this project and it

is a multi-service program.

He also called "Digital Branch" a unique product of the bank which makes the customer needless of his in-person presence in the bank for the banking services without any problem in the banking services.

Boeing Engine Blowouts Investigated as Older 777s Are Suspended

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Showers of jet engine parts over residential areas on both sides of the Atlantic have caught regulators' attention and prompted the suspension of some older Boeing (BA.N) planes from service.

Saturday's incidents involving a United Airlines 777 in Denver and a Longtail Aviation 747 freighter in the Netherlands put engine maker Pratt & Whitney in the spotlight, though there is no evidence that they are related.

Raytheon-owned Pratt & Whitney said it was coordinating with regulators to review inspection protocols. It is expected to increase inspections ordered after previous incidents.

After the Colorado engine failure, when United Flight 328 dropped debris on a northern Denver suburb before landing safely, Boeing recommended the suspension of 777s with the same variant of PW4000 turbine. Japan, meanwhile, imposed a mandatory suspension.

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) weighed in on Monday, requesting more information on the Pratt engines in light of both events. A woman sustained minor injuries in the Dutch incident, which scattered turbine blades on the town of Meerssen. One was found embedded in a car roof.

Iran Not to Back Down...

FROM PAGE 1

Referring to massacre of 220,000 innocent people in the U.S. nuclear bombardment of two Japanese cities during World War II as well as indiscriminate bombardment of Yemeni people, their markets, hospitals and schools by Western-made warplanes, the Leader said, "Massacring civilians and innocent people is the way of Americans and Western countries, but the Islamic Republic does not believe in this method and, therefore, never thinks about nuclear weapons."

"In the meantime, that international Zionist clown, who keeps saying that 'we will not allow Iran to build nuclear weapons', must know that if the Islamic Republic had any decision to produce nuclear weapons, he and those bigger than him could not prevent it."

"The issue of nuclear weapon is just a pretext. They are even opposed to us having access to conventional weapons, because they want to strip Iran of the components of power," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei warned that Western powers want Iran to be in need of their assistance the day when the country requires nuclear energy, so that they could take advantage of our need as a means for imposing [their will on us], bully and extort [us].

"However, we are determined to acquire nuclear capabilities proportionate to the country's needs and this is why the level of Iran's [uranium] enrichment will not remain [limited to] 20 percent and the country will take action to any extent that it needs. For example, to achieve nuclear propulsion [technology] or for other purposes, we may even increase uranium enrichment to 60 percent purity," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

"Of course, a contract has been signed for [a period of] several years. If they comply with it, we will also comply until those several years [are over], but Western countries are well aware that we do not seek nuclear weapons," the Leader said.

In another part of his remarks, the Leader pointed to a law recently approved by Iran's Parliament to reduce Tehran's commitments under the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially

known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in response to the US withdrawal from the deal, and to thwart the impact on the country of US sanctions, which were re-imposed following Washington's withdrawal from the deal.

Ayatollah Khamenei said, "Majlis passed a law and the administration welcomed it. All measures that should have been taken up to yesterday were taken and, God willing, another part of that law will enter into force tomorrow."

Referring to an existing contention between the Iranian administration and Parliament with regard to the implementation of the aforesaid law, the Leader said, "Such misunderstandings can be resolved and the two sides must endeavor to settle this issue through cooperation. Differences should not be left on their own or be intensified so as to show division [in the country]."

"The administration considers itself obligated to implement this law, and this law, which is a good law, must be meticulously implemented," the Leader said.

The Leader also slammed the latest position adopted by the United States and three European signatories to the JCPOA (UK, France, Germany) toward Iran as "pompous, bullying and unfair," emphasizing that such a position "will only make the Iranian nation hate them even more."

"Since day one and for a long period of time, the Islamic Republic fulfilled its commitments on the basis of the Islamic teachings, but the party that did not fulfill its obligations since the first day was these four countries. Therefore, they must be scolded, criticized and be held accountable," Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized.

The Leader said, "When the U.S. quit the JCPOA and others supported it, it is Qur'an's command that you should also give up [your] commitments. However, our honorable administration did not give up its commitments and just reduced some of them in a gradual manner. Of course, these [remedial] measures are reversible if they [other parties to the JCPOA] restart complying with their commitments."

U.S. Chess Game...

