

Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Monday That Some 99 More Iranians Died From the Coronavirus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing The Total Deaths to 60,786

TEDPIX, the Main Index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Rose 24,344 Points to 1.199m on Monday as Over 7.888b Securities Worth 110.827 Trillion Rials (About \$2.638b) Were Traded at the TSE

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Iran to Overcome COVID-19 Next Year
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FATF Has Nothing To Do With SHTA
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Final Report of the Downed Ukrainian Jet to Be Published Soon

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) of Iran announced that the final report on the downed Ukrainian plane would be made public this week.

"In accordance with the Chicago Convention and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 13 we have sent the prepared report to the countries related to the Ukrainian plane crash," Mohammad Hassan Zibakhsh, the spokesman of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) said.

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No Direct or Indirect Contact With U.S.



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh assured that Iran has had no direct or indirect contact about the JCPOA or any other issues with the U.S.

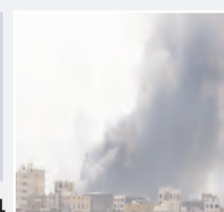
Addressing some rumors about Iran's positive signals to the West for negotiations, he said "What is going on in this area about the JCPOA is very sensitive."

"We had close talks with the remaining parties in the deal. Of course, we did not have a dialogue about the JCPOA with the Americans," he explained.

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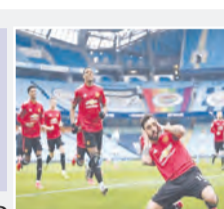
4 INTERNATIONAL

Houthis Fire Missiles, Drones at Saudi Oil Facilities
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Man Utd Snap Man City's Winning Streak at 21 Games
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Chabahar Port Connecting Gateway for Regional States

TEHRAN (MNA) - Indian Ambassador to Iran Gaddam Dharmendra named Iran's ocean port of Chabahar as the connecting gateway of regional countries.

"With the cooperation of Iran and India, Chabahar port will be the connecting highway of the surrounding countries to the east and west of the Caspian Sea through the north-south corridor, and the development of the countries in this area is expected," he said addressing a meeting at the place of Tehran Chamber of Commerce.

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Take a look at Position of Mehr Damavand Project in Development of Tourism Infrastructure of Northeast Area of Tehran

Iran News - Nowadays, the tourism industry is considered as the most extensive service system and a major job-creating industry in the world as well as the most important axis for the development of the resistance economy in Iran. According to the acknowledgment of UNWTO the tourism industry in Iran with its ancient civilization and history, four-season natural diversity, rich ancient heritage along with the registered works of our country in the World Heritage List, unique and diverse handicrafts, cultural and artistic capacities is at the top of the countries with a good capacity for tourism. Promoting the organizational structure of the tourism industry and entering this industry into macro-development plans will enhance investment in infrastructure and we will observe the results in a resilient economy, especially in the post-Corona virus era. The support of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism along with the support of Tehran province officials and honorable officials of northeast area of Tehran, including Mr. Seyed Ahmad Rasouli Nejad, representative of Damavand in the parliament, Dr. Mehdi Heidari, the esteemed governor of Damavand, Mr. Mehرداد Hanifi, the esteemed mayor of Roodehen, and other related officials, caused the Ayan Sazan Company, managed by the Alizadeh brothers obtained the necessary motivation to set up a multi-purpose tourism complex in Mehrabad of Roodehen. In this regard at first, numerous plans were evaluated until with the general consent of Roodehen Municipality and the support of the General Department of Cultural Heritage and Tourism of Tehran and Damavand Provinces, finally the «Principled Agreement» was issued for the multi-purpose project of Mehr Damavand, which we will see observe the construction process.

Geographical location of the plan

Although the reputation of Damavand is notable, but Damavand should now be considered as a tourist bottleneck in the northeast of Tehran province and as the entrance to Mazandaran. The location of Rudehen in a strategic transit position, temperate climate and climatic diversity of the region, every year attracts a large number of tourists and immigrants from the surrounding area to this city and provides many opportunities for the tourism industry. Damavand city has 73 national works and 183 identified works and due to being located in the transit axis of the north of Tehran province, with investment and planning, it will enjoy a bright future in tourism and related industries. Proximity to Tehran, the characteristics and capacities of tourism, ancient history and civilization, and being in the transit axis of Tehran to the north promise a perfect combination of investment opportunities.

Technical justifications, investment and the necessity of plan execution

Damavand city and its suburbs including Roodehen are recognized as a special tourist area among one of the crowded cities in Tehran province, as well as the enjoyment of this region with its high nature tourism capacities arise us to take a measure to equip this region with tourism infrastructure within the framework of the laws and regulations of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. In order to implement the

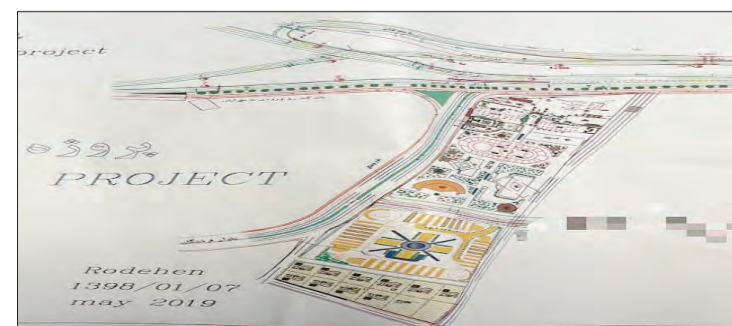


support policies of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, such as sustainable expansion of the tourism industry, also, due to the urgent need of Tehran to increase the per capita recreational and tourism areas in the dependent cities, Mehr Damavand complex pursues the realization of residential and tourist goals in Damavand as a goal. The trend of attractive nature and tourism in the country and increasing the welfare and well-being of people living in cities, especially in Tehran province and the growth of facilities and tourism facilities in families, including increasing per capita car ownership and most importantly the tourism features of Roodehen region has made it necessary to build a tourist plan Mehr Damavand feel more in this area. Growing needs of Tehran province for recreational and leisure spaces as well as the attention of the people of Tehran to travel and leisure, especially in spaces proximity to the capital, the need to create a ground and creating new economic and job opportunities in the context of planning and developing revenues of the country's tourism sector, especially in the city of Damavand. In this regard, suitable accommodation-tourism and recreation infrastructure, strengthening the infrastructure, development of employment and local economy and introducing it to tourists and distributing the resulting income in Rudehen as direct and indirect employment are among our incentives to invest in this great project. The nature of the project of Mehr Damavand Tourism Complex is predicted in accordance with the origin of this region so that along with conservation of environmental issues in attracting human resources, indigenous forces will be used as well and the basis of our macro vision is to create a complex in Khorshah Rudehen and try to keep the tourists and taking advantage of various natural and cultural-historical capacities and strengthen the tourism facilities of Damavand and Roodehen. The ultimate goal of this project is to create a homogeneous, balanced and efficient

complex in this city with a perspective on proper economic impact for investors and residents of the region. This complex is formed in the form of a balanced system, in a way that can help play the role of leisure, tourism and culture. Mehr Damavand Tourism Complex is a multi-purpose complex that in its design are established units such as accommodation and apartment hotels, handicraft markets, eco-lodges, tourism, restaurants, traditional cafeteria, garden hall and hypermarket. The objectives of this project include empowering the Roodehen region in attracting tourists, helping to turn Roodehen into a tourist destination, improving employment condition, strengthening investment infrastructure, providing opportunities for tourists to stay in a safe and healthy environment, creating a market Suitable for the supply of handicrafts, creating new bases for economic development and productive employment in the region, using the capacity of the private sector in the field of tourism development and using local and local forces and capital in the development and management of the project.

Assistance to the development of handicrafts in the region

Handicrafts as an important and influential cultural and economic area that can play an important role in supporting the introduction and sale of traditional arts in the case of marketing and marketing. The most important sales axis can be considered in creating innovation for supply and public presentation. In Mehrdamvand project, we try to create a showcase of handicrafts in Tehran and other regions of the country by creating a black tent and being creative in designing sales booths. In this regard, our effort will be to set up black nomadic tents for the sale of handicrafts and to introduce the cultural and artistic capacities of different ethnic groups. In addition to these booths, a teahouse and a traditional dining and eco-tourism canteen have also been designed. The synergy resulting from the placement of these uses as a complex with the aim of providing a complete service package and creating accommodation facilities to define Damavand seal as a multi-purpose complex that shows a combination of design and construction of modern and eco-friendly places. According to the above, we hope that the construction of Mehr Damavand complex has shone like a jewel in the heart of Damavand city and the result of its construction and development, the expansion of the economy and sustainable employment of the natives and the encouragement of other interested parties to invest in tourism in this important region.



Envoy, Iraqi Minister Discuss Releasing Iran's Assets

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Ambassador to Iraq and the Iraqi Minister of Finance conferred on releasing Iran's frozen funds in a meeting on Monday.

Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi and the Iraqi Minister of Finance Ali Abdul-Amir Allawi discussed releasing Iran's assets in Iraq in a meeting on Monday.

The Iraqi minister maintained that returning Iran's financial assets is a priority for his country, emphasizing that necessary measures have been adopted in this regard.

The Iraqi government owes \$ 6 billion to Iran for the importation of electricity and gas.

Iran to Overcome COVID-19 Next Year

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - During the inauguration of 2721 projects, President Hassan Rouhani stated that the next Iranian year (starting on March 21) would be the year of overcoming coronavirus and boosting jobs.

Referring to the inauguration of "Se Chahoon" pelletizing plant in Yazd on Monday, Hassan Rouhani said: "One of the most important measures taken by the government was the development of the steel chain, and this chain has doubled over the past eight years. The activities of this period (his administration) can be compared with the entire history of the country."

Rouhani added: "Completing the steel chain has prevented the sale of raw materials."

The President expressed hope that the year 1400 (next year in the Iranian calendar starting from March 21, 2021) would be the year of the Iranian nation to achieve great successes in the process of combating coronavirus and the economic war of the enemies.



Referring to the inaugurations of the cultural heritage projects, the President added: "Cultural heritage is very important so that a historical monument such as Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan can have as much impact as tens of volumes of books."

Rouhani noted: "Next year, enough foreign vaccines would be imported as well as the production of home-made vaccines, and all these measures can create better conditions so that we can counter COVID-19."

The inauguration of 2721 projects of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts worth 15,804 billion toman kicked off with the presence of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Monday morning.

Judiciary Chief Calls for Standing Against World Arrogant Powers

IRAN (IP) - Judiciary Chief Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raisi stressed the need to resist the arrogant powers of the world.

In the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, Raisi added: "What we consider to be the way forward for the country is the implementation of the strategy explained by the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution."

He said: "Today, the task is clear to everyone and everyone should pay attention to the fact that we must continue to resist the oppressive enemies of the Iranian nation."

Raisi went on to say: "What the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution has clearly stated is that all sanctions should be lifted, and verification should be done in this regard, and the implementation of this strategy should definitely be pursued."

He said: "The implementation of this strategy will force the enemy to withdraw."



Iran Committed to Fighting Narcotics



TEHRAN (MNA) – The Secretary-general of Iran's Drug Control Headquarters said that Iran managed to confiscate 1,200 tons of narcotics in 2020 which indicates a 41% increase compared to the corresponding period last year.

"Despite more than a decade of efforts to block the fight against narcotics, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made good progress," said Eskandar Momeni in the specialized meeting on the actions and achievements of Iran in the field of international cooperation in the fight against drugs.

"The world has been fighting against drugs for more than a century, but unfortunately we are witnessing an increase in the production, trafficking and consumption of drugs so that in the last 10 years, drug use and consumption has doubled," he added.

"Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, we are witnessing an increasing production of traditional and industrial narcotics, which in the last two decades, with the presence of the occupiers in this country, production and cultivation has increased about 50 times," Momeni noted.

Emphasizing that Iran will continue to fight against drugs with all its might, he highlighted, "Despite the difficult situation caused by the pandemic, Iran managed to confiscate 1,200 tons of narcotics in 2020 which indicates a 41% increase compared to the corresponding period last year. This shows Iran's adherence to international obligations."

"Unfortunately, this year we had 9 martyrs and dozens wounded in the fight against drugs," he said.

Being a neighbor to the biggest producer of drugs in the world has caused the Islamic Republic of Iran to shoulder a heavy burden as one of the main routes for drug transport.

Iran is at the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking and thousands of Iranian forces have been so far martyred to protect the world from the danger of drugs. Despite high economic and human costs, the Islamic Republic has been actively fighting drug trafficking over the past decades.

Iran has spent more than \$700 million on sealing its borders and preventing the transit of narcotics destined for European, Arab, and Central Asian countries.

U.S. Needs to Halt Sanctions to Return to JCPOA

TEHRAN (IRNA) - If the U.S. is serious about returning to Iran nuclear deal, the path is simple; it should return to the deal it has withdrawn from and put an end to all the sanctions, said Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Sunday.

Araqchi made the remarks in a meeting with Special Envoy of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hilde Haraldstad.

The two politicians discussed the most recent developments of Syria and Iraq and ways to counter elements creating instability in the region, especially Takfiri terrorist groups.



Stressing Iran's readiness to continue cooperation with Norway about regional and international issues, Araqchi said in the meeting that security and stability in its vicinity are of great importance to Iran and Tehran spares no effort on this issue.

He added that Iran helped Iraq and Syria in fighting the Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group at the invitation of the two countries' governments.

In the meeting with the Iranian deputy foreign minister, Haraldstad detailed the humanitarian measures of her country to the region and stressed her country's interest in continuing political consultations about regional affairs.

Iran Army Air Force Exemplary in Thwarting U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) – Majlis Speaker said that today, the Army Air Force, as an organization in counteracting U.S. sanctions and maximum pressure, is an example for Iranian youth.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf made the remarks in the funeral procession a martyr of the Army Air Forces on Monday. "Today, the Air Force, as an organization in counteracting U.S. sanctions and maximum pressure, is an example to which our youth must pay attention," he said, adding, "If we feel the sanctions in the economic dimension, the Air Force has faced with sanctions since the day of February 8, 1979, and after allegiance to Imam Khomeini. But it was able to proudly continue its path and play a good role in various scenes with struggle and self-sacrifice."

Referring to the progress of the Army Air Force despite the sanctions, Qalibaf said that the Air Force neutralized the sanctions with self-confidence and effort.

1st Indigenous Hovercraft to Join Iran Navy

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi announced the joining of the first homemade hovercraft to the navy fleet next year.

Emphasizing that the Navy has been able to achieve full self-sufficiency in all areas of equipment and operations with the presence of young experts, Khanzadi said, "Next year, the first homemade hovercraft will join the Navy."

He also pointed to the holding of a combined maritime security exercise between the Iranian and Russian navies in the North Indian Ocean this year, saying, "The reflection of this exercise at the national and international level was very effective for the entire armed forces as well as for the country. Its message to friends and neighbors

was peace and friendship, and to the enemy, a demonstration of the maritime authority and collective security by the Indian Ocean countries without the presence of foreigners and trans-regional countries."

The commander considered up-to-date technologies in the field of missiles in the Navy very desirable, adding, "Today, all surface and submarine units of the Navy are equipped with indigenous missiles, and missiles with vertical launching capability will be installed and operated on the surface vessels soon."

"With the perseverance of the young specialists in the navy, we have been able to achieve 100% self-sufficiency in all areas of repair and equipment," he also noted.

Iran Calls on ICRC to Help End Siege of Yemen

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Ambassador to Yemen Hassan Irloo met and held talks with the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Katrina Raines on the latest developments in Yemen.

During the meeting, Irloo called on Katrina Raines to put pressure on the international community to lift the siege against the Yemeni people, stressing that the siege has affected all areas of the people's lives and has created the world's greatest humanitarian crisis.

He called on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to reduce the severity of the humanitarian crisis in the country by putting pressure on the international community to end the siege of Yemen by Saudi-led coalition forces.

Katrina Raines, for her part, also stressed that she will do her best to continue efforts to alleviate the problems of the Yemeni people.

Iran to Ask Google, Instagram, Whatsapp to Respect Its Regulations

TEHRAN (IFP) - The head of the Iranian National Cyberspace Centre says permission has been issued to hold dialogue with Google, Instagram and Whatsapp over their adherence to the Iranian regulations.

Speaking in a national cyberspace conference held online, Abolhassan Firoozabadi said relevant authorities are to tell the Google company as well as the other two social networking services about Iran's rules and regulations.

"There is no room for debate about platforms which are blocked now, but folks have been authorized to enter into talks with Google, Instagram and Whatsapp to tell them to respect our regulations. Of course, we believe not enough efforts have been made in that regard," he added.

He noted the Iranian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is responsible for holding the talks.

He also called on officials not be present on blocked platforms.

Enemies Defeated Against Iranian Nation

TEHRAN (MNA) – IRGC Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami said that the enemies have bowed down to the Iranian nation and been defeated.

He made the remarks in Sanandaj, Kordestan province on Monday.

Referring to the failure of the opponents of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Salami said that the enemies have bowed down to the Iranian nation and been defeated.

In Iran, the people are the rulers and have formed the most exceptional government in history, he added, saying that hence, the people know the government as their own.

IRGC chief highlighted that Islam in Iran has made all ethnic groups brothers, and in the view of the Qur'an, this is an opportunity to get to know different ethnic groups.



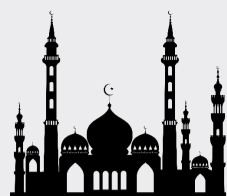
Constructing Aircraft, Sign of Authority of Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) said construction of manned and unmanned aircraft as well as smart ammunition is a sign of high authority and power of Islamic Iran in the international arena.