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Most of political experts quite obviously write in the Turkish newspapers and explain that Turkish relation with the U.S. has just remained steadfast due to their security cooperation since the Cold War era. But for now, strategic separation and difference in considering the threat has overshadowed these relations, and as the tension between Turkey and the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) was exposed in the media over the Syria crisis, their military relation has increasingly become more tense (the policy of stick).

The new strategic doctrine in Turkey that both the public and the parliament confirm and support is based on this point that now that the U.S. considers China as a tough, persistent and strategic rival and it also has put a tense relation with Russia on its agenda, Ankara should enjoy other trend and international relations which is not West-centered like before and pursue its interests in a modified geopolitical balance with the West. Analysts of both sides believe that reducing the tensions while the climate for advance in the above-mentioned five disputed fields is limited, it is unlikely both sides to reach an acceptable formula over the S-400 missile system and this issue will remain as a sustainable problem in their relations for years.

In Eastern Mediterranean, at the best they may stop this crisis and push the start of the bilateral talks between Turkey and Greece in order that both sides could stop dispatching research ships to their disputed waters. The future of Turkey's policy regarding Syrian Kurds has been tied with the future of the ruling government in Turkey and its domestic political developments.

As long as the coalition between Erdogan with the far-right parties is alive, the prospect for political reconsideration and change in the trend of bilateral issues will be limited. By the way, the legal case of Turkish state-owned Halk Bank will cast a shadow like a blue umbrella on the bilateral relation with the U.S. The only option, provided that if Turkey can realize it in its political and economic system and to some extent depose Americans' support, is to create strategic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, of course it is beyond the media smear campaign in the field of economy. This relation can both reduce Kurdish tension for Turkey and put both the U.S. and Zionist regime in a position to accept some of demands of this country.

Every contract of Turkey with the Islamic Republic of Iran although it may not be a checkmate for the Western side, it will be to an acceptable extent like the threat of the queen in the chess which forces the opposite side for a temporary retreat and will give Turkey time to breathe more.

IAEA Nuclear...

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He explained that footage recorded by cameras at Iran's nuclear sites will now be withheld and no longer shared with the IAEA on a daily and weekly basis as was done in the past.

The foreign minister also noted that Iran will have no official meeting with the US, since Washington is no longer a party to the nuclear deal. The halt came under the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, a law passed last December by the Iranian Parliament.

The legislation set February 23 as a deadline for the Iranian government to further scale back compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), if the US does not lift its sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

The withdrawal from the Protocol adds to Iran's previous steps away from the JCPOA in response to the U.S.'s unilateral withdrawal in 2018 and the other parties' failure to fulfill their commitments.

Iran Allocates...

FROM PAGE 1

"These problems are expected to be resolved gradually with the opening of the mentioned credit line," he said.

The official noted that the TPO and other relevant government bodies and agencies are preparing various programs in order to boost the Islamic Republic's trade with African trade partners.

Holding three joint economic committees and four joint industrial committees with target African countries, holding 10 exclusive exhibitions in 10 different African countries, participation in 10 international exhibitions in African countries, sending 10 trade delegations and accepting 30 trade delegations from African countries, holding 18 trade promotion desks for introducing opportunities and fields of cooperation and export issues are some of the mentioned programs, he explained.

Ikee Books Olympic Qualifiers Spot

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese swimmer Rikako Ikee will compete in Olympic qualifiers in April after clinching a podium finish in her first 100 meters butterfly event since being treated for leukaemia.

Ikee, who was diagnosed in February 2019 and returned to action in August last year, finished in 59.44 seconds to win bronze at the Tokyo Open on Saturday. The 20-year-old will now compete at the Japan Swim meet, the country's only Olympic-qualifying event before the Tokyo Games which were rescheduled to begin on July 23.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

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Sri Lanka Names 20-Member Squad for West Indies Tour

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka Monday named a 20-member squad for six limited over matches against the West Indies delayed by Covid-19 infections.

The cricket board said fast bowler Lahiru Kumara, 24, who tested positive on Monday was being replaced by 33-year-old Suranga Lakmal for the three one-day internationals and the three T20 matches.

The Twenty20s will be played on March 3, 5 and 7 at the Coolidge Cricket Ground, Antigua while the ODIs will be at the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium on March 10, 12 and 14.

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SPORTS

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Pelicans Rally Past Celtics in OT

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Brandon Ingram scored 33 points, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with 34.4 seconds left in overtime, as the host New Orleans Pelicans overcame a 24-point deficit to defeat the Boston Celtics 120-115.