Speaking in a funeral procession of martyred pilot "Birjand Bey-Mohammadi", held at Iran's Army Air Force Command Headquarters on Monday, Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh said that Islamic Republic of Iran owes its success to the pure blood of martyrs who sacrificed their soul and body in the battlefields during the eight years of Sacred Defense (Iraqi imposed war against Iran in 1980-1988) in line with defending sublime value of the Islamic Revolution.

Elsewhere in his remarks, IRIAF chief commander pointed to the authority and power of the Air Force in the Islamic Iran and stated, "Islamic Republic of Iran has been put under tough and severe sanctions for the past 40 years but during this period, whenever a mission is assigned to the Army Air Force of the country, it has managed to implement the assigned mission in the best form possible."

Turning to the construction of manned and unmanned aircraft as well as smart ammunition, Brigadier General Nasirzadeh said, "Manufacturing advanced UAVs, while observing requirements of international standards, is a sign of full authority of Iranian Air Force and in this way, Army Air Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran proceeds it with utmost power and authority."



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:14
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:24
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:58
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:21

4. Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah will suffer the severest penalty, and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution.
5. From Allah, verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens.
6. He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases. There is no god but He, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.
Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran (4 - 6)

FATF Has Nothing To Do With SHTA

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-Switzerland Joint Chamber of Commerce Sharif Nezam-Mafi says FATF has nothing to do with Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA) and each one has different function.

Speaking to ILNA, Nezam-Mafi said that the SHTA should provide more options for Iranian purchasers and companies, and this limitation should be lifted an order that the channel could become more active and turn into an operational lever for required purchases of Iran.

Touching upon the latest development on the transfer of Iran's blocked assets via the SHTA, he said that so far there is no news of the released assets in the SHTA because nobody announced the transfer of the money to this channel and even Swiss media have not pointed to it but it may be possible that Switzerland does not announce the news.

On Switzerland's inability for providing Iran with medicine more than 300m euros, he said Iran evaluates its needs for medicine based on the current time and if Iran's financial capabilities grow, the purchase of medicine will increase. He added that if the money in the account is more than Iran's need for the purchase of the medicine, then it can use the extra money for purchasing grain.



Nezam-Mafi reiterated that Iran's need to the basic and humanitarian goods is above the current companies which are just working in Switzerland and the SHTA should provide more options for purchase for the Iranian companies and purchasers.

He reiterated that the joint chamber believes that the purchaser should have the right to choose, adding that in his opinion, the restrictions should be lifted in order that the channel could be more active and turn into an operational lever for the required items for purchase by Iran.

On the effect of FATF, he stipulated that FATF has nothing to do with SHTA because SHTA is not a normal banking channel, adding that since the purchaser, good and the money are all evaluated in this channel, it is above that laws and regulations of the FATF and therefore it has nothing to do with FATF.

Nezam-Mafi reiterated that the SHTA has been set up for a certain condition, adding that as long as the sanctions and banking problems remain in place, the SHTA can be a good solution for providing required goods.

MSC Sets Historic Record For Its Raw Steel Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Mobarakeh Steel Company (MBC) managed to set a record for raw steel production in the history of the company as it produced 6.341m tons of raw steel in 11 months which shows 9.6% growth comparing to the same period last year (5.784m tons).

Head of Exploitation Department of the company Mr. Abbas Akbari Mohammadi announced this proud achievement and said this record is set while the previous record had been set in 2018 with 6.451m tons and the new record has been set in 11 months this year despite all restrictions.

He went on to say that it is predicted that due to Almighty blessing and the endeavors, skills and determination of management and personnel of the company, this rise in production will be half a million ton more than the set target for production by the yearend.

Reacting to this achievement, Head of Steelmaking and Continuous Casting Unit of the company Mr. Gholamreza Salimi hailed some factors behind this important achievement and said the full support of the management, unity and empathy in all levels of company, timely and effective management coordination and appropriate interactions between different units of production, effective utilization of the supporting unit and effective employment of contractors have been crucial in achieving the success and thanked all efforts of the personnel.

Envoy Hails Iran-Kazakhstan Amicable Ties Throughout History

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Iran said that the two countries of Iran and Kazakhstan have established brotherly and amicable ties in the course of history.



Speaking on the occasion of Iran-Kazakhstan Cultural Night on Sunday, Askhat Orazbay seized this opportunity to express his thanks for organizing such a prestigious cultural program and expressed hope that such a new initiative would continue in the future.

He went on to say that Kazakhstan is a friendly country to the Islamic Republic of Iran in a way that senior officials of the two countries have emphasized this issue in their messages repeatedly.

History has shown that the relations between the two countries have been brotherly and deep in all cultural, social and economic sectors, the ambassador added.

Republic of Kazakhstan attaches great importance to its relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, he said, adding, "Kazakh nationals in the Islamic Republic of Iran are mostly residing in Golestan province and we thank Iranian government for hosting Kazakh people and will never forget the hospitality of Iranians towards our nationals."

Meanwhile the Iran-Kazakhstan Cultural Night ceremony was held in the presence of Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Ali-Asghar Mounesan, and the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Tehran Orazbay at Fakhruddin As'ad Gorgani Hall. Iranian and Kazakh bands performed musical pieces at the ceremony.

Ali-Asghar Mounesan stated that cultural programs could help nations get to know each other better and play an important role in sustainable communication and friendship development.

"The expansion of regional relations is one of Iran's foreign policy principles, and holding cultural night programs can help the nations communicate as much as possible, especially at the regional level," he noted.

He also expressed readiness to help strengthen Iran-Kazakhstan cultural and tourism ties.

The Iranian minister added that regional tourism was an important issue for the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism, and the ministry has been trying to strengthen Iran's tourism relations with neighboring countries, especially in the border provinces, aiming at developing relations.

JCPOA Revival Not to Turn Iran Into Economic Paradise

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian businessman has warned against too much optimism in the country about a revival of a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, known as JCPOA, saying the Iranian economy would be worst off if it is again tied to oil exports under a revived nuclear deal.

Bahman Eshghi, who serves as secretary general of Tehran chamber of commerce, criticized those in Iran who are banging on about a return of the United States to the JCPOA two years after it pulled out of the agreement and restored its sanctions on Tehran.

"Some believe that ... a full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action would turn Iran into a paradise, but this won't happen and this way of

thinking is wrong," Eshghi said in comments covered by IRIB News on Sunday.

He said that JCPOA's revival may briefly strengthen the Iranian rial against major currencies but it won't help the country overcome its foreign currency problems in the long-run as boosted oil revenues would harm the balance between supply and demand for currency.

The businessman, who is active in construction and transport sector, said that resumption of oil exports to levels near 3 million barrels per day (bpd) under a resuscitated JCPOA would only cement government's control on the Iranian economy and would lead to more waste of public money in state-run companies and institutions.

MAPNA, Esfarayen Co. Sign Deal on Manufacturing Locomotive Axel

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – On the final day of the International Exhibition of Rail Transportation and Related Industries and Equipment (Rail Expo 2021), the senior officials of MAPNA Locomotive Engineering and Manufacturing Company and Esfarayen Industrial Complex Company signed an agreement for implementing the manufacturing of 224 locomotive axels.

According to the agreement which was signed by Mohammad Eslami Esfehiani and Ali Malek at the Pavilion of Iranian Mines, Mining Industries Development and Renovation (IDRO), Esfarayen Company ordered MAPNA the manufacture of 160 Map 24 locomotive axels as well as 64 MAP30 locomotive axels. Indigenization of types of locomotive and cargo and passenger wagon axels by IDRO and Esfarayen Company has saved the country over 2b euros.

Esfarayen Industrial Complex Company is one of the affiliate companies of IDRO and one of the biggest manufacturers of steel and alloy parts in the country.



KSC Honored for Its Role Economy of the Region

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - In a meeting which was held on Saturday, Khorasan Steel Complex Company was honored for its effective role in the economy of the eastern country as well as observing social responsibilities.

Deputy Governor General of Khorasan Razavi and Special Governor of the town of Neishabour in the ceremony hailed Khorasan Steel Complex Company for its presence in several scenes and observing responsibility and striving to play its role in social issues.

Alireza Ghamati in the meeting with Ali Akbar Labafi, a member of board of directors of Khorasan Steel Complex Company and his entourage, pointed to the role of the company as the economic determining in the



district 5 of Khorasan Razavi, saying that the management of the company especially in the recent years has taken serious steps in different scenes like combating COVID-19 and its consequences, support of education and jobs in the town, assisting the urban management and even creating social exhilaration.

Them Mr. Labafi, for his part, announced the support of the board of the directors and shareholders of the company for playing the social responsibility role and highlighted some of the plans of the infrastructural plans of the company, reiterating that the company is determined in observing all of its social responsibility regarding the development of the region.

ESCO an Export Model for Sadr Tamin Companies

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Sadr Tamin Investment Company (STIC) says the affiliate and related companies to the holding, despite facing several challenges especially the sanctions, have had good performance and they have reached a stage so that they can export their products and they need a strategy for integrated and targeted export in this regard.

Gholamreza Soleimani said that Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) with management of Mr. Mansour Yazdizadeh has had a very good performance in the field of export and it has been recently awarded with national medal of export which is considered as a valuable honor.

He went on to say that regarding continuous successes of ESCO in the field of export, this mother industrial company can be set as a model for the affiliate companies of Sadr Tamin Investment Company, adding that therefore, Sadr Tamin wants to take advantage of experience and strategies of ESCO for more convergence.

Soleimani reiterated that 30 percent of products should be allocated for export, adding that today if the companies do not move in direction of exporting their products will not success and therefore forming workgroups for developing exports in the level of companies and holding is one of the essential actions as they monitor the activities of companies in this field.

He reiterated that successful experience of ESCO in the field of exports despite facing challenges has been very valuable and other companies in this climate and condition.

Then Yazdizadeh, for his part, said ESCO has exported almost 50 percent of its products in the past year and this year due to restrictions in exports for regulating the domestic market, it has exported almost 20 percent of its products.

He noted that ESCO has had good plans for exports, expressing hope that with improvement of the condition, the company would be more active in this regard.

Yazdizadeh added that ESCO's export is concentrated on the diversity of markets and it exports its products to the countries in the Persian Gulf, North Africa, Africa and Europe.

Swiss Vote to Outlaw Facial Coverings

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Swiss voters have narrowly approved a proposal to ban face coverings in a decision that critics branded Islamophobic and sexist.

Official results showed that 51.2 percent of voters, and a majority of federal Switzerland's cantons, supported the proposal.

Some 1,426,992 voters were in favor of the ban, while 1,359,621 were against, on a 50.8 percent turnout.

The vote comes after years of debate in Switzerland following similar bans in other European countries, despite Muslim women wearing full-face veils being an exceptionally rare sight in Swiss streets.



French MP Dassault Dies In Helicopter Crash

PARIS (Dispatches) - French billionaire politician Olivier Dassault has been killed in a helicopter crash, according to parliamentary and probe sources.

The private helicopter crashed on Sunday afternoon in Normandy, where he has a holiday home, a police source said.

French President Emmanuel Macron paid tribute to the 69-year-old, saying on Twitter that Dassault "never ceased to serve our country, to value its assets. His sudden death is a great loss".



Houthis Fire Missiles, Drones at Saudi Oil Facilities



SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's Houthi rebels fired drones and missiles at the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry on Sunday, attacking a Saudi Aramco facility at Ras Tanura in an assault the kingdom said was aimed at the security and stability of the global energy supply.

Announcing the attacks, the Houthis also said they attacked military targets in the Saudi cities of Dammam, Asir and Jazan.

The Saudi energy ministry said an oil storage yard at Ras Tanura, the site of an oil refinery and the world's biggest offshore oil loading facility, was attacked with a drone but there were no casualties or property loss.

"One of the petroleum tank areas at the Ras Tanura Port in the Eastern Region, one of the largest oil ports in the world, was attacked this morning by a drone, coming from the sea," the ministry said in a statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency.

It added that shrapnel from a ballistic missile fell near Aramco's residential compound in Dhahran.

"Such acts of sabotage do not only target the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but also the security and stability of energy supplies to the world, and therefore, the global economy," a ministry spokesman said in a statement on state media.

Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said the group fired 14 drones and eight ballistic missiles across the border with the kingdom in a "wide operation in the heart of Saudi Arabia".

The United States mission in Saudi Arabia advised US citizens to take precautions after reports of possible attacks and explosion in the area of Dhahran, Dammam and Khobar in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province.

The province is home to most of Saudi Aramco's oil production and export facilities.

The spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis in Yemen said that Saudi Arabia will take all necessary measures to protect itself, and to ensure the stability of energy supplies and maritime traffic.

The attacks on a petroleum tank farm at Ras Tanura port and on Aramco facilities in Dhahran were "cowardly terrorist attacks", a defence ministry spokesman said in a statement on state news agency SPA.

The coalition said earlier on Sunday it intercepted 12 drones launched by the Houthis, including five that were fired towards the kingdom, and two ballistic missiles fired towards Jizan.

Separately, the coalition said it conducted air strikes on Houthi military targets in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, and other regions and warned that "civilians and civilian objects in the Kingdom are a red line".

It said the Houthis - who have been battling the coalition since it intervened in Yemen's civil war in March 2015 - had been emboldened after the new US administration revoked a terrorist designations on the group in February that had been imposed by former President Donald Trump.

Blinken Proposes Plan to Accelerate Peace Process in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has written to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, suggesting ways to accelerate Afghanistan's stalled peace process in Afghanistan and achieve a lasting ceasefire.

In the letter outlining the strategy of U.S. President Joe Biden's administration, Blinken proposed convening a United Nations-facilitated conference with foreign ministers and envoys from Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, India and the United States "to discuss a unified approach to supporting peace in Afghanistan".

The letter, which was published on Sunday by TOLONews, an Afghan news outlet, also said US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has been asked to share with Ghani and Taliban leaders "written proposals aimed at accelerating discussions on a negotiated settlement and ceasefire".

Blinken said these documents will enable the government in Kabul and the Taliban to move towards developing principles that will guide the country's constitutional and governing arrangements, develop a road map to a new, inclusive government and develop the terms of a permanent ceasefire. In addition, the U.S. will ask Turkey to host a senior-level meeting of both sides in the coming weeks to finalise a peace agreement, the letter said.

Blinken further said a revised proposal for a 90-day reduction-in-violence has also been prepared, "intended to prevent a spring offensive by the Taliban" and to "support a political settlement between the parties".

The top U.S. diplomat concluded his letter by saying Washington has not ruled out any option regarding Afghanistan, including the full withdrawal of its forces by May 1.

"Even with the continuation of financial assistance from the United States to your forces after an American military withdrawal, I am concerned that the security situation will worsen and that the Taliban could make rapid territorial gains," Blinken said.

"I am making this clear to you so that you understand the urgency of my tone regarding the collective work outlined in this letter."

Reporting from the UN headquarters in New York, Al Jazeera's diplomatic editor, James Bays said Blinken had ended the letter with a "chilling message".

"In other words, he is telling the Afghan government we are going to do a fast-track process and you better get on board, otherwise American forces might leave and you might be toppled by the Taliban," said Bays.



Bolivian Left Faces Setback in Local Elections

LA PAZ (Reuters) - Bolivia's leftist ruling party received an electoral setback on Sunday when exit polls showed it had lost the possibility of governing the most populated cities in the country.

In the midst of a second wave of coronavirus, the center-right won the mayoralties of La Paz, Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and El Alto, which account for about 70 percent of the Bolivian population. In all the country has 11.3 million inhabitants.

The ruling party's rivals won eight of the 10 main Bolivian cities and appeared set to take control of at least four of the nine provincial governorships, according to survey data released by local television channels Unitel, Red Uno and Bolivision.

The left returned to power in Bolivia at the end of last year, when current president, Luis Arce, won the national election with a comfortable 55.1 percent. He was backed by former president Evo Morales.

But increasingly Bolivian voters are looking towards a new generation of politicians.

In the city of El Alto, long a bastion of socialism, Eva Copa, a former socialist party star who was pushed out of the party for being too moderate, was elected mayor, according to the exit polls.

"We have shown that we are a new alternative," she told reporters.

Election authorities have a week to announce the official results of Sunday's vote, which was marred by long delays at many polling stations where lines formed as people waited to cast their ballots.

Protests Continue in Myanmar

YANGON (AFP) - Anti-coup protesters gathered across Myanmar on Monday, answering a trade union call for a general strike following a weekend of night raids and arrests.

The country has been in turmoil since a February 1 coup ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power and triggered mass protests against the new military junta.

The police and military have responded with an increasingly brutal crackdown on demonstrators, with more than 50 people killed and nearly 1,800 arrested.

Despite the risk, protesters rallied in parts of the commercial capital Yangon, the second-largest city Mandalay and other towns around the country.

Monday's demonstrations followed an appeal by trade unions for mass walkouts to bring the economy to a standstill.

"To continue economic and business activities as usual... will only benefit the military as they repress the energy of the Myanmar people," 18 unions said in a statement. "The time to take action in defense of our democracy is now."

Unions are seeking to extend the impact of an ongoing "Civil Disobedience Movement" -- a campaign urging civil servants to boycott working under military rule -- which has already hit state machinery hard.

The impact has been felt at every level of the national infrastructure, with shuttered hospitals, empty ministry offices, and banks unable to operate.

The junta has warned that civil servants "will be fired" with immediate effect Monday if they continued to strike.

After a restless night with security forces deployed to multiple neighborhoods and shots heard in some areas, parts of Yangon woke to a heavy police presence.

"Police and soldiers started clearing off Kyuntaw Road in Sanchaung township. They used sound bombs to stop protesters gathering," a resident told AFP.

"They are now using a bulldozer to remove the barriers protesters have made."

Reports emerged overnight that security forces had taken over several public hospitals in Yangon.