Zion Williamson had 28 points and 10 rebounds to help lead the largest comeback in New Orleans history, while Josh Hart had 17 points with 10 rebounds and Lonzo Ball scored 16 for the Pelicans. Jayson Tatum scored 32 for the Celtics, Jaylen Brown had 25, Tristan Thomson and Kemba Walker added 14 each and Aaron Nesmith had 10.

Brown made a layup to give Boston a 112-111 lead with 1:12 left in overtime and Ingram tied it with a free throw and added a 3-pointer to give the Pelicans a 115-112 lead. Walker missed a 3-pointer and Hart hit two free throws for a five-point lead with 18.6 seconds left as New Orleans closed it out.

Brooklyn Nets 112 - Los Angeles Clippers 108

James Harden had 37 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists as Brooklyn won its sixth consecutive contest, knocking off over host Los Angeles to complete a five-game road trip.

Kyrie Irving scored 28 points with eight assists as the Nets improved to 7-0 against the Pacific Division this season. Joe Harris, DeAndre Jordan and Bruce Brown scored 13 each for the Nets. Brooklyn's Kevin Durant (hamstring) missed his fourth straight game. The Nets lost forward Jeff Green with an apparent shoulder injury with 2:50 remaining.

Paul George had 34 points and seven rebounds but sat out the game's crucial minutes down the stretch while on a minutes restriction. Kawhi Leonard had 29 points with five 3-pointers and 13 rebounds, while Ivica Zubac finished with 13 points and eight rebounds.

Milwaukee Bucks 128 - Sacramento Kings 115

Giannis Antetokounmpo had a double-double by halftime and he combined with Khris Middleton for 70 of host Milwaukee's points in the victory over Sacramento.

Antetokounmpo finished with a game-high 38 points and 18 rebounds, while adding four assists. Middleton finished with 32 points, while shooting 13 of 22 from the field and adding eight rebounds, six assists and four steals. The Bucks won their second consecutive game after snapping a five-game losing streak.

Sacramento dropped its seventh consecutive game and played without leading scorer Harrison Barnes (left foot strain) for the third



consecutive game. Rookie Tyrese Haliburton led the Kings with 23 points, while adding eight assists and five rebounds and was one of six Sacramento players to score in double figures.

Orlando Magic 105 - Detroit Pistons 96

Nikola Vucevic poured in 37 points and grabbed 12 rebounds as host Orlando topped Detroit for its third consecutive win.

Vucevic, who was coming off a 30-point triple-double Friday against the Golden State Warriors, was 14 of 27 from the field. Evan Fournier supplied 29 points, seven rebounds and seven assists, and Terrence Ross added 17 points off the bench. Jerami Grant led Detroit with 24 points and five rebounds. Josh Jackson had 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Pistons, while Saben Lee contributed 12 points, five assists and three steals. Saddiq Bey chipped in 11 points and eight rebounds.

Oklahoma City Thunder 117 - Cleveland Cavaliers 101

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 31 points to lift Oklahoma City over host Cleveland, while the Thunder's bench played a big role, as Hamidou Diallo scored 15 points and Mike Muscala added 13.

It was just the second victory in the last eight games for the Thunder and snapped a three-game losing streak, saving them from a second consecutive winless three-game road trip. Collin Sexton led Cleveland with 27 points, Jarrett Allen added 26 and 17 rebounds, while Darius Garland scored 21. The Cavaliers have now lost 10 consecutive games.

Barty Uncertain of Schedule as Osaka

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Australian Ash Barty has provided no certainty if she will play regularly on the women's tour amid the COVID-19 pandemic despite Naomi Osaka closing in on her world number one ranking with a fourth Grand Slam title in Melbourne.

Barty accepted a wildcard to defend her Adelaide International title this week after making an exit at the quarter-final stage of her home Grand Slam with a defeat to Czech Karolina Muchova.

The Queenslander skipped last year's U.S. Open and did not defend her 2019 French Open title, opting not to travel due to health concerns amid the pandemic.

Barty, who is expected to head to the Middle East next month to play WTA events in Doha and Dubai, said she faced no fitness issues during the Melbourne Park swing despite returning to the circuit after 11 months.

"We plan as best as we can," the 24-year-old told reporters in Adelaide on Monday. "Obviously in the current situation nothing's certain. It's difficult to plan, without a doubt, but we just go with the advice that we have been given."