South Korea, U.S. Agree on Troop Deal



SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea and the United States have reached agreement on Seoul's contribution to the costs of the U.S. troop presence on the peninsula, Seoul said Monday, as the two allies kicked off annual joint military exercises.

The issue had bedeviled the two allies' security alliance under former president Donald Trump, who had a transactional approach to foreign policy and repeatedly accused the South of freeloading.

Washington stations 28,500 troops in the country to defend it from the nuclear-armed North, which invaded in 1950.

They are a key part of U.S. forces' deployment in Asia, but negotiations over funding had been gridlocked by the former U.S. administration's demands that the South pay billions of dollars more towards their costs.

The Trump administration initially insisted on \$5 billion a year -- a more than fivefold increase.

Under the previous deal, which expired at the end of 2019, Seoul paid Washington about \$920 million annually.

Seoul's foreign ministry said the two sides had reached an agreement "in principle" without specifying the agreed amount.

"The government will resolve a gap that has lasted for more than a year through a swift signing of an agreement," it said in a statement.

The new deal must still be approved by the South Korean legislature.

U.S. President Joe Biden has vowed to revive frayed US alliances under his predecessor to counter the challenges posed by Russia, China, Iran and North Korea.

"America's alliances are a tremendous source of our strength," the US State Department said in a tweet.

It also did not state how much the South would pay.

The two sides "will now pursue the final steps needed to conclude the Special Measures Agreement for signature and entry into force that will strengthen our Alliance and our shared defense," it added.

Shanon
(adviser)

Farmanieh Apt (\$3000)
250sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, S, J
L.balcony
Fully Furn

Tajrish Villa (\$6000)
1400sq.m
6bdrs, S/p
S, J, yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Jordan Apt
130sq.m, 2bdrs
S/p, F.F (\$1000)

Darrous Apt (\$2400)
230sq.m, S/p
3bdrs, S, J
balcony, pkg
Nicely Furn

Velenjak (\$1600) 2bdrs
Velenjak (\$2200) 3bdrs
Velenjak (\$3400) 4bdrs
All with S/p, S, J, & F.F

Elahieh bldg (\$10000)
4storey, 12bdrs
yard, terrace
enough pkgs
Semi Furn

Jordan Villa
1000sq.m, 4bdrs
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Venezuela Rations Diesel Supply to Truckers

VALENCIA (Dispatches) - Venezuelan state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela has begun rationing diesel to truckers, four transport sector sources told Reuters, as low domestic refining output and scarce imports amid U.S. sanctions squeeze fuel supplies.

Frustrated truckers blocked a highway in the central state of Maracay in protest over the shortages on Friday, social media images showed. Industry groups said the unprecedented

rationing would create delays delivering goods to markets in the OPEC nation, reeling from a prolonged economic crisis.

The diesel squeeze came after the country suffered widespread gasoline shortages throughout 2020, prompting President Nicolas Maduro to cut longstanding heavy subsidies and import gasoline from Iran. Diesel is still distributed to truckers free of charge.



U.S. Set to Power Global Economic Recovery From Covid-19

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. could help drive a powerful global economic recovery this year, as it plays a more central role in the comeback than after the financial crisis, reflecting the unusual nature of the Covid-19 shock and the flexibility of the American economy.

The world economy is likely to grow by around 6% this year, according to Oxford Economics, the fastest rate in almost half a century, as vaccine campaigns allow pandemic restrictions to be lifted and businesses to snap back.

For the first time since 2005, the U.S. is expected this year to make a bigger contribution to global growth than China, said the research firm. After the 2008 financial crisis, the global economic recovery was powered by China, as the U.S. experienced the weakest revival since the Great Depression.

Since the U.S. economy is about one-third larger than China's, its contribution to global growth will be larger than China's if, as expected, both grow roughly at the same rate this year.

"The U.S. is going to play the role of the global locomotive again in 2021," said Catherine Mann, global chief economist at Citibank. She added though that the international situation would temper the country's economic growth.

The U.S. economy contracted 3.5% last year and is expected to grow about 7% this year, according to Goldman Sachs. China grew 2.3% last year and is expected to grow 8% this year, the bank said.

JP Morgan economists expect the U.S. to surpass its precrisis trend growth rate by the middle of this year, while China has already returned to its pre-pandemic trajectory but won't exceed it. Europe and some emerging markets will lag through next year.

Weak population and productivity growth could weigh on China's output over the coming years, said Joerg Kraemer, chief economist at Commerzbank. Beijing policy makers have signaled that they plan to gradually withdraw stimulus measures this year and focus on reining in debt and heading off a real-estate bubble.

The U.S.'s economic resilience reflects the nation's rapid rollout of Covid-19 vaccines, an expected \$1.9 trillion spending package, easy money from the Federal Reserve and pent-up savings. American households are sitting on \$1.8 trillion in excess savings, according to Oxford Economics.

Malaysia's Economy to Remain on Positive Growth Trajectory

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's economy is expected to remain on the positive growth trajectory moving forward, despite uncertainty on the global economic front, as the country still has ample liquidity buffers.

Inter-Pacific Asset Management Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said despite a surge in the US inflation recently, Malaysian bonds, namely Malaysian Government Securities, remained stable.

"Now we know that the market is falling not due to economic factors but due to inflation rising faster than expected. We can see a massive fall in bonds (in the US), but Malaysian bonds, relatively, are not affected so far.

"We still have ample liquidity, BNM cut the interest rate four times last year. So, there is a possibility for the central bank to reduce it further to 1.5% (from 1.75%), that could be to stimulate the economy. So, we have bullets to support the economy, as well the stock market," he told Bernama.

U.S. Federal Reserve chairman Jay Powell triggered a sudden sell-off in long-term U.S. Treasury debt and equities, after he vowed to keep monetary policy steady, even as the economy improves and inflation begins to rise.

He has raised concern among investors that the central bank is reacting too slowly to the recent rise in inflation expectations and long-term Treasury yields.

The U.S. five-year break-even rate, a market-based measure of inflation expectations, exceeded 2.5% on Wednesday for the first time since 2008, Bloomberg data show.



Meanwhile, Nazri said that Bursa Malaysia is expected to trend higher next week, touching 1,600 points, driven by the downward trend in Covid-19 infections to below 2,000 daily cases of late, as well as the continued recovery in oil prices.

The market is also expected to gain some support over speculation of a snap 15th general election lingering in the market, he said, adding that it could be held once the pandemic is contained as assured by Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"The improving of U.S.-China (relations) under Joe Biden's administration is also good catalyst for us. As an open economy, where both countries are among our major trading partners, Malaysia should be riding on the positive development to grow the economy," he added.

Venezuela to Introduce 1-Million-Bolivar Bills as Inflation Persists

CARACAS (Reuters) - Venezuela's central bank said that it would introduce a banknote worth 1 million bolivars beginning next week, as years of incessant hyperinflation continue to batter the value of the crisis-stricken South American country's currency.

The new banknote will be worth just 52 U.S. cents at the current official exchange rate. Interannual inflation was running at 2,665% as of January, according to the central bank.

The once-prosperous OPEC nation's economy has been in a tailspin for the past seven years, spurred by a collapse in oil prices that led to a drop in imports and a gaping fiscal deficit, prompting the central bank to print more bolivars.

"These new bills will complement and optimize the current denominations, to meet the requirements of the national economy," the central bank said in a statement.

In addition to the 1-million-bolivar banknote, the central bank said it will introduce 200,000- and 500,000-bolivar banknotes to circulate alongside the 10,000-, 20,000-, and 50,000-bolivar bills currently in circulation.

Years of hyperinflation and erosion of the bolivar's value have led Venezuelans to use U.S. dollar banknotes for many everyday transactions. President Nicolas Maduro has called the informal dollarization process an "escape valve" while blaming U.S. sanctions for the economy's woes.

Critics say the root of Venezuela's economic collapse lies in the interventionist policies of Maduro and his socialist predecessor and mentor, Hugo Chavez.



Kazakhstan Reaches 39th Place on Economic Freedom Index

NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - Good news to mark the 30th Anniversary of Kazakh Independence. According to the new figures from the Index of Economic Freedom 2020 provided by the American Research Center Heritage Foundation, Kazakhstan took 39th place out of 180, after improving its indicators by 20 positions (the country was in 59th place in 2019).

The Heritage Foundation noted that Kazakhstan has become one of the 10 countries with the most significant positive dynamics in terms of improving its position in the 2020 ranking. Positive dynamics were noted in the key indicators of fiscal sustainability, protection of property rights, efficiency of government agencies, efficiency of government spending, freedom of business, freedom of trade, and the efficiency of the judicial system.

Stable dynamics were noted for such indicators as freedom of investment and freedom of the financial sector.

For comparison, in the ranking of countries according to the Index of Economic Freedom 2020, the Russian Federation took 94th place, Uzbekistan - 114th, the Belarus - 88th, and Kyrgyzstan - 81st. The top five countries with the highest level of economic freedom include Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia, Switzerland.

The American Research Center The Heritage Foundation annually publishes a report on the economic freedom of the countries of the world. The Index of Economic Freedom is a combined indicator that measures the level of economic freedom, which forms the corresponding rating.

Singapore Manufacturing Jumps as Economic Revival Rolls on

SINGAPORE (dpa): Singapore's economy is recovering steadily from pandemic-related lockdowns, according to a February survey of around 400 factory managers in the wealthy city-state.

Manufacturers reported "substantial growth in output and new order volumes," according to IHS Markit's purchasing managers index (PMI), with firms recruiting to try to keep pace with increased demand.

Shreya Patel, an economist at IHS Markit, said that the February data suggested "a strong improvement across Singapore's private sector with robust expansions recorded in output and new orders."

The manufacturing jump comes after Singapore's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 3.8 per cent quarter-on-quarter during the final three months of 2020 and after the Trade Ministry reported exports grew 12.8 per cent in January.

But lockdowns in key markets in Europe and North America, as well as the collapse of international travel, have slowed Singapore's revival, contributing to GDP shrinking by a record 5.4 per cent overall last year.

Much of the damage was done during an April-June lockdown that saw Singapore's economy contract by more than 13 per cent during the second quarter.

Growth returned later in the year as Singapore largely reopened domestically, with export-oriented electronics, pharmaceuticals and medical production sectors mostly expanding due to demand driven by the pandemic and lockdowns elsewhere.

Singapore's small domestic market leaves it economically dependent on trade with and investment from overseas, with the World Bank in 2019 estimating Singapore's trade-GDP ratio at around 300 per cent.

Germany Urges New Outreach to Moscow



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany has called for greater co-operation with Russia on climate change in a contentious new effort to restore frayed EU ties with Moscow.

The European bloc should develop a "concrete and detailed strategy" on global warming as part of a broader attempt to "selectively engage" the Kremlin, according to a document drawn up by Berlin ahead of EU leaders' talks on Russia this month.

The German proposal highlights deepening EU internal divisions over how to handle Russia. The detention of poisoned opposition activist Alexei Navalny has put further strain on a relationship hobbled since Moscow annexed Crimea in 2014 and the European bloc retaliated with economic sanctions.

While some EU capitals including Paris have favored engaging with Moscow, a growing group of member states including the Baltic countries and Poland see it as unrealistic and unwise in the face of the Kremlin's behavior.

"While a fundamental change in Russia's foreign policy appears unrealistic in the short term, managing our challenging relationship with Russia must remain a key foreign policy priority of the European Union," states the new German document, which has been seen by the Financial Times. "At the same time, the EU has to forcefully seize opportunities to push Russia towards taking more responsibility for global goods such as security, conflict resolution, climate, environment, health, trade or migration."

The German proposal is an unsigned and undated "non-paper", which EU countries use to air ideas without having to take formal responsibility for them. A German official said the government did not comment on alleged leaks as a matter of principle.

The document accuses Russia of violations of international law, a clampdown on civil society, and campaigns to influence neighboring states and use propaganda and cyber attacks to "divide Europeans".

But it also notes that Russia has an "indispensable", if "often difficult", role in various global policy fields, meaning the EU had a "vital interest" in stable and predictable relations. Scope exists for possible engagement with Moscow on conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, global environmental and health problems, and economic themes such as digitalization, hydrogen power and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union alliance, the document states.

The EU should seek, in particular, to "develop structured, concrete and detailed strategy on how to engage Russia in multilateral efforts to fight climate change", according to the first of three points for immediate action proposed by the document. The other two are to start high-level EU-US consultations on Russia and to set up a Russia civil society fund to finance projects involving non-governmental groups in the country, the EU and the six nations in the European bloc's "Eastern Partnership" initiative — Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

Iran Pays Highest Price in Fight Against Drug Trafficking

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian President's Chief of Staff said that Iran has paid the highest price in the fight against the criminal act.

Mahmoud Vaezi made the remarks on Monday, noting that the Islamic Republic has adopted necessary measures in the battle against illicit drugs.

He went on to say that the International community has a

responsibility to counter drug trafficking, adding that joint cooperation can bring success in the future. According to Vaezi, the Islamic Republic is determined to continue the fight against drug trafficking based on its religious, moral, and cultural beliefs, underlining that Iran is just a gateway and not a destination in the process and the country pays the highest price in this regard.



China, Russia Continue to Cooperate on Fighting Color Revolutions

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Sunday China and Russia will continue to cooperate in fighting the color revolutions and disinformation, and safeguarding political security together in 2021, which marks the 20th anniversary of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation.

Chinese analysts said that to fight the color revolutions and disinformation, China and Russia can further promote cooperation on intelligence sharing, cybersecurity management and information exchanges over military affairs and transnational crime.

According to Wang, the two countries have agreed to renew the Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation and inject new meaning into it in the new era. "This is a milestone in China-Russia relations and, more importantly, a new starting point," Wang said.

In the face of the once-in-a-century COVID-19 pandemic, China and Russia have stood shoulder to shoulder and worked closely to combat both the coronavirus and the "political virus," Wang said, noting that China and Russia standing together will remain a pillar of world peace and stability.

Wang made the remarks in response to a Russian reporter from TASS who asked the first question among foreign correspondents, at a press conference on the sidelines of the fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress.

"The more unstable the world is, the greater the need for carrying forward China-Russia cooperation," Wang said. He said that China and Russia should be each other's strategic supporter, development opportunity and global partner, as this is both experience gained from history and an imperative under the current circumstances.

Yang Jin, an associate research fellow at the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), told the Global Times on Sunday that bilateral cooperation in response to a possible "color revolution" is urgent as both China and Russia have been challenged by foreign interventionists.

Anti-government protests took place in cities across Russia including Moscow in January, in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Western media outlets said more than 3,000 protesters were arrested.

The U.S. has played a role in hyping the protests. However, analysts said the superiority of the U.S. model has been crushed by the pandemic and now Washington is not capable of launching another round of the Color Revolution.

Also, Yang said that the nature of the crisis gripping China's Hong Kong since the anti-extradition bill protests in 2019 was essentially an attempted Color Revolution backed by the U.S. and the West.

Yang said the two countries shared common interests in opposition to potential "color revolutions." The U.S. and its allies have tried to contain the development of China and Russia by encouraging and even seeking to overthrow the governments by supporting and encouraging protests using the excuses of so-called democracy and human rights issues.

The two countries could improve their intelligence sharing in the fields of cybersecurity and military, and enhance joint efforts in cracking down on transnational crimes and cyber management, Yang predicted.

A reporter with Russia's TASS news agency asks a question at a virtual press conference held by Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Sunday on the sidelines of the ongoing fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing. Wang, during the event, took questions from reporters on



China's foreign policy and relations. Photo: cnsphoto

Apart from high-level exchanges, China and Russia can promote youth communications and media publicity in sharing healthy stories over mutual cooperation, which can set the stage to effectively defend against value infiltration by Western countries and avoid the potential Color Revolutions, Yang said.

Wu Hongwei, a research fellow of the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, CASS, told the Global Times on Sunday that Wang's remarks again showed the extraordinarily important and high-level relationship between the two countries.

In the new era, the two countries will solidify and deepen cooperation and closely collaborate in the areas of politics, economy, national security and military, Wu predicted. Such strategic coordination has no upper limits.

The two sides will carry forward the spirit of friendship and win-win cooperation embodied by the treaty, keep up the momentum, generate new dynamism, and further expand, broaden and deepen the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination, Wang noted.

Wang said that China and Russia will set an example of strategic mutual trust, mutually beneficial cooperation, people-to-people connectivity and equity and justice.

"We will deepen the synergy on the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union, upgrade economic, trade and investment cooperation, and expand cooperation in emerging areas such as scientific and technological innovation and the digital economy," the foreign minister said.

The two countries will jointly uphold multilateralism, the authority of the UN, international law and basic norms governing international relations, and global strategic stability.

A series of interactions and cooperation between China and Russia has raised concerns in the West, as some observers speculated that the China-Russia partnership will be transformed into a military alliance and bring a new Cold War to the world.

A military alliance is not an option for both sides at the moment, Yang said. The military alliance is not flexible and will bring new problems, and the current strategic partnership is enough for the two sides to handle common challenges and remain flexible to serve their own interests, he noted.

Consumption Driving India's Economic Revival

MANGALURU (Dispatches) - Consumption is certainly driving the revival of the Indian economy with states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal filling the 'shopping cart' at a fast clip, a review of GST data disaggregation by ASSOCHAM has noted.

In all, 23 states and UTs registered a positive GST revenue collection trend during February, reflecting an uptick in consumption.

Breaking down the February 2021 GST collection showed that Gujarat has achieved the enviable position of being amongst the largest consumption states and has grown its revenue at an impressive pace of 14 per cent year-on-year in February (from Rs 7215 crore to Rs 8221 crore).