"Of course I would love to be back on tour full-time, and all those decisions will come as close as we can to the events, but also as far out to try and plan a schedule and plan a tour."

Barty did not play for 11 months but has still held on to her top spot as the women's governing body adjusted the WTA rankings due to the pandemic, allowing players the ability to skip tournaments without the fear of losing points.

In contrast, second-ranked Osaka won last year's U.S. Open and the Australian Open on Saturday but still finds herself more than 1,300 points behind the Australian.



Osimhen Hospitalized With Head Trauma

ROME (Dispatches) - Napoli forward Victor Osimhen was hospitalized on Sunday after losing consciousness following a knock to the head in Sunday's 4-2 defeat to Atalanta in Serie A.

The Nigeria striker was stretchered off the pitch in Bergamo after 90 minutes after hitting his head on the ground after a Cristian Romero challenge.

The 22-year-old came around as he was transported to hospital in northern Italy where tests revealed head trauma, but were reassuring, Napoli said.

"The player will remain in Bergamo until tomorrow (Monday) under clinical observation," the team said in a statement.

Neither coach Gennaro Gattuso nor his players spoke to the media after the match which was a clash for fourth place and the Champions League berths.

The forward, who joined the club from Lille last summer, had only returned to action last month after being sidelined for over two months with a shoulder injury and coronavirus.

Despite a promising start to the season he has scored just two goals for the club.

Napoli fell to their third defeat in five league games as Atalanta warmed-up for next week's Champions League clash with Real Madrid to move fourth in Serie A.

After a first half marked only by the red card given to Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini, for arguing with the referee for a penalty after Matteo Pessina went down, the hosts dominated after the break.

Colombian striker Luis Muriel set up compatriot Duvan Zapata to head in seven minutes after the break.

Piotr Zielinski pulled Napoli level six minutes later volleying in off a Matteo Politano cross.

Robin Gosens restored Atalanta's advantage on 64 minutes with Muriel adding a third seven minutes later.

Solskjaer Not Giving Up Hope of Catching Man City

LONDON (Dispatches) - Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is not giving up hope that Manchester United can challenge Manchester City for the Premier League title, despite the scintillating form of the league leaders.

City have soared 10 points clear of their local rivals thanks to an 18-game winning streak in all competitions. United's own inconsistent form has helped open up the gap, but the Red Devils beat Newcastle 3-1 on Sunday to win for just the second time in six league games.

"We've got to be there just in case," said Solskjaer. "Every time we get three points we've done our job and that's what we've got to do and see what other teams do."

Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford were again on target on a night United needed their star men to paper over the cracks of another unconvincing performance.

Solskjaer made five changes to the side that impressively thrashed Real Sociedad 4-0 in the Europa League on Thursday and was lucky not to be punished for a disjointed start from the hosts.

"We had to find a way to win it in the second-half. The first-half wasn't up to the standard that we wanted," added Solskjaer.

"Maybe because of Newcastle, maybe because of what we did in the week. We asked them to go again after a high-intensity game and it took us to half time to get our legs and energy."

A run of two wins in 14 games has left Newcastle just three points clear of the drop zone, but Steve Bruce remains confident his side will survive.



Djokovic Faces A Sideline Spell With Muscle Tear

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic will need to spend some time on the sidelines recovering from a muscle tear that hindered him in the later rounds of the Australian Open, the Serbian said as he celebrated his ninth Melbourne Park title on Monday.

The 33-year-old extended his own record with an emphatic 7-5 6-2 6-2 victory over Daniil Medvedev at Rod Laver Arena on Sunday, despite carrying the injury suffered in the third round of the tournament.

Parading his trophy on the beach in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton on Monday, Djokovic said a second scan of his abdomen had revealed he had made the injury worse by playing on.

"I just came actually came from another MRI that I've done this morning and the damage is bigger than what it was when it happened, when I did the first MRI after the third round," he told reporters. "It's not too bad judging by what doctor said but I'll have to take some time off and heal. The tear is bigger."

The injury was not the only issue Djokovic had to contend with during his time in Australia.

The world number one riled some locals when he submitted suggestions to organisers over how quarantine conditions for players could be improved.

The ups and downs of what he described as a "rollercoaster" of a trip Down Under had made his 18th Grand Slam title triumph all the more satisfying. "I reflect on it as a great experience, and a unique journey, and I would definitely remember and try to take out a lot of positives from it," he said.