Though Maharashtra is the largest consumption state, its annualised GST growth was on the lower side, partly because of a large base. Along with Karnataka, Maharashtra showed a modest annual expansion of two per cent for the month. However, credit also goes to these states for maintaining consumer confidence despite being amongst the largest consumption states.

As the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is mainly the consumption tax, it gives a better picture of consumer confidence than a combination of taxes which have since been merged into GST. Being the largest consumption state, Maharashtra raked in GST revenue (Centre-State combined) of Rs 16,103 crore in February 2021, showing an increase of two per cent over the corresponding month of last year. A similar 2 per cent rise was seen in Karnataka, with GST revenue increasing to Rs 7581 crore for the month under review.

"The consumption story is catching up with the trend being led by manufacturing, FMCG, chemicals, fertiliser, real estate and construction with a major positive impact on industries such as steel and cement. Once the capacity utilisation reaches to the fullest, the investment wheel of the economy too would pick up momentum, giving further traction to the economy," ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said. He said the chamber's assessment about the V-shaped recovery in the FY'22 is being reflected in the high-frequency data, including the key figures of the GST collections.

The gross GST revenue collected February 2021 Rs 1.13 lakh crore, showing an increase of seven per cent over the same month last year. The other states pointing towards speedy revival in consumption include Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan Seeks Economic Re-Engagement With U.S.

ISLAMABAD (IANS) - The Pakistan government is looking to explore economic avenues to re-engage with the new U.S. administration under President Joe Biden, with a possibility of exploring investment under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

The government has formed an apex committee to work on finding avenues of economic ventures to put forward to the new Biden administration.

The committee comprises a 14-member ministerial team, which will meet next week to contemplate on different ranges and domains of economic and commercial proposals, aimed at re-aligning relations with the U.S.

However, matters related to national security and

defense cooperation are not to be tabled during the committee's meeting.

As per the agenda, the Imran Khan-led government aims to revive economic ties with Washington.

This comes at the backdrop of slow progress on the CPEC during the tenure of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi is the Chairman of the apex committee.

"The government wants to re-engage the Joe Biden administration in areas of trade, investment, energy and economic cooperation, which had also remained the common grounds for discussion during former President Barack Obama's term," said a government official.

Chabahar...

FROM PAGE 1

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of India and ambassadors and representatives of more than 20 foreign countries, including France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, Finland, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Bangladesh, Switzerland, Oman, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Norway, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Sri Lanka, as well as representatives from relevant ministries and organizations.

Referring to the last week's Indian Ocean Summit in Mumbai, the Indian ambassador mentioned the port in southern Iran as a commercial transportation hub for the region.

"In recent years, all kinds of humanitarian aid have been dispatched from India to Afghanistan and Iran through the port of Chabahar," he said, referring to the sending of 75,000 tons of wheat from India to Afghanistan and 25 tons of pesticides to Iran. Referring to the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Iran in 2016 and the signing of a cooperation agreement between the three countries of Iran, India, and Afghanistan for the development of Chabahar port, he stated: "Establishing a secure trade route and unimpeded access by the landlocked countries of the region to the countries of Central Asia and Western Europe are the main focus of this agreement."

The Secretary-General of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Bahman Eshghi, for his turn, said the port of Chabahar can be a haven for peace and the creation of wealth and capital for countries in the region.

"The port of Chabahar, relied on Iran and India, has the capacity to be a connecting point for key players in the region," he added. "Comprehensive development of Chabahar port can end in peace and poverty alleviation in the region," he said.

Final Report of the...

FROM PAGE 1

"Total of 4 related countries had 60 days to comment on this report," he said adding that the deadline has been over on February 30. He went on to say that there was no technical difference between the countries.

Referring to the time of publication of this report, he says that the final report will be published this week, but the report is completely technical. Zibakhsh promised that in the public publication of the final report, the CAO will not have any censorship. On January 8, 2020, Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 crashed shortly after takeoff from Iran's capital Tehran killing all 176 people aboard, including 55 Canadians.

The Islamic Republic admitted that the Kyiv-bound Boeing 737-800 plane was mistakenly shot down.

No Direct...

FROM PAGE 1

"Iran has not received a step-by-step plan for the JCPOA and does not consider such a plan in accordance with its policies."

Regarding Iran's blocked money in Iraq, he said: "The Iraqi government has always tried to pay its debts to Iran, but there have been sanctions in the meantime." For several months now, the path of payment of these debts has been discussed between the Central Bank of Iran and the Iraqi parties, some of which have reached a conclusion and are moving forward in their own path and channels. "Of course, good progress has been made in this area," he added.

Khatibzadeh, referring to President Rouhani's telephone conversation with the Iraqi PM, noting, "In this conversation, important issues have been raised, including the need for the withdrawal of foreign troops in accordance with the law of the Iraqi parliament."

"This law is not limited to one foreign country's force," he noted.

Referring to the developments in Yemen, Khatibzadeh said Iran is "really worried about the tragic crisis inside Yemen. Today, millions of Yemenis are in dire need of healthy food and potable water, and this is a shameful situation that is happening inside Yemen."

He added: "In the last six years, Iran has always emphasized that a ceasefire must take place with humanitarian access and the lifting of the siege."

"Saudi Arabia must end this unequal war as soon as possible because it will create better days for itself and the region," he reiterated.

"The Yemeni people have the right to self-defense, but the only way to resolve the Yemeni issue is through dialogue and a political solution," he said, "The Yemeni National Salvation Government has repeatedly emphasized this issue."

Talking about Ansarullah Yemen's attacks on Saudi oil facilities, he said: "The root of what is happening in Yemen is six-year aggression and blatant oppression of several million Yemenis. Today, blind bombings are taking place in different parts of Yemen."

"What we see as the outbreak of this war has roots, and we must pay attention to these roots. As soon as Saudi Arabia ends the war and ends the siege, it will certainly help the implementation of the UN initiatives and diplomatic solutions."

In response to a question as to whether Iran has been invited to a meeting on Afghanistan at the United Nations, he said "We have not yet received an invitation."

Responding to question regarding the Irish Foreign Minister's talks with Iranian officials and the fact that it is said that a positive pulse was sent by Iran to the United States during these meetings, he said: "The issue of Iran and the United States is not a pulse and signal but a matter of effective implementation of Resolution 2231. Such issues do not need to send a pulse."

In response to a question about whether the Irish Foreign Minister during his visit to Tehran did not speak about the implementation of European JCPOA obligations, Khatibzadeh said "Europe has not done its homework." Asked if \$3 billion had been allegedly released from Iranian assets in South Korea, he said: "We have not yet seen any practical action in this regard and today we are waiting for practical action from the South Korean government."

In response to a question about some of the statements made by British officials about Nazanin Zaghari, the Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said: "The hypocritical remarks of the British former Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, do not cover his troublemaking remarks and acts in the past few years and he knows better if did not commit such destructive actions what happened today would happen a few years ago."

"The British government should be aware that the case of Iranians who were unjustly arrested in Britain without a court order and kept in the worst possible condition is still open in Iran," he underscored.

Responding to a question about the U.S. Secretary of State's claims that Iran was working to make its nuclear program more dangerous, Khatibzadeh said it is the U.S. who is driving the wrong side not Iran.

Considering the imposed sanctions on Iran by the U.S., he said "The United States must know that the Iranian people will never forget the crimes of the United States today. To date, the Biden administration has taken the same path as the Trump administration."

"After the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA, Europe made 11 definite commitments to Iran, none of which were fulfilled," he said, "Europe, along with the United States, has not lived up to many of its commitments to remove the anti-Iranian sanction."

He underlined Iran's support for diplomacy and diplomatic solutions, as well. "The Americans have not yet taken the first step, and the illegal sanctions have not been lifted, even on paper," he said answering the question "If the United States announced today that it wanted to return to the UN Security Council and that negotiations were needed for its return, would Iran not accept the talks?"

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Blachowicz Edges Adesanya To Retain UFC Crown

LAS VEGAS (Dispatches) - Jan Blachowicz bounced back from a slow start to outpoint Israel Adesanya and retain his light-heavyweight title after an enthralling tactical battle at UFC 259 in Las Vegas.
In the co-main event, Amanda Nunes blasted Megan Anderson en route to an easy first-round submission win to defend her featherweight title, and Petr Yan lost his bantamweight belt to Aljamain Sterling when he was disqualified for an illegal knee.

Tauson Wins Maiden WTA Title in Lyon

LYON (Dispatches) - Danish 18-year-old Clara Tauson captured her maiden WTA title in Lyon on Sunday, sweeping from qualifying to the trophy without dropping a set.
World ranked 139 Tauson saw off Switzerland's Viktorija Golubic 6-4, 6-1 to guarantee a top 100 debut on Monday.
Tauson was playing in just her third main draw and with Sunday's win confirmed her status as one of the sport's in-form players.

Man Utd Snap Man City's Winning Streak at 21 Games

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bruno Fernandes hailed an "almost perfect" performance from Manchester United to end Manchester City's 21-match winning streak in all competitions with a 2-0 derby win at the Etihad on Sunday.
Fernandes's early penalty and Luke Shaw's first Premier League goal for three years moved United back into second place, 11 points adrift of runaway leaders City.
"Today we did almost everything perfect," said Fernandes. "The league is not a sprint, this is a marathon. We have to do our best and not think about others."
United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer admitted a landmark win for his side has almost certainly come too late to reignite the Premier League title race.
But just a third win in nine league games takes United back above Leicester and opens up an eight-point cushion in the battle to secure a top-four finish.
"They are too far (ahead) to think we can catch them," said Solskjaer.
"Even today they put you under so much pressure you see you are playing against a very good team."
City had not even trailed in a Premier League match for 20 games stretching back to their last defeat to Tottenham in November.
However, the visitors were gifted the lead after just 34 seconds when Gabriel Jesus's clumsy challenge on Anthony Martial saw referee Anthony Taylor point to the spot.
Fernandes has failed to match the extremely high standards he has set as United's key man in recent weeks, but the Portuguese midfielder has maintained his dead eye from the penalty spot and his strike had too much power for Ederson.
Shaw then stung Ederson's palms with City still shell-shocked by their slow start.
"We played good apart from the first 10 minutes," said City boss Pep Guardiola. "Unfortunately we could not be clinical up front."



"The news is not today, the news is 21 victories in a row. This result is going to help us a lot to understand how difficult it is. The important thing is the next one. There are 30 points to play for and we need to win again." Meanwhile Jurgen Klopp admitted Liverpool's stunning collapse is one of the worst spells of his managerial career after Mario Lemina condemned the troubled champions to a shock 1-0 defeat against lowly Fulham on Sunday.
Klopp's side are four points adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea, who can extend that lead to seven if they beat Everton. That would leave Liverpool with a tough task to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish.
They could still make it by winning the Champions League, but glory in Europe's elite club competition is hard to envisage given Liverpool's steep decline.
In a sign of how far they have fallen, even third-bottom Fulham easily out-played Liverpool to secure three points at Anfield for the first time in nine years.
Without a home victory since before Christmas, Liverpool are a pale shadow of the team that romped to their first English title for 30 years last season.
They have been destabilised by horrific injury problems in defence, but it was still jarring to see the toothless Reds surrender so tamely once again. Asked if it was among his worst periods, Klopp said: "I would wish to say no but yes it is. That's not a problem. I don't always have to have the best times. "This team is an extreme team. We were extremely successful and now we have an extreme situation as well but we will fight through."

Djokovic Takes Federer's World Number One Record

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic yesterday set a new landmark of 311 weeks as world number one, surpassing Roger Federer whose hold on a record-equalling 20 Grand Slam titles is now firmly in the Serb's sights.
The 33-year-old Djokovic, already the winner of 18 majors, has time on his side with Federer turning 40 in August. He is also a year younger than Rafael Nadal who also has 20 majors.
"Now that I've become the historic No.1, I'm relieved," said Djokovic after sweeping to a ninth Australian Open last month which guaranteed his extended stay at the top.
"Now, I'm going to be able to focus mainly on the Grand Slams."
Djokovic reclaimed the top ranking from Nadal in February 2020 and finished as year-end number one for the sixth time, tying the mark set by Pete Sampras.
He is currently in his fifth different spell atop the rankings.
Nadal, currently at number two, has been at the top for 'only' 209 weeks in total although the 13-time Roland Garros champion can boast being a top 10 ever-present since April 2005. He will, however, lose his world number two spot to Daniil Medvedev a week on Monday.
Federer, who returns to action in Doha next week after more than a year out of action to recover from two knee surgeries, will slip out of the top five on Monday.



Benzema Pounces Late on to Deny Atletico Derby Win

MADRID (Reuters) - Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema struck an 88th-minute equaliser to snatch a 1-1 draw at La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid on Sunday and keep his side in the title race.
Luis Suarez had put the hosts in charge in the 15th minute, producing an ice-cool finish to beat Thibaut Courtois after a lung-bursting run forward from his own half by midfielder Marcos Llorente.
The Uruguayan was denied a second goal later in the half by former Atletico keeper Courtois and early in the second period, while the Belgian also thwarted his compatriot Yannick Carrasco from point-blank range.
Benzema, who returned after missing Real's last three matches through injury, was the champions' focal point in attack and spurned three chances to score before equalising late on, playing a one-two with Casemiro to tap into the net.
An Atletico victory would have taken Diego Simeone's side eight points clear of their city rivals but Benzema's leveller means they lead third-placed Real by five points while Barcelona, in second, are three points behind.

Ferguson Says Feared Losing Memory, Speech After Brain Hemorrhage

LONDON (Reuters) - Former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson said he feared losing his memory and voice after suffering a brain hemorrhage in 2018.
The 79-year-old, widely regarded as one of the greatest managers of all time, needed emergency surgery and spent several days in intensive care at Salford Royal Hospital in greater Manchester.
"One of the first things I said the day after the operation when my family came to see me was (about) my memory," Ferguson told questioners at Glasgow film festival on Saturday after the premiere of a documentary about the Scotsman.
"I've survived with having a great memory all my life. The next week... I lost my voice. I couldn't get a word out and it was absolutely terrifying."

Rublev Reigns in Rotterdam



ROTTERDAM (Dispatches) - Andrey Rublev extended his phenomenal winning run at ATP 500 events to 20 matches on Sunday when he defeated Marton Fucsovics 7-6(4), 6-4 to win the ABN AMRO World Tennis Tournament. The World No. 8 also stretched his winning streak in ATP Tour championship matches to seven victories.
Rublev saved all four break points he faced to capture his fourth straight title at ATP 500-level after one hour and 50 minutes. Prior to his title run in Rotterdam, the fourth seed also claimed titles in his final three ATP 500 events of 2020 in Hamburg, St. Petersburg and Vienna.

Since 2009, only Roger Federer (28) and Andy Murray (21) have compiled longer winning streaks at the level. Rublev's last defeat at an ATP 500 event came against Daniel Evans at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships in February 2020.
Rublev's 13th win in 14 matches this year marks another milestone moment in an impressive start to 2021. Last month, the 23-year-old won all four singles matches he played to steer Russia to the ATP Cup title and he also reached the Australian Open quarter-finals.
Since the 2019 VTB Kremlin Cup in Moscow, Rublev has won each of the seven championship matches he has contested. Across those victories, the eight-time ATP Tour champion has claimed 14 of the 15 sets he has contested.

Federer Pain Free Ahead of Qatar Open

LONDON (Dispatches) - Roger Federer said retirement was never really an option during his battle with injury, insisting Sunday the pain was "completely under control" ahead of his return to competitive tennis at this week's Qatar Open.
The 39-year-old hasn't played a match since a semi-final defeat to Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open in January 2020 and acknowledged it was unusual for a player of his age to return after injury.
"I know it's on the rare side for a 40-year-old to come back after a year out," he said at a media briefing in the Qatari capital Doha.
"The important thing is I'm pain free and injury free."
"I'm very happy to be back playing a tournament -- I never thought it was going to take this long."
On his rivalry with Rafael Nadal and Djokovic, who this week overtakes his record of 310 weeks as world number one in men's tennis, Federer said "it's a great debate to have".
"I think what Novak and Rafa have done of late is extraordinary - they're not 25 either," he said with a smile. "Novak did it in Australia, Rafa did it at The French -- they seem at their peak which is great for tennis and for the debate."
"My concern is my own health, my own game (more) than the record."
"The guys are unreal, I hope they keep on going and can do everything they possibly want -- you want to leave the game with no regrets, and in that respect we all sleep very well at night."
Federer, a 20-time Grand Slam title winner, said that while "expectations are really low" for his campaign in Qatar, he hoped to surprise himself.



Iversen Takes 50km Gold For Norway

OSLO (Dispatches) - Norway's Emil Iversen took the gold in the 50km classic after his compatriot Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo was disqualified for a late clash with Russian Alexander Bolshunov in the final race of the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships on Sunday.
Klaebo had outsprinted Bolshunov on the home straight, but after a long committee meeting to review the incident in which Bolshunov broke his ski pole in two places as he tried to shut out the Norwegian, Klaebo was disqualified.
As a result, Iversen was declared the winner, with Bolshunov awarded the silver and Norway's Simon Kruger taking bronze.
The result means the dominant Norwegians will take home an incredible total of 31 medals - 13 gold, 11 silver and seven bronze - from the championships. Next in the table is host nation Austria, with seven medals.
The field remained tight through the first 30km with few serious efforts to push the pace in the uncertain weather conditions, but a change of skis for Olympic champion Iivo Niskanen coincided with a group of 17 breaking away.
That group was whittled down to six as they entered the final 10km but again there was no breakaway and the stage was set for one final lung-bursting sprint.
Bolshunov held the lead expertly as he came around the bend into the final climb and this time Klaebo could not pass on the uphill section -- one of his favourite places to attack.
Instead Klaebo, better-known for his sprint and relay racing than his long-distance prowess, made his move on the final straight, slipping into the outside lane and powering forward.

